AMBITION'S CONTEST

BY CHRISTINE FABER

CHAPTER XIX-CONTINUED

THE STRUGGLE OF FAITH AND INTELLECT

In her numerous thoughts and conjectures about her brother, Ellen gave little consideration to what arrangements she should make for her own future, till Anne brought subject to her notice by a direct then she dwelt on the question; hope which Howard had expressed that her mother would join her.

"But if she should not come over, persisted Anne, in a tone which clearly indicated her own private knowledge that Mrs. Courtney would not come over; "and if she would send for us, which of course she will do, you will go home, will you not?

"If mother requests my return, certainly; but she will hardly do that when she knows the contents of Howard's note," and, without saying more, Ellen turned away to give the subject grave and sad deliberation. Her heart yearned for home; never, perhaps, so much as in this moment when she fancied she could already realize what the desolation of her life must be without Howard. But, even had he not expressed a wish to have her remain, the clause in his letter which said that were he to be again swayed by his old passions he would scarcely return home, was enough of itself to make her desire stay-that, in the case of such a dread recurrence, he would, as he promised, return to her. But she could form no decision till her mother should know all, and she wrote at once to Mrs. Courtney, enclosing Howard's note, and repeating all that her own full heart could say on the subject.

Anne Flanagan smiled grimly when she received the letter to take it to the post, and she muttered to herself, as she walked briskly down the leafy avenue leading to the

Howard Courtney will never be what his mother prays to see himthis is the last blow to her hopes. He has taken himself away, because he hated his sister's influence, and he was afraid of it, and he is free now to go his own wild way. Bah! he become what his mother has been praying and wishing for this many a Never-never!

There was a grim, and even malignant satisfaction in her utterance of his last words, as if she had a vicious

triumph in their truth. Mrs. Courtney, on the reception of that letter, was, like Ellen, at first disposed to yield to but one wretched thought—that Howard was removed from his sister's influence, and, as consequence, had lost the last plank had supported his wrecked faith; but when the full contents of the letter revealed them when Howard's own note breathed to her heart the hope consolation with which it inspired Ellen, then she, too, like her daughter, hastened to pour forth her joyful thanks giving. Afterwards, as she was wont, she sought Brother

Fabian. His stern eyes carefully read Howard's note, and Ellen's longer missive; but when he looked up, after the perusal of both, there was little in his countenance to show that the reading had imbued him with any of the hopeful feelings which his visitor entertained.

asked; "yield to the whim of this foolish boy, and join your daughter in Ashland Manor ?"

The question was asked with apparent carelessness, but the expression of his countenance betrayed he eagerness with which he awaited her reply.

"Why do you torture me by sug-gestions which you are already aware I cannot follow?" was her "You know I cannot go answer. you still hold to that pledge ?

'Still ? always! till death takes Howard, and there is no longer a chance of being restored to happi-She spoke passionately, as if from the very sharpness of some inward suffering.

The Religious bent to her : "If one or both of your children were dying abroad, would you keep this absurd pledge then, and still re

fuse to go ta them?' A stifled cry broke from her lips. and her face became livid—as if there had been laid bare some nerve which thrilled with unendurable pain—and even he started, appalled from the sight of the suffering he had himself engendered.

"God help me!" she at last ejaculated: "in that case I would have to break my promise. But they are not dying," she continued, wildly; "they will not die; they will live; and he will know at last how faithfully I have kept my word."

The Religious turned aside, as if he would not longer look into her heart-broken countenance, and when her disjointed sentences had terminated in a sob, he said, still without

looking at her : will at least, then, recall your daughter. Her stay can scarcely be of benefit to her brother

My heart is bursting to recall her," she answered, "but I will not yet. Howard desires to have her care. Mrs. Courtney always says remain, and that portion of his letter which contains his promise to return to her, in the case of his being swayed again by any of his old desires, is sufficient to make me consent to a longer separation.

of them is as well as she'd have him. Howsomedever it's not my place to being swayed again by any of his never be the happy home it once consent to a longer separation.

of them is as well as she'd have him. Howsomedever it's not my place to breathed the anguish which that anguish which that the little school had been dismissed; he hurried to the road to find an urchin or two breathed the anguish which that the little school had been dismissed; he hurried to the road to find an urchin or two onesnt had cost the writer, and animal. That done, he waited at a similar little school had been dismissed; he hurried to the road to find an urchin or two or with her money.

