

GERTRUDE MANNERING

A TALE OF SACRIFICE

BY FRANCES NOBLE
CHAPTER VI.

Lady Hunter's ball that night was a brilliant scene, and Gertrude, who had quite recovered from her fatigue, felt almost in fairy-land in the splendid room with its almost dazzling maze of wax-lights, watching the elegant dresses as they swept in, one seeming more gorgeous than another, until Gertrude gave up in despair trying to decide which she admired the most. Lady Hunter, graceful as ever, and dressed, as she always was, to perfection, was seen to special advantage in the part of hostess, so well suited to her sweet, fascinating manners; and so Gertrude thought as she watched her receive her guests. Whatever of serious impression or reflection had occasioned her temporary abstraction that afternoon in the carriage after her conversation with Gertrude, it had completely passed away now, and she was again the brilliant woman of the world, whose highest and most important business just now was to secure the entertainment and enjoyment of her fashionable guests. Gertrude, herself attired in a beautiful but simple dress of white and cerise, which latter suited well with her dark hair and complexion, sat as yet by the side of her father, amusing him with her delight at the novel scene, and her remarks on the company.

"After all, papa, Lady Hunter herself looks as well as any one, doesn't she? and no one would think her to be more than thirty, I'm sure. I always feel as if she were quite a young person when I am talking to her. What a dear she is, isn't she, papa? And Sir Robert is so noble-looking too; he always reminds me of an old picture, somehow; and none of these young men seem to come up to him, I think, papa, or to you either," she added, stealing her hand into his caressingly, and looking up into his face with fond admiration.

"I'm afraid we are behaving in a very unfashionable manner, Gertry," laughed her father, very fondly returning her gaze. "Some of these people would be quite horrified at us."

"What would it matter, papa? Besides, they are not minding us. What dandles some of the young men are! I suppose I shall be dancing with some of them later on. What ever shall we talk about, I wonder? Ah, to be sure, the Drawing-room today will do, won't it, papa—it will be fashionable conversation enough, won't it? But I was in such a stupid state all the time I'm afraid I can't tell very much about it. O dear! I wish the dancing would begin, though I rather dread just the first getting up, too. Fancy, papa, when you are at the college, making your retreat, I shall be here still, among all this gaiety, with never time to say an extra prayer, perhaps!"

"Well, never mind, Gertry; it is your holiday, you know, and it is but for a month. Only bring your heart safe back with you, instead of leaving it with all this gaiety and fashion, and you will be all the better for having enjoyed them for the time."

Their chat was soon interrupted now by the partners for the dance, whom Sir Robert and Lady Hunter began to introduce to Gertrude, who was soon borne away from her father's side, and in another minute was treading the mazes of a quadrille, her very heart seeming to dance, too, to the fascinating music.

"Who was your partner, Gertry? I did not quite catch the name," asked her father when that first dance was over, and he could get near her once more.

"That was Lord William Southgate, papa, son to the Marquis of—I forget where, though Lady Hunter told me. He was really very pleasant indeed, papa, though he has such a ferocious moustache, and I got on all right. He seemed so much amused to hear how nervous I was about the Drawing-room today (for of course we talked about that, you know), and he did seem to be being at my first ball, he said. It must all seem so fresh and enjoyable to me, he said, and he gave me such a sentimental sigh that I really couldn't help laughing; and then he began to be cheerful and pleasant again, though I was afraid at first I had offended him, papa." And Gertrude was still laughing at the recollection when she was again claimed for the dance.

Her father saw very little of her for the rest of the evening, for she was constantly engaged, enjoying the dancing and the novelty around her, as she did everything, with her whole heart; enjoying it too genuinely to be conscious of the admiration she was attracting on all sides. Most of Lady Hunter's guests were perfectly charmed with her "pretty little cousin from the country," whose sweet face, engaging manners quite fascinated the gentlemen who danced with her, when once her first shyness wore off. Lady Hunter was delighted at her favorable impression created by her protégée among her brilliant and fashionable company, and kept finding out Mr. Mannerling, who perhaps had appreciated the fact as such an important one as she did, to tell him her satisfaction.

