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GERTRUDE MANNERING

A TALE OF SACRIFICE

BY FRANCES NOBLE

CHAPTER XXII

Two days later, while yet her wound was all fresh and sore in her heart, Gertrude received the promised letter from Lady Hunter. It was waiting for her when she and her father got in from Mass, and she ran up-stairs to read it first alone.

"My darling Gertrude," wrote her cousin. "I dare say this will cross on the way with your letter to me, but I cannot wait for its arrival to write to you, though it would only be useless to tell you in words how we are feeling it all, I and Sir Robert, to whom I have told everything, dear, as you wished. He says it has made me visibly older-looking already, to have had such a thing happening to one who was in my care, especially one so dear as you are."

"Last evening (I am going to tell you all exactly, for I feel you would rather know it, though it may seem cruel at first) Stanley Graham came in early, as he had said he would, an hour after I got back from the station. He came up-stairs to me at once, as I was sitting alone and had had for him to do so when he came in. I do not know what he thought or expected, but he asked immediately where you were—if you were better; not feeling sure, I suppose, how much I knew. Then I told him briefly that you were gone away—gone home again; and that as things were, I should hardly have detained you, even if I could have done so, which would have been impossible; but that you had left a note for him, which I then gave him. He took it and put it in his pocket, with a look, Gertrude, which shall never be forgotten—such a look of bitter suffering. 'Lady Hunter,' he said to me, 'she does not love me! It was a mistake.' And his tone was so stern that I am afraid, Gertrude, I grew angry as well as sad; and I said to him, 'You are a tyrant, Stanley, to wish to make her, for your sake, trample under foot feelings and convictions which you and I cannot understand and are not worthy to share. Not love you! How can you love her, to make her suffer so?' But I was sorry the minute I had spoken; for if ever I saw a man look the personification of grief and perplexity he did, Gertrude, as he turned and left me without answering a word. He gave me no opportunity of speaking to him all the evening, but studiously and politely avoided me. No one named you to him, love; for when you were once gone I told them all that the engagement was broken off, for reasons I could not mention; for I knew, dear, you would wish to spare him any additional pain to what he must have been suffering during all last evening, when he could not understand and resent himself without appearing remarkable. Well, this morning, after breakfast, he asked to speak to me; and he told me he had resolved to bid us farewell at once, and return to Briarvale for a week or two, preparatory to going abroad for another year. I was not surprised, Gertrude; and I attempted no useless discussion, but apologized to him for my harsh words of the day before. Then he said to me: 'Lady Hunter, I have nothing to forgive; and if I had, could I cherish resentment for a few hasty words spoken in sorrow, as they were? But you were right: perhaps I am a tyrant, fittest to be alone and unloved; perhaps I ought never to have cherished a dream of love and domestic happiness. When you write to your cousin, Lady Hunter, will you thank her from me for her kindly letter? Tell her I cannot write to her myself after what she said of the cruelty of any needless intercourse; and that anything in her that may have pained me during that last interview I ascribe, not to her, but to those who have taught her. Tell her I ask her forgiveness for my sternness, which would not let me hide that where I love, as I love her, I must have all or nothing; that I could not share her heart, especially with a religion I hate. I should only have made her miserable, perhaps, with my unspoken jealousy, even if I had consented to everything she asked. Tell her, too, Lady Hunter, and say farewell to her for me.'

"Then he left me abruptly to prepare for his departure, and I did not see him again for two or three hours, when he came to bid good-by to Sir Robert and myself. He told us not to expect to hear very often from him from abroad; it will be better, he says, for him not to have much intercourse with even such intimate friends as ourselves, for a time. But, Gertrude, he shook hands with me, very, very earnestly, his manner was so softened as a tear glistened in his eyes—a thing I have never seen before in him; and now that he is gone, I cannot but hope from it, love, though I scarcely know for what."

