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**GERTRUDE MANNERING**

A TALE OF SACRIFICE  
BY FRANCIS NOBLE

**CHAPTER XXI.—CONTINUED**  
"God grant it, Gertry!" echoed her father solemnly, thinking in his heart of hearts that the example of his little girl might go far to work that for which she prayed. "And now, my darling, you must be starved and weary," he added, rising. "I will ring for the lights while you run upstairs, for it is just dinner-time. I shall not have to be solitary over it again tonight, Gertry, as I thought." And the look came into his eyes and the expression to his voice which must be ever in them henceforth with his darling, the unpeppery renewed tenderness, greater and more reverent, as it were, than the old ones. Then, as she was leaving the room, he detained her yet a minute longer. "Gertry, you would like to see Father Walsley, I know, soon, even tonight; and it will be better for you not to be too quiet and alone with me this first evening. It is too cold and you are too tired for me to let you walk; besides, you will like to see him by yourself, love, first; so you must have the carriage as soon as dinner is over."

"Thank you, papa dear!" And Gertry's eyes filled with tears as the old, unselfish love, which she had so nearly forsaken, greeted her again. "I should like to see him, to tell him all—at once—if I can; because, papa, he must have thought me strange and reserved all that time."  
Then she went up-stairs, to take possession once more of her own little room, which she would never want to exchange now for any other better one. Since last she had seen it, had she not faced the fear and conquered in the struggle which then had only loomed threateningly in the distance?  
Throwing off her hat and mantle, she hastily washed her face to hide the tear-traces, without lingering to make herself look bright and pretty, as she had done on that last return home, when her heart had been so full of its earthly idol, and then ran down again to her father, who awaited her in the dining-room. How pale she looked, his darling! how quiet and womanly was every movement of the girlish figure, lately so full of buoyant liveliness and gaiety! But she was his own little Gertry still, dearer than ever because of the cruel sorrow which had sent her back to him. The dinner was a quiet one, almost silent, because to speak of any indifferent subject yet seemed impossible; but the silence was not, as it had been so often lately, one of painful reserve, but of eloquence more expressive than words, a tacit acknowledgment of full, sweet confidence for ever restored.

"I shall not be more than an hour away, papa," Gertry said, as the carriage being announced, she rose and kissed him with a yearning fondness.  
"Don't think of me being lonely, for a minute, my darling. If Father Walsley can send you back looking and feeling the least bit brighter and happier, I shall not grudge the time spent with him, my poor little Gertry." And he left her go.  
As Gertry drove along, her heart beating again now, she tore a leaf from her pocket-book and wrote upon it—  
"Dear Father Walsley: I have come home unexpectedly, and would like to see you now if I can. Have you a few minutes to spare for your affectionate child."  
GERTRY?

And she sent the note in to Father Walsley on ascertaining he was at home when she arrived at the presbytery. As she sat waiting in the little parlour, listening absently to the ticking of the timepiece, it struck eight, and Gertry started tremblingly. "Just this time last night I was in the library at Nethercotes with Stanley!" she said to herself almost aloud; and in another minute Father Walsley entered.  
"Gertry, my child!" And as she gave him her trembling hand, his look of surprise changed to one of gentle, fatherly solicitude; for it needed no words to tell him that it was a tale of trouble and sorrow he was about to hear from his spiritual child.  
He made her sit by the fire, for she trembled as if with outward cold; and in less than half an hour Gertry had told her story to her kind, fatherly friend, all as she had told her father, without reserve; and had received from him the precious consolation which God himself teaches those to impart who have themselves given up this world, with its human joys, to save their souls by doing his own blessed work of saving those who are still tossed to and fro amidst its storms.