"Mr. Mannerling, Gertry is quite making a sensation in her own

way," she whispered to him in the course of the evening. "Fancy that for your little convent girl! I was half afraid she would be too shy at first, especially as there are two or three noted belles here tonight; but Gertry is too genuine and artless to be awkwardly shy, and holds her own against them all. Are you not proud of her now, Mr. Mannerling?"

Mr. Mannerling smiled at her eagerness. "Proud of her? Too much so, I am afraid, Lady Hunter. But perhaps not so much in the sense you mean—perhaps not enough so for you; for I was just as proud of my little girl on the day I brought her from the convent as I am when I see her looking so lovely and attracting admiration as she does tonight. Not that I do not appreciate your great kindness, Lady Hunter, and know how much she owes you; do not for a moment think I do not." And he looked at her anxiously, and was soon reassured by her bright smile.

"Do you think I know you so little as that, Mr. Mannerling?" she said. "Don't I know how little you always cared for gaiety, even in poor Gertrude's lifetime? I know you only cared to come to London even then more on account of the intellectual part of the society you could meet there than for the gay and pleasant one. But you really ought to move on a little more with the times, Mr. Mannerling," she added, laughing. "You are like one of the stones of your old Grange, I declare. I believe you would like to have lived three hundred years ago—in those days you are so proud of, you Catholics, though I really am too earthly to understand why. I'm afraid. Even little Gertry gets quite eloquent on the subject, Mr. Mannerling."

May she always keep so, Lady Hunter. I'm afraid I am prouder of her for that than for being so much admired tonight," he said, with a smile.

"O you incorrigible Papist! It is quite waste of time trying to convert such an old antiquarian to my worldly views, I see." And laughingly shaking her fan at him, she left him, and was soon mingling again in the brilliant crowd.

The ball came to an end, as all things must, pleasant or otherwise—much too soon, it seemed, for Gertrude, as she told her father as they sat chatting with Sir Robert and Lady Hunter before going to bed.

"Oh! I have enjoyed it so, papa. I'm not a bit tired, and shall be quite ready to go out again tonight."

"Well said, Gertry!" exclaimed Lady Hunter. "She is a more hopeful pupil than you, you see, Mr. Mannerling."

Mr. Mannerling was to leave very early, before Gertrude would be up, after the night's fatigue; so they said "Good-by" before they separated.

"I wish you would let me get up to see you before you go, papa. I could, I know."

"No, no, my darling; I would rather you did not—I would rather you rested."

"Very well, then; good-by, you dear, dear old papa, and be sure to be looking quite well when I come home. Oh! I don't like your leaving me, somehow. But you will pray for me when you are in retreat, won't you, papa? Because the world is so pleasant, so fascinating, and I might get too fond of it, after all, mightn't I? And you must give my very best love to Rupert—I do envy you going to see him—and you can tell him to pray for his worldly sister. Perhaps he'll be really alarmed if you tell him that, dear old saint as he is!" Then with another close embrace and another lingering kiss, Gertrude tore herself away and went upstairs with her maid, to undress and go to bed by daylight for the first time in her life.

Gertrude hardly kept count of the days now for the next week, so rapidly they flew on in one round of pleasure and brilliant scenes of gaiety. A dinner-party or the theatre every evening, and then some ball or reception afterwards, was always the end of a day spent in making or receiving calls with Lady Hunter, or driving out with her as if she were of fashion or pleasure. There on two or three days Sir Robert took her to ride with him in Rotten Row; and though at first she felt somewhat nervous at appearing among the fashionable crowd of equestrians, she soon grew excited with the spectacle, and felt quite at home on the beautiful, specially-chosen horse which had been lent her for the occasion.

"You must ride in the Row, you know, Gertry," Lady Hunter said to her; "or else you won't have done your duty properly in London."

And so Gertry went, and was quite proud of her elderly escort, Sir Robert, who looked so noble on horseback, and who took as much care of her and was as attentive to her as if she were a princess, with that old-fashioned courtesy which Gertrude admired in him so much. He was never tired of answering her eager questions, or of telling her the names of the riders, until she came to know them as well almost as he did; and he was always so proud to introduce his pretty little companion to the numerous acquaintances he met in the ride.

"I hope you don't object to your elderly beau, Gertry dear," Lady Hunter said to her one day on her

return. "I must find you a younger one, I think, in a day or two."

