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GERTRUDE MANNERING

A TALE OF SACRIFICE

BY FRANCIS NOBLE

CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED

"Yes, papa—a handsome, showy-looking person, isn't she?"

"Handsome certainly, but a very estimable, kind-hearted woman too, as you will find when you know her. She was so fond of your mother, Gerty; and they were as great friends as a good pious Catholic and a worldly though very good-hearted Protestant could be. Your mother used to say that Lady Hunter would make a grand Catholic, Gerty. She is always so much in earnest in whatever she does that if the energy she devotes now to fashion and amusement were bestowed on religion and her own soul, she would outstrip a great many of us in sanctity. What a grand thing it would be if you were to convert her, Gerty! What a glorious exchange you would be giving her then for her kindness to you! She has simply no religion at all that I ever heard of, except that of kindness and benevolence, poor thing! But of this I am sure—that if she did come to think seriously or be convinced of religious need at all, no half-measures would satisfy her; she would turn instinctively to the Catholic faith, which so many of them feel in their hearts to be the only one, though they are not generous or in earnest enough to listen to the voice that is calling them to it. And Mr. Manning sighed, thinking perhaps of friends of his own, men of intellect and learning, who were thus, with a wilful, cowardly blindness, refusing to see the one way which the one Lord was pointing out to them.

"Poor Lady Hunter!" said Gerty, after a pause. "It would be a grand thing to be able to convert her—so grand that I dare not aspire to the honor. No wonder, papa, she can't understand Rupert, is it?"

"No wonder indeed, Gerty. It must seem like madness for a boy of eighteen, as he was, to give up all—possessions, comforts, home, and a dear little sister's society—to become one of those maligned, dreaded Jesuits. May God help her to understand it all some day, Gerty, so that she may not be among those who at the end of all things will cry out, 'We fools esteemed their life madness'."

If Lady Hunter could have heard the kind of conversation called forth by her letter, so different from what she had pictured of anticipations of the gayeties she was holding out to Gertrude, she would either have laughed good-naturedly or else have listened in incredulous amazement, understanding not how fitting and natural it was to these two sons of an old Catholic house, whose glory had been so long to suffer persecution for conscience' sake and God's honor—a house which only now was venturing forth shyly to its place in the great world.

They were silent for a minute or two, and then Gertrude said, laughing again:

"I must go and see Father Walmsley this morning, papa, to tell him he is going to be rid of me for a while, so he needn't get ready any more sermons on vanity and worldliness just yet. I shall want them all when I come back; so he had better keep them till then, instead of wasting them on you and the country people, poor things. O papa!" she added suddenly, the soft brown eyes changing all at once to sadness. "I wish the London visit were over, and we were both safe again here together! I don't know why, but I do. Of course I shall enjoy it, and I shall like to see the world; but now the time is coming, I would rather stay at home, papa, with you."

But her father, hiding his own emotion, drew her to his side, and smilingly began to tell her of the glories of London, of its places of interest and antiquity as well as of amusement and fashion, until she grew merry again, and delighted at the prospect before her.

Gertrude was to go up to London in a fortnight, as Lady Hunter had asked, so that her days began to be very busy now with preparations. Lady Hunter herself sent down two or three dresses as presents, with orders as to how they were to be made. "And," she wrote, your papa must let me present you with some more on your arrival, when I see what best suits you. It is quite a delight to me to have a young girl to dress and look after. Sir Robert says it is making me a girl again myself, so your papa must not spoil my pleasure by being angry with me for my dubious opinion of country taste and style, dear."

And when the dresses came home, made as Lady Hunter had directed, Gertrude tried them on for her father with a girlish delight, unconscious of the inward sigh in his heart as he gazed smilingly on her bright, fresh loveliness.

"If she looks so beautiful to me, her old father, what will my darling appear to other young hearts? Well, God help me to bear it," he thought, "if it is His will that I must give her up to a husband. If she only keeps good and innocent, firm and steadfast in her faith, if she does not lose her heart to one whom I could not see her marry! Poor little Gerty, she never thinks of anything like that herself; it is all girlish excitement

and amusement she looks forward to, and then to come back to me! But what wonder if I think of it, in my fears for my little sunbeam!" Only to his spiritual adviser and friend, Father Walmsley, were these fears and anxieties confided, and the good priest spoke hopefully and with a cheerful confidence when he had listened to all.

