

CHAPTER XLI - "A Soart o' Pollygy"

The interview between Anice and Derrick was a long one. At the end Derrick said:

"I shall go to Ashley-Wold."

Grace had been called out almost immediately after his return to the house; but on his way home he met Anice, and having something to say about the school, he turned toward the Rectory with her.

They had not gone far, however, before they were joined by a third party,--Mr. Sammy Craddock, who was wending his way Crownward. Seeing them, Mr. Craddock hesitated for a moment, as if feeling somewhat doubtful; but as they approached him, he pulled off his hat. "I dunnot know," he said, "after aw, if it would not be as well to ha' a witness. Hope yo're nicely, Miss," affably; "an' th' same to yo', Parson. Would yo'" clearing his throat, "would yo' moind shakin' honds wi' a chap?"

Grace gave him his hand.

"Thank yo', Parson," said "Owd Sammy." "It's th' first toime, yo' know, but it shanna be th' last, if yo' dnnnot see owt agen it. Th' truth is, as it's summat as has been on my moind for some toime,--ivver sin' th' accident, i' fact. Pluck's pluck, yo' see, whether yo're for a mon or agen him. Yo're not mich to look at. Yo' mowt be handsomer, an' yo' mowt

be likelier,--yo' mowt easily ha' more muscle, an' yo' dnnnot look as if yo' wnr like to be mich i' argyment; but yo're getten a backbone o' yo're own,--I'm danged if yo' ha' na."

"I'm much obliged to you, I am sure," said Grace.

"Yo' need na be," answered Sammy, encouragingly. "Yo' need na be. If yo'd getten owt to be obleeged to me fur, I should na ha' so mich to say. Yo' see I'm makin' a soart o' pollygy,--a soart o' pollygy," with evident enjoyment of the word. "An' that's why I said as it mowt be as well to ha' a witness. I wur allus one as set more store by th' State than th' Church, an' parsons wur na i' my line, an' happen I ha' ben a bit hard on yo', an' ha' said things as carried weight agen yo' wi' them as valleyed my opinion o' things i' general. An' sin' th' blow-up, I ha' made up my moind as I would na moind tellin' yo' as I wur agoin' to w'draw my oppysition, sin' it seemit as if I'd made a bit o' a mistake. Yo're neyther knave nor foo', if yo' are a parson. Theer now! Good-mornin' to yo'!"

"Noan on 'em con say as I wur na fair," Owd Sammy said to himself, as he went on his way shaking his head, "I could na ha' done no fairer. He desarved a bit o' commendation, an' I let him ha' it. Be fair wi a mon, say I, parson or no. An' he is na th' wrong sort, after aw."

He was so well pleased with himself, that he even carried his virtue into The Crown, and diffused it abroad over his pint of sixpenny. He

found it not actually unpleasant to display himself as a magnate, who, having made a most natural mistake, had been too independent and straightforward to let the matter rest, and consequently had gone to the magnificent length of apologetic explanation.

"I ha' bin havin' a word or so wi' th' little Parson," he said. "I ha' ben tellin' him what I thowt o' what he did th' day o' th' blow-up. I changed my moind about th' little chap that day, an' I ha' ben tellin' him so."

"Yo' ha'?" in an amazed chorus. "Well, now, that theer wur a turn, Sammy."

"Ay, it wur. I'm noan afeard to speak my moind one way or t'other, yo' see. When a mon shows as he's med o' th' reet cloth, I am na afeard to tell him I loike th' web."