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## GERTRUDE MANNERING

### A TALE OF SACRIFICE

BY FRANCES NOBLE

#### CHAPTER XII.—CONTINUED

"I shall be very glad indeed to see you, Mr. Graham," she said; and Stanley could not know how the brave little heart was beating and yearning as she spoke the conventional words so quietly.

Another minute, and Lady Hunter came up to them.

"Well, how are you ready? Are you prepared to make your bow to society and tear yourself away?" she asked laughingly. "I think we must go now, if I want you not to go home tomorrow looking so pale and tired as to draw down a scolding letter upon me from your papa."

"I am quite ready, Julia." And Gertrude laughed too, as though there were no terrible pain just then in her heart—as though she were not wondering what life would be like when the next few minutes should be over.

Another gentleman escorted Lady Hunter to the carriage, and Stanley gave his arm to Gertrude, lingering behind with her a minute on the staircase.

"Miss Manning," he said, almost in a whisper, "promise me I shall see you at Nethercotes; promise me to be glad to see me when we meet there."

He was so agitated that Gertrude strove to force back her own perturbation, and to say, gently and soothingly:

"Indeed I shall be there, if I can, Mr. Graham; and I shall be very pleased to see you again."

She saw his firm lips quiver ere he spoke again, as they went on towards the carriage.

"God bless you, Miss Manning, and keep you safe and well!" he whispered, with the faith of his boyhood unconsciously returning to him in the moment of agitation. "I may not tell you yet how I thank you for that promise." And the next minute Gertrude was seated by her cousin's side in the carriage, and her hand was in Stanley's farewell grasp.

"Good-by, Miss Manning."

"Good-by, Mr. Graham." And the carriage rolled away, bearing Gertrude each moment farther from the sight and presence of her earthly idol.

She sat very quiet and silent during the drive home, her heart beating with a wondrous joy, and yet a joy that must be patient and untold through the weary time of waiting which was beginning for her tonight. Lady Hunter saw her abstraction, and kindly closed her eyes, feigning to be tired, so that Gertrude might not feel called upon to talk. When they reached home, Gertrude stayed a few minutes downstairs with her cousin and Sir Robert; and as she said good-night at last, she added, somewhat hesitatingly:

"Julia, you won't mind, will you, if I ask to be called very early in the morning? I should like to go out to—Mass—at Farm Street, if you would not think it strange. I shall only be out about an hour."

Gertrude had often longed to ask this before, to be able to go out sometimes to Mass in the morning; but the fatigue caused by the constant late hours, and the fear of perhaps annoying her cousin or Sir Robert by doing what to them must have seemed a strange, unnecessary proceeding, perhaps calling down even the remarks of their servants, had always prevented her. But on this last night something made her feel that she must hear Mass before her return home—that she must be present at the Holy Sacrifice, and beg for grace and strength in the future, amid whatever trials it might bring forth; for already trouble seemed vaguely looming in the distance, much as she strove to shut her eyes to its vision and listen only to the joyful whisperings of hope in her heart. She felt somehow that before she left London she must kneel in Jesus' Sacramental Presence, and pray for, oh! so many things—for light and grace to be sent to more than one soul which now knew not him or his truth—most especially to one dearer to her than life, dearer to her than all the world beside—dearer, alas! than father, brother, and home.

Lady Hunter smiled at Gertrude's request.

"Of course you shall go if you like, love; but I am only afraid you will tire yourself by getting up so early. They will think you are going to elope, or something of the sort, Gertrude, seeing you go out alone so early."

Gertrude laughed.

"You see it doesn't seem anything to me, Julia: I am so accustomed to it at home. I want to go on the last morning, you know, to pray for my safe journey."

"How good you Catholics are, to be sure!" And her ladyship sighed among her smiles. "I go here and there without ever thinking of praying for safety, taking it all for granted. By the bye, love, I wish we could have persuaded Mrs. Leeson to come to London tonight, and have stayed here. It will be all coming and going for her tomorrow."