A woman, more generous with her coast of find an urchin or two or with whom he might trust his onesnt had cost the writer, and animal. That done, he waited at a

But something tells me that I may, as he requests, trust him as I have done before, and perhaps all will yet be well.'

The Brother turned to her, shortly. What security is Howard's mere word for the course he intends to pursue—he who has so lightly thrown aside the very first principles of his faith-what guarantee can give that we ought to accept? Pshaw, woman! this note"—tapping Howard's missive—"is only a sham, to make you less solicitous about him, and consequently to leave him more free to pursue his own wild ill. He is of age now, is he not?"
She bowed her head, being too

terror-stricken to speak. "This is the manner in which he has chosen to assert his independence. He would be free-he would shake off the trammel of a sister as well as that of a mother, and he has done so. Your son will be lost in the vortex to which he is hastening." "No, no, no!" the frantic mother almost shrieked. "Retract what you have said! God is too good!"

And, kneeling at his feet, she essayed to catch his gown, as if, in the extremity of her misery, she imagined that that act must move to retract his harsh words But he plucked his robe away ere her hands could grasp it.

Recall your daughter - expose her no longer to the dangers of a life abroad, and leave your son to the fate his pride and ambition merit.

Never !" she cried, " you have no heart, no religion to counsel me to such a step! Your garb" - she pointed to his gownonly covers uncharitableness and coldness.

His face slightly flushed. The mother who refuses to seek her children, alone is heartless.' She raised her clasped hands to Heaven.

God, who knows the anguish which it costs me to persevere in my sacrifice, will not reproach me as you do; and He who rewards faith and patience will restore my son to

Her face, so worn and tear-stained, her voice so replete with emotion, seemed to have some softening effect on the stern Religious-his features relaxed their harshness

Recall your daughter," he said. It will be cruel to prolong her stay now. The tears streamed from Mrs.

Courtney's eyes. For Howard's sake, not yet. I can trust Ellen abroad, and she has already formed friends in Ireland who will gladly supply, as far as they can, my place to her; and there, if my son" her voice was choked for a moment by a sob—" is what you can her influence mey again some. say, her influence may again sometime reach him; while, should she return to me, it would indeed seem as if my hope was completely shat-tered—as if the heart from which I have been so long estranged could

never be won back. The brother averted his face, as if to conceal the tender expression which suddenly flashed into it, and after a few moments, during which Mrs. Courtney's grief, utterly beyond her control, had sometimes audible he said, quietly:

vent, Neither faith nor duty demand the sacrifice you are making. You have dwelt on the requirements of that unreasonable pledge till you have become morbid.

ing your griefs. Bear them." He went out hurriedly, and without an adieu, as if he would escape all further sight of her suffering while she, faint from sorrow, was obliged to wait, in order to recover sufficient strength for her departure. On her arrival at home she w met by a domestic bearing the card with the singular inscription—

Morte.

Mrs. Courtney pressed the card to her lips, and hurried to the parlor.

The same dark-complexioned individual who had always been the bearer of the card, rose on her entrance, saluting her with the profound salaam with which he invariably met her.

Again you come," she cried; and burying her face in her hands she gave vent to low but passionate

The dark, peculiar eyes of the singular visitor shone with sympa-thetic emotion, but every trace of such had disappeared when Mrs. Courtney, having calmed herself, lifted her flushed and tear-stained

face. Tell," she said brokenly, "that you have found me this time plunged in unutterable woe. My son has separated himself from his sister to I know not where. My daughter go I know not where. My daughter is in Ashland Manor—the home of my girlhood—and I cannot go to her

because of that pledge."

Again the man bowed, placed his finger on his lips as was his wont, and signified his desire to depart.

She accompanied him to the door watched his figure, with its snakelike gait, pass down the street, and then turned inwards to wring her hands and murmur:

" How long, O Lord !-how long ?" In the servants' hall gossip was rife about the mistress of the mansion. The domestic who had admitted the strange visitor reported that fact below stairs, and many and various were the remarks which ensued.