"I will not trouble you by writing any more today, love, except to repeat our closest sympathy, Gertrude, and every kindest message to your father—especially one of thanks for his forgiveness for our share in it all. Write soon, darling, to say how you are. I need not tell you that our party here has had quite a gloom cast over it; for I cannot conceal that I am

anxious and out of spirits, and they all (though they do not know the truth) feel that something sad has happened. I can only go on hoping—I must, or it would seem too cruel.

"Ever your most loving cousin,  
"JULIA HUNTER."

It brought the tears again, that letter—the kind, relieving tears—up from the very depths of her sore heart; and burying her face in her hands, she wept freely—weeping out the yearning which must linger still, though the temptation to yield to it was past and conquered.

He came home to England, this time hoping to remain and be so happy and I have sent him away—back again to the old weary, unloved life. O my God! help me to bear it. Then, as soon as she could, she rose and dried her eyes, and went down-stairs again.

"See, papa," she said, as she gave him her cousin's letter, "it is from Lady Hunter. Will you read it? I—don't think I can read it—so well for you, papa." And her voice faltered.

He read it, with a look of pain on his face as he did so, and then gave it back to Gertrude, and drew her to him.

"Was it wise, my darling, as she says? To tell you all this, as she says?"

"Oh, yes, papa, indeed! If she had not, I might have fancied—worse, papa; I might have thought of it—more constantly still. But now that I know for certain—that—that he is going so far away—She paused, and then added, "Oh, yes, papa! it is better to know all exactly; and now—it is all over."

That day happened to be Father Walsley's day for dining at the Grange, and he came from a willingness than ever, he told Gertrude with a smile, to welcome her home. To him too she showed her cousin's letter; for she wished to tell him all, owing it to him, she told herself, for her past reserve, which he had so kindly forgiven. Then, as he returned it to her, she bent over the fire and laid it on the flames, as he watched her quietly.

"I know that is what you would tell me to do," she said, with that sad smile so painful to see on the girl's face, "so I am doing it of myself at once. If I kept it, Father Walsley, I feel—I should not be able to keep from—often reading it, and thinking over every word, I know I should not. So now I—can't." But the quiet tone faltered at last, even while she tried to smile bravely again as her father re-entered the room.

And so the old life went on again—the old quiet life, outwardly unchanged; Stanley Graham's name never being mentioned between Gertrude and her father—the name which was graven upon her heart, and which was so often and so painfully in his mind too, as he watched his darling's quiet, altered movements, and the sad, patient look deepening every day on the sweet, pale face.

It seemed to that tender father that he had never loved his precious child fully until now, when, bowed down with sorrow, and yet victorious over it, she had come back to his arms—back to the old routine of duties which she strove never to shrink from or grow weary of, but to perform cheerfully when she could, and willingly always. It was very beautiful and touching to see now the loving, anxious care her father bestowed upon her; so constant that she herself asked him one day, with a tender look and tone, but still trying to show some of the old playfulness for his sake, if he were afraid the wind would blow her away, unless he took such care of her.

And the honest country people, who all loved Gertrude so much, had not failed to notice how very long "Miss Mannering" always knelt in church now after Mass and Benediction; how she stayed bowed down, as though quite forgetful of quite secret tears, not of complaining, but of patient, irresistible yearning. But never could it be said that Gertrude looked unhappy, even by those who thought her looking saddest and most changed; for the sweet peace ever in her heart in its sorest desolation was shadowed forth always on her girl's face.

Gertrude had been at home about three weeks when Rupert came to pay his promised visit, which was but a short one of the three or four days, because he could not leave the college for longer just then. He was in the seminary still, pursuing his studies, and had thought he would not be able to go home yet for another month or two; but a letter from Mr. Manning to his superiors, asking that he might come at once, if only for

a day or two, for his sister's sake, had procured the desired leave, and he was at home now at Whitewell for three short, precious days.