"Trust her to God, Mr. Manning," he said. "He is calling her into the world, and He will take care of her there; perhaps make her even the instrument of good to others. Do not fear to think that I shall omit to pray for her, poor child; but I have great confidence in Gertrude. She is no weak, silly girl, bright and lively as she is, but strong and brave at heart, with a spirit worthy of her persecuted ancestors, as I feel we shall one day discover, Mr. Manning."

And the anxious father came away calm and confident, for the good priest's words seemed to him almost prophetic. The evening before their departure for London arrived—the last evening they would have alone together for several weeks. It was a Sunday, and they walked down together to church for Benediction, sauntering slowly after the heat of the bright summer day.

"What a shame it seems to be going away, doesn't it, papa, just now when the park is so lovely and everything looks so green and bright!" exclaimed Gertrude.

"How I shall miss Benediction in London, papa; for I shall never get a knot on my head, even on Sundays, and perhaps never get to Mass in the mornings? Dear me! what a heathen life it will seem! I wrote to Sister Teresa today, papa, and told her I would send her a photograph of the dress I am to be presented in, just to shock her you know, for fun. I'm sure she is praying for me today as if I were to be launched into a lions' den tomorrow! You don't know what a horror she has of the world, papa; we girls used often to laugh at her, she used to shudder at the very name of it, and at the earnest way she always said how thankful she was to have escaped from it."

"Perhaps, Gerty, she knew it too well—better than any of you school-girls yet could do," replied Mr. Manning, thinking of the nun's knelt on still, bowed in adoration and supplication, long after the rest had risen to leave the church. She had been to Communion that morning, and the prayer which had been a custom with her ever since she went to the convent came now from her very heart, the petition to Jesus, whom she had that day received really and sacramentally, that He would stay in the midst of her still, and not grow to love the world.

"Let me not grow to love pleasure more than Thee; never let me offend Thee by any mortal sin!" was the girl's simple prayer as she rose at last from her knees and joined her father, who was standing outside in the little grassy churchyard with Father Walmsley.

"Good-by, my child," said the latter to her very kindly, as he shook hands with her. "Enjoy yourself, and come back not looking too pale and worn out."

"Good-by, Father Walmsley," she answered brightly. "I'll try and get to the world and fashion—I will really. And with a merry laugh she turned, and her father, and they walked away together.

"Papa, what do you think I dreamt last night?" she said, as they neared home again. "Rather a strange thing to dream just now, papa. I thought it was the days of persecution again; but somehow it was still you and I who were living here, and we had a priest hidden in the house, a Jesuit, who somehow was a mixture of Rupert and Father Gerard. We were just going to have Mass secretly in the chapel, when the pursuivants came to search the house, and I went down to try and keep them quiet while the priest hid himself. But they insisted on coming in and seemed to be going straight to the chapel, and I remember thinking that after all the poor priest would be a glorious martyr and that we should have to suffer for harboring him; but I didn't feel a bit afraid, but glad, somehow. Just as we got near the chapel I woke, papa; and you can't think what a queer shock it was—almost comical—to remember that instead of a holy persecuted Catholic of the days of Queen Elizabeth, I was only a very ordinary nineteenth-century one, just on the eve of going to London for the season. I declare I was quite disappointed for the minute, papa. I was really, and felt quite envious of those ancient Miss Mannings, with the large ruffs and solemn faces, who are hanging up and down the house. How they must despise their degenerate representative, papa!" And Gertrude laughed merrily.

"Not so degenerate either, Gerty, so long as you keep up the martyr's spirit, ready to show itself if occasion should offer. And we never can tell how soon we may be called on to suffer, Gerty, if not in

a bodily way, in another quite as painful one; for though our country is kinder to us now, though England allows us to flourish again in her midst unmolested, still bigotry is alive, and what is worse, utter irreligion is gaining rapid ground, and we Catholics have a battle to fight yet, if a different one to the old one."