O'Connor gravely shook his head "It passes my comprehension the way those children are let to stay abroad without mother or father's they're well, but I doubt whether one

CHAPTER XX

AN UNHAPPY MEETING

Dick Monahan had returned, but he had nothing to communicate further than that Howard had called upon Malverton Grosvenor in London, having learned in Dublin that the latter could be found in his English residence.

Ellen's heart bounded at that She fancied that Malverton might know what her brother intended to do; but then the remem brance of her promise to Lord Grosvenor made her heart as suddenly What avail could Malverton's knowledge be to her, who had pledged herself to hold no intercourse with the peer's son? And her spirits sank still more when she found there was not, as she had fondly anticipated, any message from Howard. She had expected something that would, at least, breathe tenderness and remembrance of herself-but there was nothing, and for a moment she was tempted to distrust the contents of the note he had left. But her Faith came to her aid, and once more

hope asserted its sway.
Not so, however, with Anne Flan gan; when she learned that Howard transmitted no message, she shook her head sagely, and muttered

Its just as I thought-he has aken himself further from them than ever.' Malverton Grosvenor had been re

quested by Howard to afford such proection to Ellen as she might require in any decision at which she should arrive, and he was speedily on his way to Ashland Manor. Surprised that Ellen had returned no answer by his valet, he was anxious to hear her explanation from her own lips, and anxious, also, to urge her to turn to her American home. Much as he desired to have her remain where he could sometimes see her, still he would forebear to yield him self that gratification in order to have her safely where a mother's tenderness might soothe her to the rest she so much required after her many fatigues and trials, and where. very long, he hoped to follow her. But what was his wonder and ismay when he learned that Miss Courtney could not see him. Anne Flanagan, who had borne him that message from Ellen, was equally surprised, and it was with an exceedingly perplexed face that she had delivered the answer. He refused to credit the statement, and, insisting that Anne must have mistaken the reply she had been commissioned to bear he sent her back to say that he had called in obedience to Howard's desire; but the same answer was returned. He paled and flushed alternately, and for a long time he stood silent, and filled with wild and anguished thought, from which at length he appealed to Anne for some explanation of her young mistress's unprecedented conduct; but

woman was as impotent as himself to render one. What have I done?" he ejaculated wildly, "to merit such treat-ment?" and then the agonizing conviction burst upon his mind that perhaps, after all, Ellen Courtney vas only like so many of her sexfalse, or fickle, or both. The thought was madness; he seized his hat and

strode rapidly to the door.
"Tell Miss Courtney," he said,
turning upon the threshold, that any message she may desire to transmit to me will find me at my father's residence in Dublin, where I shall remain sufficiently long to give her time to explain her singular conduct." Despite his intense grief there was a trifle of haughtiness in his tones, as if his native trying to assert itself.

Anne Flanagan held up her hands when the door closed upon him, and she heard his rapid step through the hall.

'It beats all!" she murmured; from father to son, from mother to daughter, they are all alike, past understanding.

Fiercely the tempest of anguish swept across Ellen Courtney's soul. Never were pangs of sorrow keener or more hopeless; and even prayer, which she sought to utter, fell back dry and dull on her aching heart. Now she realized all the agony which her promise to Lord Grosvenor involved; but, bitter as it was, she would not gainsay it-she would not wish it otherwise were she but sure that it had tended to the reclaiming of Howard; and again and again she offered to heaven her present suffering, her past trials, her dreary future, that her brother might be surely reclaimed to the course from which he had so sadly straved.

Anne Flanagan certainly expected some private explanation from her mistress, but the latter made not the slightest allusion to her mysterious refusal to see Malverton—making no reply when Anne repeated the young man's message; and the maid grew secretly indignant, muttering, when she could do so without being over-

heard "Her mother trusted me!" Mrs. Courtney's letter, so impatiently and anxiously looked for, arrived, but it contained not the tidings for which Ellen had so ardently hoped—that her mother would join her. It gave, as the young girl had anticipated, a full consent that the latter should remain in Ireland, and presumed that she would at once seek a residence with some of her friends, as Ashland Manor must tion. henceforth be too lonesome and melancholy a place of abode. But every

for her mother's sorrow than for her

Anne Flanagan's astonishment on learning that Mrs. Courtney did not desire her daughter's return, exceeded any wonder by which that erratic spinster had yet been possessed. She gave vent to it in the presence of Dick, and even in the hearing of Ellen herself; but the latter was too much engaged in her own troubled thoughts to heed it.