TO BE CONTINUED

ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

By Helen Morality in Rosary Magazine

Mrs. Haley wanted a car. Their new house was so far out that really she did not see how they were going to get along without one. Of course, George had his roadster for business, but what good was that to any one else? Why, nowadays, a car was getting to be a necessity instead of the luxury it was considered a few years back.

"Well, if you think a car isn't a luxury," pronounced George Haley when this sentiment was tried out on him, "you ought to see what it costs to keep my little boat running; No sir! No car for the Halays! Not the way things look now!" Mrs. Haley had heard pronouncements before. Therefore she remained unimpressed and observed casually. "I thought you said business was good."

"Business is good enough, but, as I've often observed before, you can stretch an income so far and no farther. Get that, Louise!"

"Other people—the immemorial argument—no more prosperous than we are, have cars. I don't see—"

"Neither do I," grumpily, "see how they manage it. Mortgages, and debts, and never paying what they owe, maybe. Oh, I know their tricks and their manners," grinning a little.

Mrs. Haley looked faintly shocked. "George! You don't suppose the Grays mortgaged their house to get that lovely car—"

Mr. Haley registered impatience. "For heaven's sake! I was speaking generally, Louise. How do I know what the Grays did?"

"Well, but you said—"

And, of course, Will Gray is only on a salary, while you have your own business. . . . and it is a lovely car," sighing.

With an exasperated air, but half amused too, as is a husband's way, George Haley threw down a paper he had been trying to read. "Yes, and there's where he's got it on me," he explained tersely. "When he gets his salary it's his to spend—and believe me, the Grays spend, while what I make has to run the business and keep my family. And we've got this big house on our hands, remember that!"

"Oh, yes," absentmindedly. Of course the business had to be run, but then a house wasn't everything. She returned to the attack. "I was only thinking that we'd save money that way. With five children using the street cars every day, and when I go down town, why, it amounts up—"

"Five! The boys don't ride to school every day, do they?"

"Of course no, but they have to have tickets in case it should rain or anything."

"Rain!" disgustedly. "Let 'em walk in the rain—do 'em good! Now look here, Louise, I've told you not to mollycoddle those boys. If they can't walk a couple of miles to school. . . . Why, when I was a boy—"

"Oh, don't, George," and his wife began to laugh. "That's what I'm always saying to the girls. 'When I was a girl, I wouldn't think of using paint!' I'm afraid it sounds awfully old foggy to them and doesn't make the slightest impression. And the boys—I've seen them grin and look at each other when you tell them about working your way through college. I wonder—"

"They're coddled too much that's why!" roared the father. "Riding to school—street car tickets! Huh! And the girls better walk too after this. They won't need any paint if they do."

"Oh, they've stopped using rouge—it seems it's gone out," innocently. "I couldn't make them do it. Mothers nowadays."

"I don't believe Marion feels that way," her husband rejoined defensively. "Oh, Marion's different." A tender light crept into Mrs. Haley's eyes. "She's so sweet and sensible—everybody says so. Oh, I do want her to be happy, and have a good time!"

"Well, if she isn't happy and having a good time I miss my guess," was the reply. He, too, had secret hopes for his oldest child, who was dearer to him if possible than any of the others. She was so pretty, so bright, so lovable. No one had such endearing ways as Marion. He loved to watch her. She amused, amazed and touched him, all at the same time. He could never get over the wonder of her being his child. The others he took quite as a matter of course, but Marion was the first, the wonder child, whose growth and development furnished such exquisite and never ending joy. Every year there was something different about her, some surprising new quality that caught his interest, an interest often shot through with intangible hints of fear. He never stopped to analyze the fear, though indeed it was simple enough, the protective instinct of maturity passionately desirous of fending off as long as possible those contacts with life which might conceivably dim the vivid charm or enshrine the bright spirit of his beloved child. He was reflecting now on how little the

mother knew of his hopes for Marion, his dreams and prayers for her future, when Louise spoke again, following up her own thoughts.

