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GERTRUDE MANNERING

A TALE OF SACRIFICE
BY FRANCES NOBLE

CHAPTER IX.—CONTINUED

"How strange," she began to think, "that we have never yet named religion, hardly anything approaching to it! He did name monasteries and convents, to be sure, in a general way, when he was telling me so much about Italy, but never as if he thought for a minute I could be particularly interested in them or in what he thought of them. Will he be surprised, I wonder, when he finds I am a Catholic? Would he be very kind if he knew it? Would it make any difference, I wonder? Didn't Julia say that he despised and disliked all religion?" Then suddenly a deep blush rose to her face as the delicate conscience suggested the next thought. "Have I been at all afraid of the subject? Have I kept from letting him know my religion as long as possible, not directly perhaps, but indirectly, arranging to talk of other things, because I was so weak, because I was afraid he might not like to hear I was a Catholic, that it might make him not so kind?" For as yet Gerty used no more tender term to describe Stanley Graham's manner to her, even in her own thoughts. "Ah! I wish I knew if I have done, if I have been wrong like that! Oh! what would papa and Father Walmesley say, what would the nuns say, if they thought such a thing of me?" And she longed to be free of the presence of the maid who was dressing her, so that she might kneel down and bury her face in her hands while she asked God's pardon for the cowardice of which she fancied she had been guilty—she, the daughter of such an old Catholic house, which in its time had suffered so joyfully for the faith—descendant of glorious confessors who would have shamed to own one who was afraid of a little coldness, a little inward pain, endured for the cause for which they would have freely given their lives!

"And so would I too—so would I too—oh, yes!" And as the "martyr spirit," of which her father had spoken on the eve of their separation, rose within her young, enthusiastic heart, Gerty resolved that another day should not pass without Stanley Graham hearing from her own lips that she was a Catholic, even if she should have to go out of her way to tell him so.

And the resolution seemed to bring back some of the holy peace and calmness to her heart, tempering the restless joy which had taken possession of it, though a kind of weary, chilly desolation tried to enter too now, at the thought of what she might bring upon herself by her avowal, of the changed, cold tones of the voice which was becoming like delicious music in her ears, of the haughty though polite contempt which might come over the face whose image had so engraven itself on her heart, though as yet she never dreamed or dared to hope for a return of the feeling which was making her, as it were, into a new creature—into a woman all at once, with a woman's cares and trials.

"Perhaps the maid thought, somehow, that her taste and artistic skill in hairdressing were wasted today on her young mistress; for the bright face looked so troubled and perplexed that it was easy to see that even when the eyes glanced toward the mirror their owner's thoughts were but little occupied with what they saw there.

And for the first time in Gerty's life she felt glad she could not write to her father again just yet, as he was still in retreat, and would be for the next few days. How could she bear to write to him, to say from her heart that she longed to return home, to be alone with him again, in spite of all her present enjoyment? And how could she say it with this new joy, this new yearning, this other self which had arisen for her, driving out her own old free girl's life, and making her live but in another's presence?"

"Is this what the world is doing for me?" she sighed to herself, as she sat with her cousin at the concert, listening dreamily to the music, but hardly following it. "Is it making me forget papa and home and everything I have loved and treasured all my life till now?"

And up from the midst of that brilliant concert-room there rose from one young, overburdened heart a prayer for strength to be guided to do right, that she might not lose herself amongst the snares which were surrounding her in this earthly paradise, this new existence which had begun for her.

CHAPTER X.

The opportunity Gerty wished for came to her more easily than she had hoped, without any seeking on her part, that very evening. Her cousin's drawing-rooms were filled with a select company comprising many well-known authors, authoresses, poets, and men of letters of various grades and descriptions, together with a number of Lady Hunter's own private friends. It was the first reception of the kind which Gerty had been present at, and it was a real delight to her, little hero-worshipper as she was, to see and listen to so many celebrated persons, of whom

before she had only heard or read. But her pleasure was marred—rudely so sometimes—during the evening, as on all sides around her she heard open infidelity talked and discussed, in a refined, intellectual manner, it is true, but none the less making her blood run cold as she listened, longing the while that she were able to speak out, as powerfully as could these unbelievers, what was in her heart—the faith so strong and deep, the indignation and horror which burned in it—as the cold, sceptical words struck on her ears.