Ashland Manor was not forsaken. Lonesome and melancholy as it threatened to be, Ellen preferred it to a residence in which it might be impossible to lead the life of retirement she desired, and she commis sioned Dick to effect all arrangements by which she could continue to retain possession of the old homestead. She had already begun a life of singular seclusion and good works when Malverton Grosvenor, despite the pride which he summoned to his aid, unable longer to endure the suspense of Ellen's protracted silence, gain presented himself at Ashland Manor. Again was he denied the interview he solicited, and, without deigning to appeal to Anne Flanagan, as he had done before, or attempting to show the stormy agitaof his feelings, he strode haughtily from the house.

Naught but benevolence—and that of the most active kind-could suffice to fill Ellen's dreary life. Steadily but gently resisting the kindness which would have made her one of many a happy home circle, she narrowed her own existence down to a monotonous tedium of distributing alms, and tending to the sick, by that very course of action enhancing, though unconsciously to herself, the interest which already attached to was reported that her brother had been obliged to the country, and rife were the conjectures as to why Ellen herself should remain in Ireland unattended by brother or mother. Some deemed the isolated life which she led very erratic, and evidence, perchance, of a mind unsettled by the trouble in which her brother had been involved; but the pious girl, little caring for the observations which her conduct might create, pursued her unselfish and poble course-feeling now that no obstacle existed to making her life one entirely of good works, atl of which should be offered for Howard's spiritual benefit, she filled her days, and sometimes far into the night (when she attended the deathbeds of the poor) with such. She taught catechism in the little parish chapel, and her ragged pupils listened with awe to the lessons of piety which fell from the lips of the

angel lady." With every mail she dispatched a letter to, or received one from her mother. Mrs. Courtney no objection to Ashland Manor as a residence, when she learned that Ellen preferred it; but, beyond the interchange of their own thoughts, either had little comfort to give the other.

Vainly did Malverton Grosvenor seek to treat Ellen Courtney's inexplicable conduct as he imagined it leserved—vainly he plunged into the distracting cares of his own profession-her image haunted him; it drove him back from London, whither, in his wild and painful excitement he had hurried, and it impelled him to make one more and last trial for an interview at Ashland

It was Sunday afternoon when he arrived, and Granny Cleary hastened from the lodge to open the gate for bonny gentleman," who always left a handsome douceur in her hand. He had a kindly greeting for her as was his wont, and in return she ven. tured to inform him of the charitable errand on which Miss Courtney had a few minutes before departedto teach catechism in the parish He held the bridle of his chapel. horse for a moment, as if irresolute in which direction to proceed; then, saying that he would defer calling at the house just then, he turned his horse about and returned to the

road. Inquiring his way, he rode leisurely along till he came in sight of the ittle cross - surmounted structure which announced the place of Catholic worship; then, finding a secluded spot in which to tie his animal, he proceeded, after that had been per-formed, to the entrance of the build-The door was partly open, and ing. in such a manner as to shield him from observation, while it permitted his own unobstructed view.

Ellen was seated near the centre of the room, her little class about her. There was a soft flush on her thin cheeks, arising from the earnestness with which she was seeking to explain the words of the little book in her hand, and the afternoon sun shone with a mellow light on her hair and face. Her face! the cautious observer without the door fancied he had never beheld so pure, so heavenly a countenance. His heart softened; the feelings with

which he had been wont to regard Ellen Courtney came back four-fold —surely, one who could enage in so lovely and so lowly a work of charity could neither be fickle nor It must be that she had refalse. It must be that she had re-solved to give her heart to God alone, he thought; but why, even in that case, should she refuse to see him? He stole softly away, and back to his horse, resolved to wait till Ellen would come forth, when he should insist upon an explana-