"Yet, I do want Marion to have a good time, like all the girls she goes with. There's Betty Gray—"

It's kind of hard on Marion. She was saying the other day she wished we had a car of our own, even a small one—"

Her husband threw her a fiery suspicious glance. Was she playing on his love for Marion? "No doubt," sarcastically. "It would be fine if I could afford a car for the use of my children. But I can't, so what's the use of talking."

"Well, of course, if you can't. . . . Then in a different tone. "The girls are all nice to Marion, about calling for her with cars, I mean. And ever since the Grays got their sedan Mrs. Gray's been taking Marion and Kitty to school every morning. I told her I didn't want her to bother, but she said as long as she had to take Betty she might as well take our girls."

George Haley winced. He hated to be patronized by the Grays—he loathed having Marion under an obligation to them. The Grays, living as he knew on the extreme edge of nothing, bestowing favors on his family! He got up and stalked out of the room, furious with himself and the sudden weakness that assailed him to shout angrily, Mrs. Gray—bah! You can have your own car and drive the girls down yourself!" He was glad he checked the foolish impulse by leaving the room. There was no telling when his common sense might fail him. It had failed him before, he recalled uneasily.

The new house, for instance. He had thought their other house plenty good enough for awhile, but Louise—"

Mrs. Haley smiled after him with a little secret smile, George was a wonderful husband, but he required managing as all men did.

Yes, of course she got the car, and not a Ford either. In respect of a car men are entirely different from women. They want a car they can point to with pride.

"And besides," growled George Haley, "I can't afford to put my family in a little car. If I don't get a car to match the house they'll say my business is going down. So you see," grimly, "that's how a man gets in deeper and deeper."

"But George, that's foolish—to cater to appearances like that. We would have been satisfied with a less expensive car for the present—"

"Oh, for the present!" with a glare. "Well get me now! This car is for the present, and the future! As far as I can see now we'll never have another one!"

Mrs. Haley cried enthusiastically. "Oh, it's a lovely car! Marion adores it, and can't she drive it though! Did you ever see anything like that way she learned? She wants to learn too—"

Vigorously Mr. Haley vetoed that. The boys were not to learn to drive the car, not even Don. If he could help it his boys would never become joy riders, killing others as well as themselves.

"Of course, you're right, dear," cheerfully acquiesced his wife. "And Don's only fifteen. Not that he'd think of taking the car without your said so, but he has plenty of time, in a year or so maybe—"

"If Don's driving a car before he's nineteen it won't be his father's fault," declared Mr. Haley firmly.

But in another year Don was driving the car. It happened naturally enough, too. Marion, now in her senior year, had suffered a sprained wrist at tennis and her mother was laid up with a slight attack of sciatica. It was clear some one had to take Marion to school and to the various little parties which her class was giving. Even her father could see that; and he had the balance of his resistance broken down when he saw how easily Don was about it. So Don became the accepted chauffeur, and Marion declared she was glad to be relieved. The big car was so heavy to handle.

"When I graduate you can give me a little 'coop,' Daddy," she told him.

"Yes, I can!" sarcastically. Marion regarded him thoughtfully. "Well, that's all I want."

"All you want?" "What I mean is, I have everything else. Betty's going to get a wrist watch, and Lucile a trip to New York. Margaret wants a diamond ring and Judy a platinum and diamond pin. But I have all those, and I've been to New York; so—" she smiled engagingly at her father, who stared back at her in a curious stupefaction. After a moment he said: "But you have a car, too."

"Oh, I mean a little car, all for myself. Wouldn't it be thrilling though?"

"No doubt," heavily. He felt chilled at her carelessness and the gay assumption that all he had to do was to buy another car. It hurt him strangely, and yet why should it? He argued with himself. He had given her everything, as she said, and it was natural that she should look for still more. That she was selfish he could not admit. It was only youth demanding youth's rights—the best of everything. "I suppose we spoiled her," he ruminated sadly. It had never occurred to him before and it was an unpleasant thought. Anything

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