"Oh! thank you, Julia; but I don't think any consideration would make Mrs. Leeson sleep a night away from the Grange. She will not mind the journey at all in

the morning, if only because she is coming to fetch me; and she will only have about an hour to wait at the station, you know."

"Well, whatever shall we do without you, Gertrude, when you are gone? We shall miss you so dreadfully, love, shall we not, Robert?"

"So much, Gertrude," said the baronet, with his kind smile, "that it is a good thing we are going away ourselves next week. I wish, but for your father's sake, we were taking you with us back to Nethercotes."

"You are very kind, Sir Robert." And the tears came to Gertrude's eyes, springing from the warm heart, so sensitive to kindness.

"And we are going to lose Stanley Graham again," said Lady Hunter, as she took Gertrude's hand caressingly. "I suppose he told you, love, that he is going abroad for three months?"

Gertrude could not hide the tell-tale blush that rose to her face, but she replied quietly:

"He said he was going abroad, and would only return in time to go to you at Nethercotes for Christmas, Julia."

"Yes, he is going to Nice, to stay with his uncle, his mother's brother, a bachelor, and his only relative that I know of. He is an infirm old man, and it can be no great pleasure to Stanley to visit him; but it was a promise that he would spend this autumn with him, and Stanley would never break a promise, however disagreeable it may be to keep. Besides, the old man is very much attached to him for his mother's sake, and for the same reason Stanley pays him great respect always, for Mrs. Graham was very, very fond of her brother, I believe. But he is an ailing old man now, with only a slender income; and but for the society Stanley makes for himself in Nice, his visits there cannot be very enjoyable. It is two years since he stayed there so long before. Well, I wish these partings were over, and we were all at Nethercotes together." And she gave Gertrude a hearty, lingering kiss, and the latter went up-stairs to try and grow accustomed to the thought of the next three weary months, to the patient waiting for the brightness to come back to her life.

As the door closed on Gertrude, Lady Hunter turned to her husband as she said earnestly:

"Do you know, Robert, I feel relieved that things have got no further yet between Stanley and Gertrude. Not that I expected anything would be settled yet, more especially as he has this tiresome visit to Nice to take him away for so long; and besides, Stanley is not one to ask a girl for her heart before she has had time to be sure she can really and truly give it to him. He is too honorable to draw any girl into a hasty engagement, though I fancy it must have been a struggle to part with her in this unsettled way; but I feel sure where the child's heart is, if he does not. But I should not have liked it all to come about just yet, somehow; for I have the feeling still that all may not be as smooth and easy as it seems to us it should be, Robert."

"You are thinking of her father, Julia, of course, and the religious question. I know; but I think, dear, you exaggerate its importance. If she loves Stanley, as you think, she will yield to him in that as in other things, and Mr. Manning would not destroy her happiness by withholding his consent to the marriage. Besides, Stanley may himself be more pliable than you think in the matter, and there may be no cause for any unpleasantness at all."

Lady Hunter smiled.

"You're always a cheery prophet, my dear old Robert, and I hope from my heart you will be a true one in this case; for, as I said before, I should never be happy again if sorrow ever came to Gertrude through what has, after all, been my doing."

#### CHAPTER XIII.

The journey was over; Gertrude was safe at home again. Once more Stanley Manning had got his darling back with him—his little "Sunbeam," who would gladden his heart and brighten up the old house as had ever been her wont, so he told himself. She looked a little pale, and was thinner than she had been, and thought with a kind of elegant air about her, due perhaps to her fashionable attire, he fancied; but that was all. She was his little girl still, his own Gertrude, all unchanged, as she stepped quickly from the train and rushed into his arms, forgetting everything else for the minute but that she was safe back with him again, her own dear, dear father. How could he know, while she kissed him so sweetly, while she smiled her own old smile up into his face—how could he see yet that she could never be all his own again; that she brought back a secret he must not share; that her heart was gone, whether for joy or for sorrow, into the keeping of a stranger whom he knew not? After those first few moments, the terrible consciousness of the change in herself came over Gertrude with redoubled force; and, as though to hide it as long as possible even from suspicion, she laughed and chatted gaily all the way home, as they drove along the familiar roads and through the friendly village, so gaily and happily, apparently, as quite to deceive and satisfy Mr. Manning, though more than once

she herself scarcely knew what she was saying, because of the painful self-reproach in her heart, and the ever-recurring thought:

"Everything is just the same but myself; nothing else is changed in the least since I left it all only a month since. How careless and free I was then—how little I knew what was coming! And yet, would I go back to the old peaceful life if I could—the time before I knew Stanley Graham? Oh, no, no! Whatever is to come of it, I would bear it rather than wake and find the past month all a dream." And even as she sat there by her father's side, with her hand in his caressingly, trying to laugh and answer him merrily, the vision of that noble face rose up before her, making her yearn wearily for the sound of one voice which was music now in her ears.

"Father Walmesley is coming to see you this evening, Gertrude," said her father, after a minute's pause. "He would not promise to come to dinner, because he knew 'Sunbeam' would want to brighten me up a bit first of all by herself, and would have so much to tell me that even he would feel *de trop* until later on in the evening."

Gertrude had roused herself almost with a start to listen as her father began to speak; but as he paused but a quiet any longer—the pain of the thought of the deception she would have to keep up all through these weary coming months, and of the shock that might come at the end to this dear, dear father when his darling should want to leave him so soon, to give herself—as alas! she hoped to do—to one whom she felt he could so little approve. The tears sprang to her eyes, and she stole her arm round her father's neck with half-sob.

"O papa! why did I ever leave you at all? Why didn't we stay here always together?"

For a moment Mr. Manning was startled with a kind of vague fear, but he drove it away, thinking Gertrude fancied he had been feeling lonely and blamed herself for it. No doubt her emotion was to be attributed to her joy at being again at home, safe with him once more in the old familiar place; and perhaps, too, she was thoroughly tired out now with the past month's gayeties, and a little thing would soon upset her until she was quite strong again.

"Gertrude darling, don't you know I wanted you to go. Why even if I have felt a little lonely sometimes, it is all the more treat to have you now back again, eh, Sunbeam? Besides, we are going to be together now till we get quite tired of each other, you know, with not even Rupert able to come and rouse us up again this side of Christmas."

She could not grieve that kindly, unselfish heart, whose love she never failed to appreciate, even now in her new, absorbing idolatry; so she dashed the tears away, with a strong resolve that for as long as possible she would be outwardly the same, bright and cheerful always, for his sake.

"I'm all right again now, papa. I was only silly a minute, just to show you that I am silly yet, not grown wise and solemn with my experience of the grand world. And she laughed, as a brightly as though no such things as love and sorrow and separation existed on this earth. "Julia was quite afraid you would be dreadfully cross with her, papa, if you thought me looking pale or thin or anything; but you don't think so, do you, papa? At least, I only want a little of my native air to set me to rights again, don't I?"

"That's all, I think, Gertrude. A little country air to blow back the roses to your face, and a little picky to clear away the worldliness, and we'll do, shan't we? So you did not manage to convert Lady Hunter, eh, Gertrude?"

"O dear no, papa! it would take more than me to do that, nice and delightful as she is. But she is so good really—I mean in listening to explanations about religion. She never scoffs openly, like some of them do."

"That may be partly, love, because she would not hurt your feelings. However, it *may* be something more than that; so we must go on praying for her, Gertrude."

"Yes, indeed, papa, and for dear old Sir Robert too."

"Well, I hardly hope so much for him even as Lady Hunter; but we can never tell where God may send his grace, can we, Gertrude?"

Gertrude sighed, thinking of that other one she could not name—at least not yet—especially like this; later she must bring herself to speak of him calmly, as of any other friend of her cousin's.

"Well, here we are, and there is Mrs. Leeson, home before us with the luggage. Now run up-stairs first thing and see your room, Gertrude, because I want to know how you like the position of the picture of the college that Rupert sent, you know."

