

## CHAPTER XI - Nib and His Master Make a Call

"Hoo's a queer little wench," said one of the roughest Rigganite matrons, after Anice's first visit, "I wur i' th' middle o' my weshin when she coom,--up to th' neck i' th' suds,--and I wur vexed enow when I seed her standin' i' th' door, lookin' at me wi' them big eyes o' hers--most loike a babby's wonderin' at summat. 'We dun-not want none,' I says, soart o' sharp loike, th' minute I clapped my eyes on her. 'Theer's no one here as can read, an' none on us has no toime to spare if we could, so we dunnot want none.' 'Dunnot want no what?' she says. 'No tracks,' says I. And what do yo' think she does, lasses? Why, she begins to soart o' dimple up about th' corners o' her mouth as if I'd said summat reight down queer, an' she gi'es a bit o' a laff. 'Well,' she says, 'I'm glad o' that. It's a good thing, fur I hav'n't got none.' An' then it turns out that she just stopped fur nowt but to leave some owd linen an' salve for to dress that sore hond Jack crushed i' th' pit. He'd tow'd her about it as he went to his work, and she promised to bring him some. An' what's more, she wouldna coom in, but just gi' it me, an' went her ways, as if she had na been th' Parson's lass at aw, but just one o' th' common koind, as knowd how to moind her own business an' leave other folkse a-be."

The Rigganites became quite accustomed to the sight of Anice's small low phaeton, with its comfortable fat gray pony. She was a pleasant sight herself as she sat in it, her little whip in her small gloved hand, and no one was ever sorry to see her check the gray pony before the door.

"Anice!" said Mr. Barholm to his curate, "well! you see Anice understands these people, and they understand her. She has the faculty of understanding them. There is nothing, you may be assured, Grace, like understanding the lower orders, and entering into their feelings."

There was one member of Riggan society who had ranged himself among Miss

Barholm's disciples from the date of his first acquaintance with her, who was her staunch friend and adviser from that time forward--the young master of "th' best tarrier i' Riggan." Neither Jud Bates nor Nib faltered in their joint devotions from the hour of their first introduction to "th' Parson's daughter." When they presented themselves at the Rectory together, the cordiality of Nib's reception had lessened his master's awkwardness. Nib was neither awkward nor one whit abashed upon his entrée into a sphere so entirely new to him as a well-ordered, handsomely furnished house. Once inside the parlor, Jud had lost courage and stood fumbling his ragged cap, but Nib had bounced forward, in the best of good spirits, barking in friendly recognition of Miss Barholm's greeting caress, and licking her hand. Through Nib, Anice contrived to inveigle Jud into conversation and make him forget his overwhelming confusion. Catching her first glimpse of the lad as he stood upon the threshold with his dubious garments and his abashed air, she was not quite decided what she was to do with him. But Nib came to her assistance. He forced himself upon her attention and gave her something to say, and her manner of receiving him was such, that in a few minutes

she found Jud sidling toward her, as she half knelt on the hearth patting his favorite's rough back. Jud looked down at her, and she looked up at Jud.

"Have you taught him to do anything?" she asked. "Does he know any tricks?"

"He'll kill more rats i' ten minutes than ony dog i' Riggan. He's th' best tARRIER fur rats as tha ivver seed. He's th' best tARRIER for owt as tha ivver seed. Theer is nowt as he canna do. He con feight ony dog as theer is fro' heer to Marfort." And he glowed in all the pride of possession, and stooped down to pat Nib himself.

He was quite communicative after this. He was a shrewd little fellow and had not spent his ten years in the mining districts for nothing. He was thoroughly conversant with the ways of the people his young hostess wished to hear about. He had worked in the pits a little, and he had tramped about the country with Nib at his heels a great deal. He was supposed to live with his father and grandmother, but he was left entirely to himself, unless when he was put to a chance job. He knew Joan Lowrie and pronounced her a "brave un;" he knew and revered "Owd Sammy Craddock;" he knew Joan's father and evidently regarded him with distrust; in fact there was not a man, woman or child in the place of whom he did not know something.

Mr. Barholm happening to enter the room during the interview, found his daughter seated on a low seat with Nib's head on her knee, and Jud a few feet from her. She was so intent on the task of entertaining her guest that she did not hear her father's entrance, and the Reverend Harold left the three together, himself in rather a bewildered frame of mind.

"Do you know?" he asked of his wife when he found her, "do you know who it is Anice is amusing in the parlor? What singular fancies the girl has, with all her good sense!"