"Yes, indeed, papa, I know; but I don't think I shall ever be called on to do anything much in it. I am not half good enough; I wish I were, if only half as good and holy as Rupert even. I'm not a bit of a heroine, papa; it would be terribly hard to me if I had to die and leave you and the bright world—so hard that I dare not think of it, papa."

"Who talks of you dying, sunbeam? You're getting melancholy now when the leaving home is coming so near. You will be all right, my darling, when we get to London and you have fallen in love, as every one does, with Lady Hunter. And they were soon laughing and chatting merrily together in the old Grange drawing-room, prolonging the evening later than usual because it was to be their last quiet one for a whole month or more."

CHAPTER V.

Mr. and Mrs. Manning had been in London two days, and already Gertrude felt quite at home with Sir Robert and Lady Hunter—more so than she thought she ever should be with all the novelties that surrounded her, or with the modern, luxurious, fashionably conducted house itself, so different from her own quiet old home with its antique furniture and the solemn memories of the past clinging to its very walls. She was to be presented by Lady Hunter at the next Drawing-room, which was to be held on the third day after her arrival in London; for, as her ladyship told her laughing, she might as well get the ordeal over at once, as, until she had done so, she could not be considered to have any proper standing in the fashionable world. It had been arranged on the evening of their arrival that Mr. Manning was to stay in London until the day after Gertrude's presentation, and to witness her debut at the ball which Lady Hunter was to give the same evening.

"You must see Gertrude in her court dress, Mr. Manning; I insist upon it," her ladyship had said to him the day of their arrival, when he had tried to bargain to escape from London after a stay of only two nights. "I have set my heart, too, on your being here for my ball that evening; the child will feel more at home among so many strangers if you are present." And when Gertrude joined her persuasions to her cousin's, Mr. Manning laughingly consented to remain a third night, telling Lady Hunter, however, that she would find him but a poor old addition to her ball.

"Now, as a reward, Mr. Manning," she had replied, "I will not ask either of you to go to a single place for these two first days; you shall have them free to go where you like, and to show Gerty all the London sights, and the evenings to rest together; because, after you are gone, I shall want her always with me for nights of a different kind, you know. Her ladyship had been charmed by Gertrude at once, as she told Mr. Manning on the very first opportunity, when they chanced to be alone together for a few minutes: "She is a little treasure, Mr. Manning. I never saw a sweeter face or such a lovely pair of brown eyes. And I shall really begin to have a better opinion of a convent education, now that I see what unaffected, winning manners a girl may learn there. I am only afraid, Mr. Manning, that when the world sees her some one will want to steal her from you very soon." Then seeing the painful look which came over her listener's face, she added kindly:

"Nay, I do not want to frighten you, Mr. Manning; I did not ask her here with any intention like that, so do not be afraid. I shall take care of her as if she were my own, Mr. Manning; I should do so for her own sake now that I have seen her again, even if I did not mean to do it for yours and poor Gertrude's."

And, for her part, Gerty had fallen in love, as her father had predicted, with Lady Hunter. The latter was a woman of thirty-eight or forty, but appeared fully five years younger than that age, from her elegant, youthful figure and sprightly manners.

"I know I shall love her, papa," Gertrude had contrived to whisper to her father. "I knew I should at once, from the very way she kissed me. What a pity such a sweet woman should be so very worldly, papa!"

With Sir Robert, too, Gertrude soon felt quite at home. He was an elderly man, twenty years older than his wife, a little quiet and reserved at first, but so courteous and really kind that Gertrude was not long in getting over the shyness with which the first sight of his eminently high-bred face and bearing had inspired her. He was very attentive to the young girl, behaved towards her with that kind of old-world gallantry and politeness which is so rarely seen nowadays, and which somehow made Gertrude think of Louis Quatorze and the old regime, and of how well Sir Robert would look in a flowing periwig, with a laced coat and high-heeled shoes.