"If I were only older and more clever, and could speak to them!" she sighed.

But who of that intellectual company thought of courting discussion with the young girl, their hostess's cousin, little more than a child as she seemed, and who, they thought, doubtless shared her cousin's irreligious opinions, if she were troubled as yet with any ideas on such subjects? How little they knew or could have understood of the spirit which animated that girlish frame, making the warm heart beat as now and then she made up to her quiet, secret sign of the Cross! And foremost in many an argument of this kind was Stanley Graham, with poor Gerty's wistful eyes watching him unobscured, her ears listening, when he was within hearing, with a pain keener a thousand times than when they heard the like sentiments from any one else.

And yet all the while her throbbing heart could not but allow that tonight he showed to still greater advantage than in mere brilliant assemblies of pleasure, here, where his splendid intellect had full play and was in its congenial element, heightening in its animation even the outward beauty which of itself alone was such an all-powerful attraction.

But in the midst even of such sympathetic spirits Stanley Graham never forgot the corner where Gerty sat so quietly and shyly. He kept turning to it as to a haven of rest and delicious refreshment, coming to the young girl's side with that smile which already she was learning to see was hers only, which never greeted his other friends as it greeted her, talking to her with that gentle, respectful tenderness which riveted still more strongly that poor little heart's growing idolatry. It seemed as though he could not keep long away from her side, as though he must come to see if she were attended to and amused; if she wanted to know anything about any of the guests, who they were and their different histories; to inquire if she would like to move to a different part of the room, or to be introduced to any one; until Lady Hunter at last said laughingly that Stanley quite took the care of Gerty out of her hands.

Sir Robert chanced to be standing near to Gerty on one of these occasions when Stanley Graham came up to her; and when he had stood with her a minute or two he turned to Sir Robert with a changed tone, and with a look of scorn and annoyance.

"I was very sorry to hear just now from old Mr. Beddowes, Sir Robert, that his son, who became a Romanist two years ago, you remember, is about to join those detested Jesuits."

"O Mr. Graham!" burst from Gerty almost unconsciously, as the color rose quickly to her face.

Her tone was so painful, and as Stanley Graham turned to her with surprise there was such a look of reproach in her soft eyes, that he said very quietly, with a smile:

"What have I done, Miss Manning? Surely you don't want me to believe you are an advocate of the Jesuits? Then another thought struck him, and he continued quickly, "Perhaps you knew Mr. Beddowes, and are shocked to hear my news of him, Miss Manning?"

"No, no, Mr. Graham, I never heard of him before. But—I have a brother—a Jesuit. I am a Catholic myself, Mr. Graham."

And, with the color deepening on her face, Gerty looked out straight before her, dreading, perhaps, the change she might see in his expression if she met his gaze.

"Ah, to be sure! Didn't you know, Stanley?" asked Sir Robert, with his courteous smile. "I suppose it never happened to come out before that Gerty was a Catholic (she does not like us to say Roman Catholic, Stanley,) and of course you must have thought that could be the very last thing she could be, being our relative. So that must be his apology," he added, turning to Gerty. "I have hardly seen Mr. Beddowes myself yet, Stanley, so I will go and try to find him." And he left them alone together.

Instead of the scorn and coldness which Gerty had pictured would come over Stanley Graham's face at her avowal, there was a look of intense perplexed pain, and a tenderness in the gray eyes which would have startled Gerty had she been looking up at him. But she still looked out before her, and Stanley's face was calm again as he sat down by her side.

"I am very sorry to have offended you, Miss Manning," and the gentle tone made Gerty's heart leap as she looked up now, meeting a smile instead of the polite coldness she had expected. "I had no idea you were a Catholic. You have not been so long, I suppose?"