"Indeed you need not, Julia," laughed Gertry. "I would rather have Sir Robert than twenty of the young men we speak to in the Row. I am quite proud to be with him, I assure you, Julia; and he is so very kind that my awe of him has quite gone. You see I've always been used to being so much with papa that I think I feel most at home with elderly gentlemen."

"If we only had Rupert here too, Gertry! Poor boy! I can't understand it at all, his going off to be a priest—and a Jesuit too; giving up his rights to the Grange and all hope of perpetuating your name; going off to bury himself in a college for ever so many years, and then to come out only to work wherever he may be sent! What ever bewitched him, Gertry? And such a dear boy as he is, so graceful-looking and so clever! They have plenty without wanting him—an only son too!"

Gertrude smiled brightly. "And do you think only stupid, ugly boys ought to be priests, Julia? Do you think that the Jesuits should have refused to take Rupert because he is clever and handsome, and because we idolize him, papa and I? I really think you do, Julia. And I dare say it does seem hard for you to understand why he should give up his heirship and everything, to live a life like that; I dare say it quite annoys you."

Julia; but, you see, we know that when God sends any one what we call a vocation that means a call to serve him in a special way, it is so great a favor, such a great grace, that it is not only quite worth while throwing away everything else for it, but we are obliged to do so; we have no choice in the matter, and could only be really happy in following God's will in the way he chooses. So don't you see, Julia, Rupert had that kind of a call, and has only followed his vocation; he would not have been happy or useful in any other life. And if you knew what a grand order the Jesuits' order is, you would not wonder at us for being so proud that he has joined it, though of course it was hard at first to part with him. You cannot see that it is a higher life than to be married and succeeding to the property would be; but it is very easy to see, after all, to any one who is even a Christian, don't you think so? Because a priest's or a religious life is what God's was when He was on earth, you know; and He said that whoever loved father or mother more than Him was not worthy of Him; and that if we wished to follow Him, we must take up our cross, like He did. Of course only a few are called to follow Him so closely as to become priests and nuns; but those who feel they are called would be defying God if they stayed in the world after that. I wish I could tell you better, Julia. I wish you had some one who could explain it all to you, more clearly than I can, for I am afraid I only tire you, Julia."

"Indeed you don't dear. I would rather hear it from you than ever such a learned priest, Gertry. I'm afraid I should not listen half so well to a bishop as to you, love. But what a tremendous business it must be to any one who becomes a Catholic to have to learn all that—and much more, I suppose! Every time you talk to me like this, dear, I always feel what a grand religion it is, indeed the only one, as you say, if only I could believe or care for any; but somehow I can't—it frightens me. The doctrine of hell, for instance, I couldn't believe it, dear; it is too horrible. You think you believe it, Gertry, of course; but you don't really—you could not, if you come to think of it."

But Gertrude laughed outright now. "O Julia! not believe it! How could I be a Catholic at all if I did not? It is not for us to choose what to believe, but to take all that God teaches by his Church, don't you see; and the Church most certainly bids us believe in hell, so horrible or not, we know it is true. Why, Julia, if it came to the point, I should have to die rather than deny it for a minute. Suppose it were made against the law today to believe in hell, and some one came now to shoot me straight away if I would persist in professing it, well of course I shouldn't like to be shot, Julia, I would rather live a little longer; but I should pray for courage, and let them shoot me at once, and then I should be a martyr, you know. I declare, if you won't believe me, I shall almost wish it would happen so, just to show you that I am really in earnest. For you don't know a bit what real faith is, Julia; how can you know as yet, when you have never been taught?"

"And I'm afraid I never shall be, Gertry. It is very grand, very wonderful, is your faith, and I do admire it, dear; but it demands too much. I never could embrace a doctrine like that, and so I never could have real faith, I suppose. To believe in an eternal hell, or a hell at all, would destroy all my ideas of God's goodness and beneficence, and is like ascribing to him the human attributes of anger and revenge. Now, I believe God to be all good, incapable of taking such an awful revenge on poor human creatures who offend him in their weakness. Why, Gertry, no man, however bad and cruel, could take an eternal revenge on an enemy, and of such a kind too; and can you

believe that God is less merciful than the worst of His creatures? No, no, dear; or else the God you worship is inferior to my idea of Him."

