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A TALE OF SACRIFICE

BY FRANCE' NOBLE CHAPTER III.

And now the long years were over, and Mr. Mannering had got his darling safe back again; he would never need to feel lonely any more, with the bright, loving sunbeam that had come to shine again in the old ancestral home. People had wondered sometimes why he had never married again, why he had not taken another wife to cheer his solitude; but into his own heart the thought or wish to do so had never once entered, not even for his children's sake, or as a method by which he could have kept Gertrude always at home. Such love as he would wish to give to a wife could ver dwell in his heart again; had been given once, and was buried with his dead Gertrude; and with out love he could never put another in her place; he could never ask any one to come and be mistress of home and a second mother to his children unless he could give her his love in return, and that he could

So little Gertrude was spared a stepmother, and came back to reign sole mistress of her father's house as well as of his heart. How delicious were her awakenings now every morning, when she remembered where she was, and rising early, as was her wont, dressed quickly, so as to be down-stairs in the cosy old breakfast-room before her father, ready to welcome him with her warm kisses, warmer to him than the bright fire she always stirred up

bright life she always stirred up so vigorously for his benefit!

Mr. Mannering seemed hardly able to realize it sometimes that he had got his little girl back for good, would tell her often, stroking her bright hair as she stood by him. like a dream, Gerty, still,

but it has made me feel younger again already."

And then, however cold it was, they set out together every morning to Mass at the village church, for they could only have it in their own little charel when there was an little chapel when there was an extra priest at hand to come and say it for them. The honest, simple country folk themselves felt a personal interest in Miss Mannering's return, for her father's sake as well the church every morning, or as she passed among them riding or driving with Mr. Mannering, as they remembered her doing as a child. And she began to go amongst them at once, not in any systematically benevolent way, but uneffectedly and impulsively, giving to them often out of the well-filled purse her father always provided—so impulsively, indeed, as often to bring upon herself a gentle remonstrance and prohibition from the good priest ime. warm weather, as her father had proposed they should do, thinking she would like a change after these rise quiet six months.

"Let us stay at home now, papa," she said, "and go away to the sea in September. You see, it is so long since I was at home on these nice long evenings, with the holidays always being in August, papa, that it seems quite delicious to sit out here in the park till bedator the park in the park till bedator the park in the park till bedator the park in the p upon herself a gentle remonstrance and prohibition from the good priest and prohibition from the good priest of the mission, Father Walmsley. The latter was a secular priest, but the custom of his loving parishioners and his own holiness of life had long given to him the title of "Father" so typical of his charge the work work with the park the ball time, mooning away under the trees or teasing you, papa. So you will let us stay, won't you? You won't mind, papa?"

"Mind, my darling! I would rather be always at home; but I would rather be always at home; but I

long given to him the title of "Father," so typical of his character. He was a man of no mean learning and eloquence, but he joined to these gifts such a simplicas Gertrude Mannering of the said to her father; one of those countenances whose beauty is all of heaven, and all of earth, which Probe stolen from him when once her be stolen from him when hi ances whose beauty is an of heaven, hardly at all of earth, which Protestants so often cannot understand or admire, shrinking from them even as "cadaverous" and "ungenial," the thought of how soon sile ingit be stolen from him when once her beight, sweet face looked out into the great world. "I have never been since the year before you were seeing not that in them is mirrored forth God's own holiness, or that they are, as it were, blessed portraits, if but weak human ones, of Jesus' sweet love and mercy, shown to a cold, unbelieving world. Father Walmsley had been many years at Whitewell, and, next to her father and brother, was Gertrude's best friend on earth, known and reveranced long even before her dear nuns at N— convent. He generally dined once a week at the Grange, as it were, blessed portraits, if but weak human ones, of Jesus's weet love and mercy, shown to a cold, unbelieving world. Father though as yet she seems to care for nothing better."

'Mothing better! I should think not, papa!' And Gerty threw her arms round his neck as the tears came to her eyes. "I didn't come home to go to London—I came home to go to London—I came home ally dined once a week at the Grange, as it were, blessed portraits, if but weak human ones, of I went up together for two months. But you must go in due time, for it won't do to make my little girl into an old hermit like her father, though as yet she seems to care for nothing better."