He had listened to everything, not with much surprise perhaps, as Gertry felt before he told her so, and had with his kind smile satisfied her by speaking the words of forgiveness for the alienation she had shown towards him, for her rejection of his kindly invitation to confidence.  
"I trusted you through it all, Gertry, you know, as I told you," he said then. "You have done in the end as well as I could have told you how to do if I preached a whole

course of sermons about it, my child; you have done it with God's help, granted to prayer."  
"Oh, yes, father! without that, what might I have been now?" And she shuddered, and then added: "Can you go into the church for a few minutes tonight, father? I should like so much, if I may, to go to Communion tomorrow."  
"I was thinking you would, Gertry," he replied seriously, but very kindly, "to offer your trouble up to our Lord Himself in His bodily presence, and to ask Him for grace and strength not to complain or grow weary; to pray too, my child, for him whom you have today renounced for conscience' sake."

Gertry's color rose again; but she said with a smile, "You will have to let me go very often now to Communion, father until I grow quite strong, quite used to it all." But he saw her lips quiver as she turned to go with him to the church.  
Her confession over, Gertry did not stay long in the church, not wishing to keep the carriage waiting; but she followed Father Walsley back into the house, where he shook hands with her very kindly and earnestly as he bade her "Good-night."  
"Don't come too early to church in the morning, Gertry," he said, with his sweet smile, "or I shall be angry, you know. You will be very tired and exhausted tomorrow, my child; so only get up to be just in time for Mass."  
"What bad advice, Father Walsley! You never gave it me before in your life!" And something of the old playful look flitted for an instant over the pale face.  
"And I trust I shall never give it to you again, Gertry. But you must follow it this time, remember." And with another "good-night," he opened the door for her; and she left him, to go back to her father, to assure him that already in her sad desolation the peace of a good conscience was bringing its own sweet comfort.

And the next morning when she awoke, still tired and weary, as Father Walsley had predicted, that first waking at home which she had so dreaded was rendered easier and scarcely terrible at all by the thought of the all-powerful Consoler who was coming into her heart this morning, who had Himself given her the sweet grace to turn to Him thus early for strength and solace. "Come unto Me, all ye who labor and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you," were the blessed words which seemed to echo in her very heart all the time she was dressing and as she walked to church in the old way, leaning on her father's arm, neither of them speaking much, with that sweet knowledge ever between them now of confidence restored, never to be broken again.  
Gertry received Communion, and with Jesus in her breast she knelt there motionless, bowed down in her absorbing prayer:

"O Jesus, give me strength not to complain; never to grow weary of my cross; not to hope even for it to be taken away, unless it is Thy will! And for him whom I have given up for Thee, whom I have loved until now with too earthly love perhaps, let him come at last to know and humbly love Thee, though now he may so offend Thee by his hatred and pride. But let no thought of self mingle in my prayer for him—no thought of merely earthly joy! Rather let me die than that any thought of me should tarnish his conversion to Thy faith!"  
Meanwhile Mr. Mannering had gone into the vestry, where he and Father Walsley talked long and earnestly on the one subject, the latter consoling, in his own saintly manner, the anxious father in his suffering for his child.  
"God will himself make it easy to you in time, Mr. Mannering, if she is destined never to be her old, bright self again, if even what you hope for is denied, and she is to be always now a saddened woman instead of a happy child—God, who has given her strength to renounce this proud idol of whom she made such an idol in her young heart. Did we not feel, Mr. Mannering," he concluded, "that when the time came, our bright, merry little Gertry would prove worthy of her race?"  
A few minutes later Gertry rose from her knees, with a sweet peaceful look upon her face, and was soon walking home again with her father, to begin the old life alone together once more.

TO BE CONTINUED

**STORY OF HESTER'S PICTURE**

As Hester stopped by the hall table looking for mail, Edith Rowe came by. She looked prettier than ever in a new spring suit, the smart lines of which made Hester catch her breath.  
"Hello, Miss White," said Edith, nodding brightly to Hester. Then, picking up the numerous letters that were for her, she turned to the maid who was passing through the hall of the boarding house. "If anyone telephones, Mary, please say I shan't be back until after dinner."  
Hester took her only letter and turned towards the stairs. It was from mother, of course. She read it on the way up; father's business was worse than usual; if Hester could get along without more money this month—