TO BE CONTINUED

ALL IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

By Helen Morlarty in Rosary Magazine

Denis was surprised to find the little apartment dark and no sign of Mary or the evening meal. He went toward the kitchen calling his wife, though he knew if she was there she would have been at the door to greet him. A chill settled on Denis' spirit at sight of the neat, undisturbed kitchen, though he chided himself a moment for being so foolish. Of course Mary had gone out on an errand. She had forgotten something. . . . Perhaps the steak. She was very particular about her meat and liked to select it herself. She was a good cook, Mary was. She had the French knack of seasoning, and everything she prepared tasted fine. Usually a savory smell met him at the door and he had only time to freshen up a bit before Mary called cheerily that dinner was on the table. Usually. . . . That is, until lately. Several times now it had happened like this. He had come home to a dark house, then which there is nothing more depressing, when you had expected to find some one there.

Denis snapped off the kitchen light and wandered dreadingly into the bathroom. He washed his hands perfunctorily, met his suspicious eyes in the little mirror and softly under his breath. "What's the matter with you, you big brute?" he interrogated himself sharply. "You needn't be so at your wife just because she isn't waiting on you every minute! Huh!" He shook soapy water all over the clean bowl and towelled himself savagely. Suddenly he straightened up and stood taut. Yes! there was the door closing and Mary's gay voice.

"Denis! You poor boy, home ahead of me and no supper! I didn't think I'd be so late—I had some shopping to do and it took so long—Oh, I'll bet you're starved!"

Denis beamed. "Not a bit of it. I came home a little early anyhow."

"I thought you were early."

"Cause why, Mrs. Wayne? I have tickets for the theatre."

Mary shrieked. "Denis, you angel! Why didn't you say so?" She began discarding hat and coat in great precipitation, chattering all the while. "Listen! You read the paper. . . . It won't take me a minute. . . . I have the vegetables ready. . . . What fun! We won't wash the dishes till we come home."

Denis stretched himself under the reading lamp and opened his paper with a feeling of perfect contentment, all his queer little uneasiness flown. Then when they were eating Mary said something that made him think of her afternoon's errand.

"What were you buying?" he asked casually. Their menage was so new that even the slightest purchase was still a matter of interest. "Some more peas?" Mary wanted to know. "Oh, this afternoon, you mean?" As Denis declined the peas. "Oh, I wanted some tea towels, and I was looking at curtain stuff for the kitchen, but everything is so dear, Denis! It's terrible, really." She shook her head in a discouraged manner.

"Kitchen curtains!" exclaimed Denis. "Why, I thought those colored contraptions you just finished were for the kitchen."

"Did I say kitchen? How silly of me! I meant for the dining room. The—these—" as Denis eyes involuntarily sought the windows—"these are getting frightfully dirty. Haven't you noticed them?"

Denis shook his head dumbly. As little as he was acquainted with the ethics of housekeeping, even he knew that you did not discard curtains and burnings, which disfigure your complexion and skin. Cuticura Soap and Ointment will do much to help you. Always include the Cuticura Soap in your toilet preparations. Soap 25c. Ointment 25c. and 50c. Talcum 25c. Sold throughout the Dominion. Canadian Distributors: The Dominion Canadian Drug Co., Limited, 344 St. Paul St., W., Montreal. Cuticura Soap shaves without soap.

"His wife gave him a keen glance. 'Denis, aren't you hungry tonight? You don't eat as though you are. And I made your favorite pie this morning—see? as she brought forth the dessert.'

"Denis said in assumed heartiness, 'Fine!' but he might as well have been eating a cafeteria substitute for all the taste the confection had. The play was not a success either. All the way down town Mary was her usual gay self, but though Denis tried to respond in kind he could not do it. Poor Denis was no dissembler, and before long his absent replies began to have their effect on Mary, who, sighing gently, gave over the attempt to make conversation. Neither enjoyed the play very much and a constrained silence accompanied them home.

Mary made a last effort to break through the unaccustomed constraint. "Now, for our lunch, Denis! I made the nicest sand-wiches, and how about some coffee?" She switched on the light in the dining room and Denis felt suddenly sick as he glanced at the curtains which looked exceptionally white and clean under the brightly colored drapes. He gulped.

"No, thanks," he murmured. "I'm not hungry, Mary. Nothing

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