"Nothing better." I should think not, papa!' And Gerty threw her and brother, was Gertrude's best friend on earth, known and reverenced long even before her dear nuns at N— convent. He generally dined once a week at the Grange, all alone here again. Am I obliged to go, papa? Couldn't we wait till next year?" she asked, in the tender unwillingness to leave her tender unwillingness to leave her tender unwillingness to leave her father, and that half-frightened shrinking which comes on the eve of any great and much-coveted pleasar treunions, as they felt a two wait till next year?" she asked, in the tender unwillingness to leave her tender unwillingness to leave her tender unwillingness to leave a waste of valuable time; there had shrinking which comes on the eve of any great and much-coveted pleasar ure which looks less alluring when the fight of the volume of the folks dreaded this to be all alone here again. Am I obliged to go, now an extra evening or two to honor Gertrude on her return home, to listen to all her convent adventors. tures and the plans she was laying down for her future life.

was all very well at the convent to have rules and regulations, but I've come home to run wild and do just as I like, haven't I, papa?" And she played with her father's white

hair.
"You have come home to be his sunbeam, I hope, Gerty, my child; to brighten his lonely life and reward him for parting with you for so

innocent existence, dull, perhaps, according to worldly ideas, but not dull to the loving father and daughduli to the loving father and daugh-ter, who asked no pleasure beyond each other's society, and that of doing good and living as became the representatives of the noble con-fessors of their ancient house. Would it be always so? would nothing change the simple desires which now filled Gertrude's girlish heart? would her present life heart? would her present life always seem to her the best and happiest this world could give? would she forever be content to live secluded from the world with her father in the quiet old Grange? These questions occurred more than once to the young Jesuit aspirant, Rupert Mannering, when he came before Lent to spend a week with

before Lent to spend a week with his father and sister, who welcomed him with idolizing delight.

"I hope you've not grown too holy, you know, Rupert," Gerty said to him, "or else I shall be frightened at you, as I used to tell the girls at school." A bright smile lighted up the

youth's sweet, heavenly face. " If I'm ever holy enough, Gerty, If I m ever noisy enough, Gerty, I promise you you shall begin to be frightened at me," he said. "Who knows but that the case may be reversed, and I may have to be afraid of you as a very saintly mun, or some other wonderful character, who will make my process." who will make my poor efforts seem very small indeed?"

Gerty shook her head. " Not the least fear of such a thing. You're as bad as Reverend Mother at the convent, imagining I might perhaps be going to do all sorts of grand things in the world. You see, Rupert, I was never hidden so long in the priests' hole as you were, so the blessings in it have not stuck to me like they have to you."

But, unknown to his dear sister. Rupert prayed for her, so earnestly, more especially in his daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament whilst he was at home with them-prayed that when Gertrude should go out into the world she might prove strong and steadfast; that the day might never come when she would despise the sweet, innocent life which she so loved now.

CHAPTER IV.

Winter and spring had passed, and the park round Whitewell Grange looked very green and beausonal interest in Miss Mannering's return, for her father's sake as well as because they liked to see her bright face smiling on them outside the church every morning, or as she nessed among them right against the church are selected very green and beautiful in its early summer garb, so beautiful, indeed, that Gertrude did not care to leave it to go away to the seaside during the coming warm weather, as her father had

thought you would like a change. Next year, Gerty, I want to take you to London, you know. This year it is getting rather late, and we ity and earnest humility as caused him to be revered as a saint by all hearts. His very face was a sermon, seen, Gerty." And her father hearts. His very face was a sermon, een, Gerty." And her father as Gertrude Mannering often said looked at her with a wistful fondseeing not that in them is mirrored | born, Gerty, when your mother and

nuns at N— convent. He generally dined once a week at the Grange, or rather came to dinner, for, as Gertrude always laughingly told sher father when he had gone, she could never see that he ate any could never see that he or rather came to dinner, for, as Gertrude always laughingly told her father when he had gone, she could never see that he ate anything. He was persuaded to come the second of the seco

they thought; when, not two days make my retreat while I am there. By that time you will have been away three weeks, and I shall only letter came for Mr. Mannering from letter came for Mr. Mannering fr And so it had been settled, as of life, please, Father Walmsley," most unexpectedly changed. A she said laughingly, "unless you want to kill me straight away. It a cousin of his wife's, a Lady a cousin of his wife's, a Lady Hunter, of whom he had seen but little lately, but who had been very fond of Mrs. Mannering, and who had once or twice visited at the Grange during her lifetime. Lady Hunter was a Protestant, and a sunbeam, I hope, Gerty, my child; to brighten his lonely life and reward him for parting with you for so long; and sunbeams are not expected to be under very strict control, you know." And the priest's saintly countenance relaxed into his own sweet smile.