Lady Hunter kept her promise. For the first two days Mr. Manning and Gertrude had a carriage to take them where they pleased, away from Park Lane and the Park itself with its fashionable throng, out to Westminster, where Gertrude revelled in the glorious old Abbey with mixed feelings of delight and sorrow—sorrow which came naturally to the descendant of an old persecuted house like her own; then on later into the City and to the Tower, where Gertrude felt even more emotion than in the old Abbey at Westminster. She spoke hardly a word as they wandered through the old fortress, in and out of its dreary chambers, full of thoughts of poor sainted Henry VI. and the innocent little murdered prince, of hapless Lady Jane Grey, beautiful, penitent Anne Boleyn, and a host of others; but perhaps much more than all of their own blessed guest of the past, the great confessor, Father Gerard, and his wonderful, almost miraculous, escape from one of these very windows.

TO BE CONTINUED

ALL ON A MORNING

By Helen Moriarty in Rosary Magazine

Once, at least, every May, Jimmie Bryan took occasion to walk around by Hazard Place, glancing with inward wishfulness at the tiny park as he passed, and if he had time, dropping into St. Brendan's Church for a short prayer. The little street, and the scrap of a park, and the old church, all had memories, bitter-sweet and poignant, which nevertheless he liked to awaken by a sight of the familiar places. It was on the corner of Hazard Place he had first met Mary. An unusually jocund breeze for May, had whipped her morsel of a hat off and sent it sailing across the street. Jimmie was the valiant knight to the rescue and the headgear was restored and accepted with a laughing exchange of courtesies. That began it. They had known each other by sight and had some mutual friends, so it was not long until, one way and another, the two were seeing each other frequently. Some times they walked to work together in the morning, and occasionally at noon, after a hasty lunch, they sought the dusty little down town park of Hazard Place for a breath of non-existent fresh air. Mary worked not far from there in a broker's office, and Jimmie's place of employment was not far away either. Always, before returning to work, Mary had to make a little visit at St. Brendan's Church, and of course Jimmie went along. Not because he was devout. Quite the contrary, as he often told the girl in a comical way that was peculiarly his own.

"Well, you'll never learn any younger, Mary would inform him with smiling firmness. "Come along and say your prayers like a good boy."

They were then at the stage when it is interesting to be ordered about by her, so Jimmie went along. His prayers, if very brief, but something within him that he thought long dead stirred a little at the sight of Mary's devotion. She forgot him completely for the brief moment of their stay, he could see that, but once outside she was the same, gay, endearing, mirthful, congenial too and understanding. She was the best chum he ever had. At last they were engaged. Followed a happy, happy time, and then with catastrophic suddenness they were not engaged, no longer even friends. In fact, Jimmie had never seen the girl since the fatal day when they parted.

That was nearly two years ago, and he was going over again the tragically short scene. They were talking about their marriage. Mary remarked with a smile. "We'll be well advertised, with the banns published in two churches, won't we?"

Jimmie remembered how uneasy he felt. "Two churches?" he said, playing for time, now that a critical moment had come. "Yes, of course. Yours and mine. Didn't you know?"

He tried to respond airily. "I haven't any church, my dear. I wandered. . . Didn't I?" as she turned on him a surprised, doubting look.

"This is no time to joke, Jimmie," she reproved, but she smiled too. It must be one of his jokes of course. He could see what she was thinking. It was a positive pain to deceive her. He knew he should have done it long ago. True, as he reminded her, he had more times than one enlarged upon himself as hard-boiled, a heathen, one of those "so-called Catholics you read about," and so on. Mary had scolded him mildly, secure in the belief that he, always chained to the lighter mood, was still jesting. And now as well as being painful, the thought of deceiving was strangely alarming. He had often wondered how she'd take it. He would soon know.

His mouth went dry and his lips strained to the smile. "I'm not joking, Mary. No one ever seems to take me seriously. I'm not a good Catholic."

In fact, I'm not much of anything," He felt horrible, as he saw the girl's face, pale, disturbed, a little frightened too. "I—I always told you," he added miserably, as she still failed to speak.

They were seated on the big davenport, and she rose at this and

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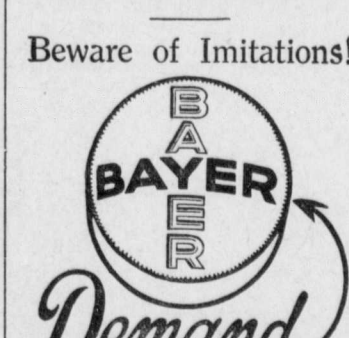
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