The sound of children's voices soon told him that the little school

her by his too abrupt appearance when she should come forth. She soon appeared, her little scholars clustering about her, proud and be permitted to attend her happy to part of the way home. He would not intrude upon her then, and he for her room; and her courage quietly followed, hoping that soon conquered by years of trouble her young companions would leave her. His wish was gratified — the the road diverged into narrower and

left to pursue her way alone. Then Malverton permitted himself need: He twould to overtake her. He murmured her her! He always h name and she turned; but it was only to recoil from him with sudden terror, while her face grew as white as the snowy lining of her bonnet. From the tender emotions of the lover, his heart fired with the indig-

nation of the insulted and injured What means this, Miss Courtney? Why this repugnance to my pres-I must — I will have an explanation."

Her promise bound her to silence she could not speak; and, still pale, she sought tremblingly to resume He sprang before her, the red flush

of passion mantling his cheeks. Stay, Miss Courtney. I will not intrude again!"—his voice took a bitterly sarcastic tone—" and since it is the *last* time I will force my presence or my voice upon you, you ust listen. Is this the interpreta tion I am to put upon your conduct -that you are not alone false, but heartless? Was yonder work of charity "-he pointed to the little church still in sight but a sham to cloak a life that is full of hypocrisy? If not, how am I to reconcile ch apparently holy deeds with the ruthless manner in which you are trampling on my heart? Speak!" he added, in louder and more passionate accents, as during the whole of his appeal she had not once lifted ner eyes from the ground.

At that last and impetuous demand she raised her eyes and fixed them full upon his face, in an expres at once so appealing and so full of anguish, that his passion calmed With the sudden reasoning of the lover, he imagined he had been mistaken, and so had been unduly harsh; all the tenderness, the love of his nature broke forth again.

'Forgive me; I alone am to blame. I have offended in some way by my rashness-my importunity, and have been justly angered; but tell me that I am forgiven, and if you will admit me to the place I once fondly, fancied I occupied in your affections, at least let the old childish friendship still exist between us.

He held out his hand She turned away, faint and dizzy, fearing every moment that she should fall prostrate on the road. She essayed to hurry from him-for, another instant in proximity to that passionate face and pleading voice, and she felt that her promise to Lord Grosvenor would be broken.

He did not attempt to restrain her this time. His power of motion seemed paralyzed—his heart was frozen; and he looked after her till her trembling, uncertain steps had borne her from sight. Then he rushed back to where he had left his horse, vaulted on the latter's back, an flinging an extravagant douceur to the urchins with whom he had left the animal, he dashed wildly in the direction of Dublin.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

For several minutes Mrs. Ruther ford had stood, shivering, on the street corner before she found courage to stop a man and timidly ask ner question.

Harcourt place !" he echoed impatiently. "No, it's not here. This is University avenue. Better wait for a belt line car. It passes ever ten or twelve minutes, and goes within two squares of Harcourt place. It would take you hours to

walk so far in such weather as this.' Mrs. Rutherford had hoped she was almost there. She murmured her thanks, trying to hide a disappointment so keen that it brought tears to her patient, tired old eyes. She did not explain that she had no nickel for car efare; but, after the man had hurried on his way, drew her cloak more closely about her, turned her collar up to her ears, and wearily struggled on, buffeted by the wind, stumbling more than once, and often blinded by the fine snow that filled the air. The people whom she passed sometimes jostled her, but not one of them knew her or her story; few of them noticed the little, old woman, thin and shabby and slow. Not one of them knew her or her story; few of them

would have cared to know. On she walked—on, on, finding even her small handbag a burden. She had been tired when she started, and every minute her feet grev heavier until sheer weariness made her forget the cold, and at times even deadened the pain in her heart, and drove from her mind anxieties which haunted it. Two or three times she tried to beguile the seemingly endless way by forming hopeful little plans, reminding her self that she was certain, or almost certain, to make some sales that afternoon, and deciding what she would do with her money.

distance that he might not startle women who lived in Harcourt place, and she was counting on their buy She dared not imagin ing her lace. what would happen if they did not Her money was gone—every cent of it; she had nothing more that she uld dispose of; she owed \$5.00 rent conquered by years of trouble, had failed her at last. It was dead quite dead. If she sold no lace that little ones said their adieus where afternoon-but she dared not look the road diverged into narrower and beyond the hour. Those rich women more secluded paths, and Ellen was would buy—surely they would, they must. The good Lord knew her take care her! He always had. She must have hope, and oh, she would! So she struggled on, through the snow and against the wind, all the long and weary way, thinking her disjointed thoughts and murmuring her

disjointed prayers.