And a sunbeam Gerty was in the old house, singing up and down, early and late, often snatches of some of the sweet convent hymns, or now again some merry, bird-like song, brightening up her father's quiet life, until he not only felt younger, but even looked it, as the villagers remarked every time he passed among them, and as Gertrude joyfully wrote to her dear convent friends in the letters she sent to them so often. It was a sweet, thorough woman of the world, but very kind-hearted and generous,

she wrote, "but our plans were so unsettled. Sir Robert was not well unsettled. Sir Robert was not well, and we thought we could not stay in London, but should have to go abroad again this year at once; however, he has improved so much since we came—indeed, I may say he is quite well—so that we shall stay, as usual, until the beginning of August. So that if Gertrude could come to us in a fortnight from now, she would have a good month to enjoy herself and see life a little. I can hardly expect you will care to stay in town so long, as edge of the envelope that she might keep it for future use, and withdrew the scented letter within. Father Whitcomb, a hopeless invald, looked up with the eagerness of a child from his wheel chair. "From George Mother?" he asked in a voice toned down and softened by illness; she nodded and, going neaver the window, read will care to stay in town so long, as I know how painful it is for you to come since poor dear Gertrude's death; but you will bring the child, nearer the window, read.
"We will be with you, sure," was of course, and see her safely launched, as we may say. Now, I will take no refusal; you must not deny me the pleasure of bringing

deny me the pleasure of bringing out poor Gertrude's daughter, as I have none of my own, and I will take as much care of her as you would yourself. Besides, she is eighteen now, and ought to see the world a little; for, as heiress of Whitewell Grange, she holds some position of her own, and it is wrong to keep her still as secluded as if to keep her still as secluded as if she were in the convent. I shall hardly know her, I dare say, after these four years (for it is just that time since I stayed a night at the Grange, you know,) but I shall welcome her most heartily all the same, tell her. This is quite a long letter for me; so if it does not bring

"I should have asked her before,"

Gerty as a remain a scolding from "Your affectionate cousin, "Julia Hunter."

"P.S. How is poor Rupert? I never shall understand what be-witched the boy to choose his present life, though he did look so indignant at me for saying so when he called on me for those few minutes last year on his way

Mr. Mannering put down the letter for a moment, and looked across at Gertrude, who met his

across at Gertrude, who met his gaze with a merry smile.

"What a long letter, papa! And how solemn you look over it!"

"Read it, Gerty, and see what grand things are in store for my little country girl." Then he gave her the letter, watching her face eagarly as she read eagerly as she read.

He had already made up his mind that she must accept the invitation; that he must not let her see for a moment that there was a possibility of refusing it, though there was a strange chill in his heart just then at the thought of the change in their happy plan of the long, quiet summer in the old home together, at the idea that she was not to be entirely his own any longer, that the world was beginning to claim her sooner than he had looked for. "She must not see for an instant that it gives me any pain," he said to himself, with the almost woman-ly unselfishness of his character, " or she will not hear of going; and it is only right she should go, and not refuse such an opportunity. She if of the age now to be introduced, and who can tell what may happen to me before next year? And it is only for a month, and she will enjoy it so."

Another minute, and Gertrude looked up from the letter.

"O papa!" she said, with a mixture of pleasure and dismay which made him smile.

me in London, you'll come back to be all alone here again. Am I obliged to go, papa? Couldn't we say that—that it would be better to

don't care to go, Gerty. I shall take you, you know, and stay a few days. And then another good plan has struck me. When I leave you I will go to the college and pay Rupert my long-promised visit, and

Gertrude's face brightened, and she came and stood by her father, putting her arm round his neck.

"And we shall go away to the sea together then, shall we not, papa, to be quiet and blow away all the London smoke from me?"