She thrust the letter into her pocket. Why, oh, why did they have to be so poor when other people, like Edith Rowe, had everything? Of course she could get along without more money, but that meant no new paints, and some of her tubes were empty. She needed a dress, too. If only she could win the Anson prize, which the Academy offered for the best flower composition!  
Opening the door of the third floor back, Hester stopped on the threshold in blank amazement. What had happened to her bare little room? It seemed twice as large, and there were embers in the grate! A chaise longue, bright rugs, old mahogany, flowers—had some fairy godmother been waving her wand there? Then she realized the truth; she had come up the wrong stairway. The boarding-house consisted of two old buildings, the first floors of which were arranged to share a common entrance. More than one girl had absently gone up the wrong stairway.

It was long climb down and up again, and Hester was tired; she sank involuntarily into a chair near the door and glanced round her the pretty room. How cheerful it was! Whose room could it be? It must be an art student's, for there was an easel and a litter of paints on a stand. Most of the boarders in the house were art students, because it was near the Academy, but few of them were rich enough to afford such furnishings! Then her eye lit on a notebook that lay on the table, and she read "Edith Rowe."

So this was Miss Rowe's room! Of course, Miss Rowe was rich—and beautiful into the bargain. For a long time Hester had admired her without daring to make friendly advances: Edith Rowe was several years older than she. Well, there was no harm in resting in the room for a minute; Miss Rowe had said she would not be back until evening. Hester set down her battered paint box and stretched out her cold hands towards the embers of the fire. Then turning as if to admire the things about her, she saw, carefully arranged on a model stand, a great vase of exquisite snapdragons; the long stalks were plumed with harmonious shades of pink, yellow and rose. And this was February! How beautiful they were, with that bit of dark old tapestry behind them!

"I wonder if she's going to paint them for the contest?" thought Hester wistfully. "If I could have a study like that to work from!"  
At that moment the late February sun cast sudden yellow beams across the flowers. It was Saturday and the Academy classes were closed. A thought came to Hester. "I'd love to stay a while and sketch them!" she murmured.  
An instant later the girl was on her knees getting out tubes of color. She had wall board to work on, for the morning sketch class had been for work in oils.  
Hastily she laid aside the square of expensive canvas, half sketched over with some vague composition that stood on the easel. "Canvas!" murmured Hester. "She can afford real canvas, too! I have to use this cheap old wall board. Oh, well!"

Her skillful hands were soon at work blocking in the composition. Squinting along her brush, she stretched the mass of the tall bloom and the space of the vase and the tapestry. It came just right. What a joy to work in so quiet and beautiful a room!

Hester painted swiftly. Beginning with no idea of making more than a rough sketch, she was soon completely absorbed. It seemed that she had never worked so well. Before her the flowers fairly budded and bloomed in glowing and translucent colors that blended beautifully with the altered shade that she decided to give to the background. An hour she painted, two hours, three. The sunlight was gone; the hearth was black, and the room had grown cold. With a start Hester realized that the picture was complete except for such finishing as she could give it at leisure. A sense of guilty alarm seized her. What had she done, staying all the afternoon in Edith Rowe's room? "What would Miss Rowe say if she returned and found her there?"

Hester hastily gathered up her materials and, carrying the wet from painting, stole down the stairs. No one was in the hall; she went on up to her own room, unobserved. Once there, she stood the picture on her bureau and gazed at it appraisingly. Yes, it was good! A few accents here, a deeper tone in the back ground, an added high light, and it would be quite the best thing she had ever done!  
"What a pity I can't enter it in the contest!" she thought. "But, of course, that wouldn't be fair. It is Miss Rowe's composition, not mine."  
She resolved to put the whole affair out of her mind. It was not possible for her at that season to buy such flowers to work from. Unless she could make a composition by observing the florists' windows, there was small chance of her winning the Anson prize. She flung herself down on the couch; her pale, eager face was wistful, her brown eyes stared at the ceiling.

A knock sounded on the door, and Peggy Ralston burst in. Peggy was a fellow student, a gay, little, red-haired ne'er do well who studied art, not because she wanted to

learn to draw, but because her parents insisted that she study something, and art was more fun than anything else she could think of.