She had left her lodging place at 1 o'clock: it was 3.30 when, at length, she passed between the big stone that guarded Harcourt place from the contamination of a vulgar world. Consulting a list which with infinite care she had drew from her Mrs. Rutherford found that Mrs. Tillston lived in the first house, a great stone mansion, in the center a wide, snow covered lawn Slowly and timidly she made her way to the door; hesitatingly she rang the bell; and when a small maid appeared it was very apologet that she asked to see Tillston.

Yes, she's in," the girl said

crisply.
"Where's your card?" And she smiled, knowing that Mrs. Rutherford had none.

'I have no card," Mrs. Rutherford faltered: and shamefully told her name. As soon as the maid went away she sank on one of the stiff, high-backed chairs, and dropped her bag into her lap, ill at ease, thankful for the chance to sit, and revelling in the warmth of the over heated hall.

The girl soon reappeared. "If you're begging or soliciting or have something to sell, Mrs. Tillston hasn't time to see you." she said.

Mrs. Rutherford rose without word; and in every inch of her trembling, poorly clad figure there was a simple dignity that Mrs. Tillston herself could not excel. her face, it was tragic. Deeply humiliated, she was even more deeply disappointed.

The girl could not but see the change in her face, and she under-stood a little now. Her pert smile faded. She was not hard-hearted, only thoughtless. "I'm sorry," she said, as she opened the door. "I'm real sorry."

And Mrs. Rutherford went out into the wind and the snow and the cold. Mrs. Smith was second on her list. She was not at home; she had gone south a month before, the man said : and he slammed the door in her face Very, very slowly Mrs. Rutherford crept on, brushing the tears from her eyes again and again, and rubbing her hands together-they were almost frozen in their cotton gloves. Before Mrs. Pierce's house she paused, tempted not to go in. She shrank from another rebuff; but if she did not go there, whither should she turn? The poor house was the only alternative.

softly when she rang the bell-sobbing and trying to pray.

A plump, rosy, round-faced maid opened the door; and, having led the way to a small reception-room, placed a chair close to a radiator.

"You're cold! Why, you're very she said in a friendly, symcold !'

She was sobbing

pathetic way.
Mrs. Rutherford hastily dried her nd tried to sm looked up into the girl's kind face

and answered: 'I was out of doors for a long time, and the wind and cold are cruel to us old people.

They are cruel to everybody. outcher's boy was so cold we had to give him two cups of coffee before he was fit to go back on his wagon," the girl said. And, having solicitously pushed Mrs. Rutherford's chair close to the radiator, she crossed the hall and entered the big room opposite. Mrs. Rutherford heard every word she said to her mistress, though she spoke in a low tone.

There's an old lady waiting to ee you in the reception room. I took her there because it's the warm est place in the house, and she seemed cold-almost frozen. Mrs. Rutherford listened breath-

lessly for Mrs. Pierce's reply. Did she give her name or any message? I am busy this after noon," a voice said—a voice so sweet so marvellously sweet, that Mrs. Rutherford's face brightened, instinctively she straightened her

She did not give her name, and —and I forgot to ask," the girl replied. "She has a little satchel, so imagine she wants to sell some thing. She is poor, I can tell."
"Then, of course, I will see her.

the gentle voice said. An instant afterward there was step in the hall, and the rustle silken petticoats-and Mrs. Ruther ford was looking timidly, appeal ingly, but not servilely, woman, still young and very beauti-

ful, who cordially shook her hand, and, finding it cold, began to rub it

gently with her own. Mrs. Rutherford had thought to meet lady; deep kindliness being ordinarily the fruit of many sorrows. "You must have a cup of tea. It will warm you. Why, you are very cold! You are shivering!" Mrs Pierce exclaimed : and, ringing the

bell, she ordered tea and sandwiches. Ten minutes later they were drinking their tea and chatting

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