

CHAPTER XVII - The Member of Parliament

The morning following, Anice's father being called away by business left Riggan for a few days' absence, and it was not until after he had gone, that the story of Mr. Haviland's lodge-keeper came to her ears. Mr. Haviland was a Member of Parliament, a rich man with a large estate, and his lodge-keeper had just left him to join a fortunate son in America. Miss Barholm heard this from one of her village friends when she was out with the phaeton and the gray pony, and she at once thought of Sammy Craddock. The place was the very thing for him. The duties were light, the lodge was a pretty and comfortable cottage, and Mr. Haviland was known to be a generous master. If Sammy could gain the situation, he was provided for. But of course there were other applicants, and who was to speak for him? She touched up the gray pony with her whip, and drove away from the woman who had told her the news, in a perplexed frame of mind. She herself knew Mr. Haviland only by sight, his estate was three miles from the village, her father was away, and there was really no time to be lost. She drove to the corner of the road and paused there for a moment.

"Oh indeed, I must go myself," she said at last. "It is unconventional, but there is no other way." And she bent over and touched the pony again and turned the corner without any further delay.

She drove her three miles at a pretty steady trot, and at the end of the

third,--at the very gates of the Haviland Park, in fact,--fortune came to her rescue. A good-humored middle-aged gentleman on a brown horse came cantering down the avenue and, passing through the gates, approached her. Seeing her, he raised his hat courteously; seeing him, she stopped her pony, for she recognized Mr. Haviland.

She bent forward a little eagerly, feeling the color rise to her face.

It was somewhat trying to find herself obliged by conscience to stop a gentleman on the highway and ask a favor of him.

"Mr. Haviland," she said. "If you have a moment to spare----"

He drew rein by her phaeton, removing his hat again. He had heard a great deal of Miss Barholm from his acquaintance among the county families. He had heard her spoken of as a rather singular young lady who had the appearance of a child, and the views of a feminine reconstructor of society. He had heard of her little phaeton too, and her gray pony, and so, though he had never seen her before, he recognized her at once.

"Miss Barholm?" he said with deference.

"Yes," answered Anice. "And indeed I am glad to have been fortunate enough to meet you here. Papa is away from home, and I could not wait for his return, because I was afraid I should be too late. I wanted to speak to you about the lodge-keeper's place, Mr. Haviland."

He had been rather of the opinion that Miss Barholm must be a terrible young woman, with a tendency to model cottages and night schools.

Young ladies who go out of the ordinary groove are not apt to be attractive to the average English mind. There are conventional charities in which they may indulge,--there are Sunday-schools, and rheumatic old women, and flannel night-caps, and Dorcas societies, and such things to which people are used and which are likely to alarm nobody. Among a class of discreet persons these are held to afford sufficient charitable exercise for any well regulated young woman; and girls whose plans branch out in other directions are looked upon with some coldness. So the country gentry, hearing of Miss Barholm and her novel fancies,--her teaching in a night school with a young curate, her friendship for the daughter of a dissipated collier, her intimate acquaintance with ragged boys and fighting terriers, her interest in the unhappy mothers of nameless babies,--hearing of these things, I say, the excellent nonenthusiasts shook their heads as the very mildest possible expression of dissent. They suspected strong-mindedness and "reform"--perhaps even politics and a tendency to advance irregular notions concerning the ballot. "At any rate," said they, "it does not look well, and it is very much better for young persons to leave these matters alone and do as others do who are guided wholly by their elders."

It was an agreeable surprise to Mr. Haviland to see sitting in her modest phaeton, a quiet girl who looked up at him with a pair of the

largest and clearest eyes he had ever seen, while she told him about Sammy Craddock.

"I want the place very much for him, you see," she ended. "But of course I do not wish to be unfair to any one who may want it, and deserve it more. If there is any one who really is in greater need of it, I suppose I must give it up."

"But I am glad to tell you, there is nobody," answered Mr. Haviland quite eagerly. "I can assure you, Miss Barholm, that the half dozen men who have applied to me are without a solitary exception, unmitigated scamps--great strong burly fellows, who would, ten to one, spend their days in the public house, and their nights in my preserves, and leave their wives and children to attend to my gates. This Craddock is evidently the very man for me; I am not a model landowner, but I like to combine charity with subservience to my own interest occasionally. I have heard of the old fellow. Something of a demagogue, isn't he? But that will not frighten me. I will allow him to get the better of me in political discussion, if he will leave my pheasants alone."

"I will answer for the pheasants," said Anice, "if you will let me send him to you."

"I will see him to-morrow morning with pleasure," said Mr. Haviland.

"And if there is anything else I can do, Miss Barholm-----"

"Thank you, there is nothing else at present. Indeed, you do not know how grateful I feel."

Before an hour had passed, Sammy Craddock heard the good news. Anice drove back to his house and told him, without delay.

"If you will go to-morrow morning, Mr. Haviland will see you," she ended; "and I think you will be good friends, Mr. Craddock."

"Owd Sammy" pushed his spectacles up on his forehead, and looked at her.

"An' tha went at th' business o' thy own accord an' managt it i' haaf an hour!" he said. "Well, I'm dom'd,--axin your pardin fur takkin th' liberty; it's a habit I've getten--but I be, an' no mistake."

He had not time to get over his grateful amazement and recover his natural balance before she had said all she had come to say, and was gone, leaving him with "th' owd lass" and his admiration.

"Well," said Sammy, "I mun say I nivver seed nowt loike it i' my loife. To think o' th' little wench ha'in' so mich gumption, an' to think o' her takkin th' matter i' hond th' minnit she struck it! Why! hoo's getten as mich sense as a mon. Eh! but hoo's a rare un--I said it when I seed her amongst th' lads theer, an' I say it again. An' hoo is na mich bigger nor six penn'orth o' copper neyther. An' I warrant hoo nivver thowt o' fillin her pocket wi' tracks by way o' comfort. Well, tha'st

noan ha' to dee i' th' Union after aw, owd lass, an' happen we con save a bit to gi' thee a graidely funeral if tha'lt mak' up thy moind to stay to th' top a bit longer."

CHAPTER XVIII - A Confession of Faith

The Sunday following the Curate's visit to Lowrie's cottage, just before the opening of the morning service at St, Michael's, Joan Lowrie entered, and walking up the side aisle, took her place among the free seats. The church members turned to look at her as she passed their pews. On her part, she seemed to see nobody and to hear nothing of the rustlings of the genteel garments stirred by the momentary excitement caused by her appearance.

The Curate, taking his stand in the pulpit that morning, saw after the first moment only two faces among his congregation. One, from among the old men and women in the free seats, looked up at him with questioning in its deep eyes, as if its owner had brought to him a solemn problem to be solved this very hour, or forever left at rest; the other, turned toward him from the Barholm pew, alight with appeal and trust. He stood in sore need of the aid for which he asked in his silent opening prayer.

Some of his flock who were somewhat prone to underrate the young Parson's talents, were moved to a novel comprehension of them this morning. The more appreciative went home saying among themselves that