The idea of being taken for a convert made Gerty laugh almost, and she looked up straight into

her questioner's face with a bright smile.

"All my life, Mr. Graham. I was born a Catholic. And even to his sceptical ears her tone said so plainly, "And I glory in it," that the painful expression came again for an instant to Stanley Graham's face; but he forced it away as he spoke again:

"Ah! then, you belong to a family which has always been—Catholic, of course? Will you think me impertinent, I wonder, if I ask if you are related to the Mannings of White-well Grange in B—shire, your own county, I believe?"

Gerty laughed outright now, while the blushes rose again to her face:

"White-well Grange is my home. I am Mr. Manning's only daughter. Why, have you heard of us, Mr. Graham?" she asked, with a frank smile.

TO BE CONTINUED

A PHENOMENAL SUCCESS

Mrs. Namara laid down her pen in despair. For a considerable time she had sat with an air of abstraction at the table in her humble lodging with writing material spread out before her, but not a word had she written.

"I wonder what is coming over me," said she to herself as she pressed her hand to her brow. "I thought I had got the plot of that story quite clear, and yet I cannot find a satisfactory beginning, nor construct even an opening sentence. Whatever shall I do? It will be utter bankruptcy for me without the earnings, small as they are, which my literary work brings in. Dear me! how my head aches, and yet I must try to keep on working for my darling's sake."

Again she pressed her hand to her head as if to still some pain which tortured her there, but after a few minutes, she took up her pen again. Scarcely had she done so, however, than she heard a knock at the street door of the tenement, and yet I must try to keep on working for my darling's sake."

It was the doctor who was attending her little son, Jim, a boy of five years, who was lying ill in the next room. Jim, like his two older brothers, who had both perished in childhood after a vain struggle to live in the gloomy air of London, had been delicate from birth, and was now confined to bed suffering from lung trouble, the result of the bitter winds of early March which were now blowing.

"And how is my little patient this evening?" queried the doctor. "Better, I hope, though those harsh March winds are trying for all of us, and especially for a delicate child. He must be shielded from them as much as possible."

He seems slightly better this evening, doctor, thank you very much, though his cough seems to stick to him. But come in and see him."

She led the way into the bedroom, where little Jim, looking as sweet as an angel, lay in his cot with apparently blooming cheeks and his gray-blue eyes indicative of his Irish origin, preternaturally bright. The little fellow, who idolized his mother, threw his tiny arms round her neck and kissed her when she approached. Then he gave the doctor, who was a great favorite of his, a friendly smile.

"Can I get up and play with the other children tomorrow, doc?" said he, "cos Ise so tired in bed all day."

"We'll see, my little man," answered the doctor, smiling at him with kindly eyes, and gently taking the hot, little hand in his. When he had examined him, his face grew grave, and he said in gentle tones: "Mother will tell you when you can get up, my little man. You'll do what she says, won't you? That's the way to get better, you know."

The child seemed disappointed, for his childish instinct divined from the doctor's manner that the morrow would not see him released for play. His mother looked at the doctor with anxious, questioning eyes. He did not speak, but signed to her to follow him into the sitting-room. There was a pained expression on his face as he looked at her sympathetically and said:

"Your little boy is very weakly, and I fear London will kill him if he has to stay here much longer. If possible, you should take him home to Ireland, the climate there is excellent for weakly children. It should be done without delay. In my opinion it is his one chance of living."

The look of anguish on the mother's face as she spoke those words made a painful impression on him, though he was used to harrowing scenes, and he felt deeply sorry that his medical skill alone was insufficient to save the boy's life, for it was obvious Mrs. Namara could not afford the expense of change of climate.

When he had gone, she returned to her little son's bedside to speak words of endearment to him and make him as comfortable as was in her power. She remained with him until his eyes were closed in sleep. Then, kissing him softly and with lingering looks of deepest love, she returned to the cheerless sitting-

room and sat down in a rickety chair before the almost fireless grate.

"Oh, my darling, if I should lose you!" she exclaimed in tones laden with a heart's misery.