"Yes, papa." And having first exchanged hearty greetings with the servants who flocked forward to see her, Gertrude ran up-stairs to her own little sanctuary, which she had left a happy, careless girl, and to which in a few short weeks she returned a woman, with a woman's weary, restless heart—with its longing love and hope and care.

TO BE CONTINUED

Our vision enhances and becomes keener as our mind broadens.]

## THE BLESSED VIRGIN AS AN ADVOCATE

Translated from the German by Roy Temple House

Franz Hofer had been an attorney-at-law for twenty-five years, and a married man for the same length of time. In both capacities he had maintained a spotless record.

At the earnest solicitation of his wife he was celebrating the double anniversary, a little against his will, with a pilgrimage to Lourdes. The couple made the journey on the special pilgrim train which is run every year.

Theresa Hofer had at first declined to accompany her husband. The Blessed Virgin of Lourdes, she said, would think very poorly of her if she presented herself before her on the arm of her husband, a stubborn sinner who had not gone to confession for twenty-five years. This third anniversary, she suggested, was not one that she particularly enjoyed celebrating.

The lawyer laughed and promised to mend his ways.

So they went to Lourdes together.

On the return trip the special train made a short stop in one of the handsome Swiss cities.

When Hofer, returning from a visit to an old college friend who was located in this city, stepped on the station platform, he saw his train disappearing down the track, and among the outstretched arms which waved handkerchiefs from the car windows, he had no doubt that one was Theresa's. But the harm was done.

The exasperated man of the law turned his back on the receding special, and made his way into the restaurant, where his depression gradually gave way to a more cheerful mood.

An hour later he sat in a well-filled compartment of the Vienna night express, and instituted an interested scrutiny of his traveling companions.

There was an air of comradeship about the six well-dressed gentlemen who had rather reluctantly made a place for him by the door. Were they a group of belated pilgrims too? They were all buried in their newspapers, and there scarcely seemed to be a look of Lourdes about them.

Hofer remembered to have heard that a physicians' congress had held its last session the evening before in the Swiss city. So this was no doubt a group of doctors.

"If we had started an hour earlier, we could have ridden to Vienna with the pilgrims from Lourdes," a young physician at last remarked to his friend across from him. The latter was a distinguished appearing elderly man with a long white beard and a brown velvet traveling cap.

The old man shook his gray head with a gesture of disapproval.

"It is just as well we missed them, Doctor. I respect every honest religious conviction, but this unwholesome cult of the Virgin is not the thing for thinking people."

The remark seemed to meet with general approbation. Two or three of the other doctors looked up from their papers, and nodded agreement.

Hofer was troubled. The owner of the white beard had cast a searching glance at him when he entered the compartment. He had appraised the black mustache, the white cravat, the easy manner—probably a prosperous business man.

The young doctor refused to drop the theme.

"The authorities ought to interfere and stop these pilgrimages. They waste our people's time and money."

This pronouncement seemed to strike the old man as too mild.

"Worse than that is the mawkishness, superstition and credulity which these affairs foster in the masses."

"Yes, but we must be too hard on them," said a good-natured fat disciple, Aesculapius, who filled approximately two places in the compartment. "Women and children seem to need to be stirred up like that. Of course men have got beyond such things, and don't have any use for them."

"Educated men, at least," completed the severe old censor, casting another quick glance at the unknown by the door.

This was too much for the attorney.

He succeeded in conquering all trace of temper, and turning politely to the owner of the brown velvet cap, he ventured:

"I hope you will not be annoyed, gentlemen, if I undertake to champion a cause which seems to have no other defenders here. It is not possible that we ought to distinguish, in the cult of the Blessed Virgin as in so many other religious matters, between various unwarranted excesses into which some of the masses have fallen, and the perfectly just and true foundation of the devotion?"

The old doctor answered in an icy tone:

"What do you mean by the perfectly just and true foundation of a cult which has no authority either from the Bible or from the practices of the early Church, which moreover is positively detrimental to the main purpose of the Christian religion, the Christ-thought, and which is responsible every-

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