"Of course, Gerty. Why, you'll want the sea-air more than ever after such a round of gayeties; and I shall want to carry you off some-where where I can have you all to myself after having parted with you for so long. I have got spoiled, you see, during these six months. Our selfish plan of staying at home together all summer was all very well while no one else wanted us, but now it would be downright unkind to refuse Lady Hunter's invitation, for she has evidently set her heart on having you, Gerty, You must remember her quite very live to the control of the con You must remember her quite well; it is only four years since she stayed the night here during your holidays on her way home from London."

TO BE CONTINUED

BENNY THE BLUFFER

The sharp featured servant gir came back from the letter box by the gate with a monthly paper and one letter. Mother Whitcomb, wiping the flour from her hands, readjusted her glasses, carefully trimmed the short edge of the envelope that she might

We will be with you, sure," was the part of the short missive that sent a happy thrill through the parents; with a pathetic, joyful rubbing together of his hands, the old invalid expressed his satisfaction at the prospect. Even the sour servant girl grinned her apprecia-tion of the fact that this word from George, the eldest of the scattered family, they were certain to have back in the New England nest the birds that had long since flown from it. Even the youngest, Ben, the scape-grace of the family, who had disgreed them by many and the scape of the scape of the family who had disgraced them by marrying a foreign singer," was coming home

"There—that makes the whole family," happily signed the patient old mother as she returned to her baking and ordering about of the Gerty as a reward, you must expect

slack girl.
"Herbert and his wife—they said they'd come?" he asked for about the tenth time, with the insistence

of a child; she nodded patiently.
"Mildred—of course. They said
they hoped Bobby will be able to
come, too," this with the doubtful tone always used in discussing the grandson, who plainly showed that he thought himself above the humble New England home of his

'What's the matter with that young whipper-snapper, that he doesn't care to come to see his

doesn't care to come to see his grandparents, hey?" irritably.
"'Cause we don't mean much to fashionable folks—he may not be trained any better," with the old, what resignations to set the set of the second secon quiet resignation at anything affecting her offspring, meantime putting the baking things to rights and watching the oven solicitously. Whose fault's that?" looking out

over the gloomy expanse of snow, with the windswept heaps and sweeps. Not receiving any answer, he tried another tack. "Copeland—said he'd come, didn't he?" She nodded with a tolerant smile. Yes-with the twins, of course.

Pity there ain't more twins in the family; then we might make a respectable show as a family.'

"City women's too busy to have families!" he cried harshly. "Of course, Chester and his one hope will come," He sighed regretfully. "The old New England stock's running out fast," he complained tapping his chair arm pettishly. She sniffed.

"Maybe just as well—'specially if it's going to be mixed with foreigner blood—like Benjamin has done." They both sighed and, busy with the gloomy thoughts of the youngest, who had married the singer, they let the subject of the reunion drop for the time being.

It was a reunion looked forward to with more interest than usual this The chances for the survival for another of Father Whitcomb "Well, Gerty, isn't Lady Hunter very kind, and isn't it a grand prospect? I shall not know my little girl when she comes back."

for another of Father Whitcomb were slim; in past years one or more of the scattered children had failed them. But, aroused now by the secret instruction of their mother (warn-"But, papa, our plan is all upset: ing of the danger to their father) all we shall not have the nice long summer together. When you leave termined to let business and society

Somehow, the folks dreaded this return, for besides the "disgrace" put upon them by the harum-scarum Benjamin, they just knew they could not endure the different race and perhaps different religion) of his wife, to say nothing of the effect on their aristocratic cousins. The fact that Benjy had been a bad son was lost sight of in the certainty that he married a worse woman, no doubt; yet his letters seemed happy and contented, full of praise first for himself,) then for the wonderful woman he had wed. the wonderful woman he had wed. Curiosity was almost consuming the family as to how he had ever succeeded. Of course, the religious question ought to cut no figure whatever, as none of the children, once away from the home roof, ever pretended practicing any—and more certain was it that no two thought the same way religiously. "Benjy always was a trial," finally sighed the sick man, following out with words his recent brooding; "he even lied to me once," he muttered, sorrowfully. She looked

muttered, sorrowfully. She looked

at him reproachfully.

"Forget it, Father!"

"Yes, he did, Mother. The time he brought that sled from the village and pretended he made it himself!" The sled episode, it might be told in passing, was twenty years old, yet ever fresh in the mind of the aggrieved parent.

"I know that was wrong—"

"I know that was wrong—"
"He always had a knack of claiming credit for everything and trying to make folks think him better than he was; like when he wrote he was

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