If, indeed, she did lose her little boy, life would then be over for her, for he was now all that she had to live for—the one link which bound her to earth. And as she sat by the dying fire she thought of the other darlings who had perished from her arms, and her heart sank at the dread foreboding that little Jim was following them.

Mrs. Namara, whose maiden name was Kitty Kilroy, was born in a western Irish county on the shores of an island studded lake, famous both for its beauty and its plentiful supply of fish, which attracted many anglers in the summer days. Her father had died while she was yet a child, and she had only the vaguest recollection of him, but how vivid in her memory was her mother's sweet face and the rose-covered cottage where she had spent with her the halcyon days of her girlhood, knowing neither care nor sorrow. How happy they had been together, though they had few of the world's luxuries, and had even hard times, too, when it was quite a struggle to live.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Kilroy, being unable to manage the farm by herself, which had been their main support, sold it, with the exception of the field on which the cottage stood, and which she purposed to utilize as a poultry farm. The sum which the sale of the farm realized and the profits from her eggs and chickens were not by any means large, but Mrs. Kilroy was a woman of resource, and she managed to maintain her small household in decent comfort, and even to pay the expense of Kitty's education at a neighboring convent. In the holiday season, too, the excellent fishing to be had in the lake attracted numerous anglers, many of whom found their way to the neat flower-covered cottage of the Kilroys, where they were made so comfortable that they returned year after year, and became a by no means inconsiderable source of income to Mrs. Kilroy.

Thither one summer came Jack Namara, a devotee of the rod and line, who had heard of the place from a friend in London, where Jack was engaged in journalism. He was just recovering from a bad breaking down, the result of overwork, and, as his doctor had recommended complete rest in the country for at least a couple of months, he thought the place might suit him. He was not disappointed. In fact, his expectations were far more than realized, and the place seemed almost like a bit of heaven itself in contrast with the unceasing face of London.

The second year complete rest in the country for at least a couple of months, he thought the place might suit him. He was not disappointed. In fact, his expectations were far more than realized, and the place seemed almost like a bit of heaven itself in contrast with the unceasing face of London. The second year beautiful, the fishing was good, his hostess was like a mother to him, and, last, though by no means least, Kitty, now a beautiful girl in her nineteenth year, was more than interesting.

No wonder that in such a pleasant environment he soon regained his health, and that the pallor of his handsome face changed to healthy brown. It was to him like a dream of happiness when he was out boating with Kitty on the lake in the delicious twilight of the summer evenings, and he began to view with dismay the prospect of its ending soon, for his profession was his only means of livelihood, and it was indispensable for him to return soon again to his strenuous life in London. For the first time in his life he sighed for riches, so that he might be in a position to ask Kitty to be his wife. It would, he told himself, be quite out of the question to ask her to share the life of a struggling journalist, who had only just got his foot on the ladder of success, and had such a long way yet to climb.

If Mrs. Kilroy noticed the growing intimacy between her daughter and Jack Namara, she evidently approved of it, for she always allowed Kitty to go with him on any excursion which he proposed. Jack never attempted to appear different from what he really was, and she was soon aware of his circumstances, but he was none the less a favorite with her.

"After all," she said when speaking about him, "wealth is not the important thing. It is character that really matters, and Mr. Namara has the very best type. In fact, I don't know any other young man that I like nearly so well. A man like him is bound to make his way in the world."

Though born in London, Jack Namara was of Irish extraction, his father, who was a native of Dublin, having emigrated to the vast metropolis, where he met and married Jack's mother, who also hailed from the land of shamrocks. He had no near relations, nor, indeed, any relations whom he either knew or corresponded with. The only relative of whom he ever heard was an elder brother of his father's, who had emigrated to the States before Jack was born, and never since been heard of. It appeared that the two brothers, who had gone to London together, had become estranged for some reason or other, with the result that Jack never saw or heard of him, and never after gave sign or token of his existence to his younger brother Jack. His nephew supposed him dead, and, as his parents were dead, also, having lived only to see him start on his journalistic career, he was quite alone in the world.

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