"Hello, Hetty!" she cried. "I've got two passes for that concert you were telling about. Come on!"  
Then, spying the picture on the bureau, she stopped short, suddenly serious. "Why, Hetty, how stunning! The best looking thing I ever saw!"

Hester flushed with pleasure, "you think it's good?"  
"Good! It's simply ripping!" exclaimed Peggy. "You'll win the Anson prize. Nobody in the school can do so well!"  
Hester became sober: "I'm not going to enter it for the prize, Peggy," she said.

"Not enter it? Why, of course, you'll enter it. Those unusual flowers, that greeny blue background—but there's the dinner gong. Hurry up!"  
While Hester changed her dress Peggy continued to admire the painting. Hester was so uncomfortable to enter it in the contest, but she feared that Peggy would be shocked; that she would not understand. To spend more than three hours in another girl's room, painting another girl's composition, was almost like stealing. No, she couldn't tell. She would simply put the study away and let that be the end of it.

They went on down to dinner. Hester was thankful that Peggy was too much interested in discussing the concert to talk about the picture.  
But on Monday at the Academy Peggy was not to be restrained. Paying no attention to Hester's pleadings, she announced to her friends that Hester's picture was absolutely stunning! Sure to win the prize! Under the fire of friendly queries and comments Hester found it hard to repeat her statement that she would not enter it in the contest. She resolved to paint something to take its place.

But assembling a flower composition from desultory sketches was not easy. All the spare time that she had she spent in trying to achieve another study as good as the first. But her pictures were lifeless, compared with the glowing bit of color to which Edith Rowe's charming room seemed somehow to have lent its mellow, beautiful spirit.

The day before the pictures for the contest had to be handed in she received another letter from home. Her father was ill, and business was suffering from his absence. If Hester could get along with a smaller allowance this month, it would help greatly. She sat down on her couch, staring straight ahead. If she only could write that they need not send her any money at all! The Anson prize was one hundred and fifty dollars. To win it would mean so much; no material for her work, the dress she wanted so badly, and best of all, it would help them at home!

She rose and took the snapdragon picture from the portfolio. For two weeks she had not looked at it, and now to her freshened eye it appeared better than ever; there were just those few details to attend to. She didn't like the vase she would alter that. She got out her brushes and set at once to work.  
Within an hour the picture was done, and Hester, standing resolutely before it, had decided to send it in. Edith Rowe's were not the only snapdragons in the world, and she had changed the tapestry background from a soft mulberry to a greenish blue. The vase, too, looked different.

That night at dinner Edith Rowe, charming in her new gown, announced that she, too, had a picture ready for the contest. "If I win," she said, and her friendly blue eyes rested momentarily on Hester's stormy dark ones, "I'm going to give the money to the Babies' Hospital. I went out there yesterday with a friend, and the little things were so nice to see. I'd like to do something for them. The hospital needs money for new equipment."  
Hester's heart thumped.  
Edith Rowe did excellent work, though not so good as hers. If her own picture won over Miss Rowe's, she should be robbing the hospital of that money! Robbing sick babies! And yet—  
The girl went up to her bare little room and lay in the dark, thinking.

She could enter her picture safely enough, but, oh, if Miss Rowe had not said that about the babies being pathetic! What should she do?  
Edith Rowe, lying on her chaise longue with a book, said, "Come in" in answer to the tap at her door. Hester white stood there very pale, bearing a big portfolio. "Why, Miss!" Edith rose cordially.  
"Come in. You've never been to see me before; I'm awfully glad to have you. Sit there and have some chocolates." She pushed the box toward her guest.  
But Hester shook her head. "I can't see you. I've come to make a confession." She opened the portfolio and held up her picture.  
Edith gave a little cry of admiration as she gazed at it. "How perfectly lovely! Your prize picture? I heard that you had done a beauty."  
"Yes, but it is not really mine, Miss Rowe."

Then in hurried, nervous tones Hester told how she had worked from Edith's own composition, worked in Edith's very room.

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