

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

the young man had power after all, and for once at least he had preached with uncommon fire and pathos. His text was a brief one,--but three words,--the three words Joan had read beneath the picture of the dead Christ: "It is finished!"

If it was chance that led him to them to-day, it was a strange and fortunate chance, and surely he had never preached as he preached then.

After the service, Anice looked for Joan in vain; she had gone before the rest of the congregation.

But in the evening, being out in the garden near the holly hedge, she heard her name spoken, and glancing over the leafy barrier, saw Joan standing on the side path, just as she had seen her the first time they had spoken to each other.

"I ha' na a minnit to stay," she said without any prelude, "but I ha' summat to say to yo'."

Her manner was quiet, and her face wore a softened pallor. Even her physical power for a time appeared subdued. And yet she looked steady and resolved.

"I wur at church this mornin'." she began again almost immediately.

"I saw you," Anice answered.

"I wur nivver theer before. I went to see fur mysen. I ha' read the book yo' g' me, an' theer's things in it as I nivver heerd on. Mester Grace too,--he coom to see me an' I axt him questions. Theer wur things as I wanted to know, an' now it seems loike it looks clearer. What wi' th' pickur',--it begun wi' th' pictur',--an' th' book, an' what he said to-day i' church, I've made up my moind."

She paused an instant, her lips trembled.

"I dunnot want to say much about it now," she said, "I ha' not gotten th' words. But I thowt as yo'd loike to know. I believe i' th' Book; I believe i' th' Cross; I believe i' Him as deed on it! That's what I coom to say."

The woman turned without another word and went away.

Anice did not remain in the garden. The spirit of Joan Lowrie's intense mood communicated itself to her. She, too, trembled and her pulse beat rapidly. She thought of Paul Grace and wished for his presence. She felt herself drawn near to him again. She wanted to tell him that his harvest had come, that his faithfulness had not been without its reward. Her own labor she only counted as chance-work.

She found Fergus Derrick in the parlor, talking to her mother.

He was sitting in his favorite position, leaning back in a chair before a window, his hands clasped behind his head. His friendly intercourse with the family had extended beyond the ceremonious epoch, when a man's attitudes are studied and unnatural. In these days Derrick was as much at ease at the Rectory as an only son might have been.

"I thought some one spoke to you across the hedge, Anice?" her mother said.

"Yes," Anice answered. "It was Joan Lowrie."

She sat down opposite Fergus, and told him what had occurred. Her voice was not quite steady, and she made the relation as brief as possible.

Derrick sat looking out of the window without moving.

"Mr. Derrick," said Anice at last, after a few minutes had elapsed,

"What now is to be done with Joan Lowrie?"

Derrick roused himself with a start to meet her eyes and find them almost sad.

"What now?" he said. "God knows! For one, I cannot see the end."