

CHAPTER XVIII.

“EDWARD,” said Edith, “scold Pablo; he has been ill-treating my poor cat. He is a cruel boy.”

Pablo laughed.

“See, Edward, he’s laughing; put him in the pitfall again, and let him stay there till he says he is sorry.”

“I very sorry now, Missy Edith, but cat bite me,” said Pablo.

“Well, if pussy did, it didn’t hurt you much; and what did I tell you this morning out of the Bible?—that you must forgive them who behave ill to you.”

“Yes, Missy Edith, you tell me all that, and so I do; I forgive pussy ’cause she bite me, but I kick her for it.”

“That’s not forgiveness—is it, Edward? You should have forgiven it at once, and not kicked it at all.”

“Missy Edith, when pussy bite me, pussy hurt me, make me angry, and I give her a kick; then I think what you tell me, and I do as you tell me. I forgive pussy with all my heart.”

“I think you must forgive Pablo, Edith,” said Edward, “if it is only to set him a good example.”

“Well, I will this time; but if he kicks pussy again, he must be put in the pitfall—mind that, Pablo.”

“Yes, Missy Edith, I go into pitfall, and then you cry, and ask Massa Edward to take me out. When you have me put in pitfall, then you not good Christian,

'cause you not forgive; when you cry and take me out, then you good Christian once more."

By this conversation it will appear to the reader that they had been trying to impress Pablo with the principles of the Christian religion, and such was the case, Edith having been one of the most active in the endeavour, although very young for a missionary. However, Alice and Humphrey had been more successful, and Pablo was now beginning to comprehend what they had attempted to instil, and was really progressing every day.

Edward remained at the cottage, expecting to hear some message from the Intendant. He was right in his conjecture, for on the third day Oswald Partridge came over to say that the Intendant would be happy to see him, if he could make it convenient to go over, which Edward assented to do on the following day. Oswald had ridden over on a pony. Edward arranged to take Billy and return with him. They started early the next morning, and Edward asked Oswald if he knew why the Intendant had sent for him.

"Not exactly," replied Oswald; "but I think, from what I heard Miss Patience say, it is to offer you some situation, if you could be prevailed upon to accept it."

"Very true," replied Edward; "he offers me the post of secretary. What do you think?"

"Why, sir, I think I would accept it: at all events, I would take it on trial—there can be no harm done. If you do not like it, you can only go back to the cottage again. One thing I am sure of, which is, that Master Heatherstone will make it as pleasant to you as he can, for he is most anxious to serve you."

"That I really believe," replied Edward; "and I have pretty well made up my mind to accept the office. It is a post of confidence, and I shall know all that is

going on, which I cannot do while I am secluded in the forest; and depend upon it, we shall have stirring news."

"I suppose you think that the King will come over?" replied Oswald.

"I feel certain of it, Oswald; and that is the reason why I want to be where I can know all that is going on."

"Well, sir, it is my opinion that the King will come over, as well as yours; yet I think at present he stands but a poor chance; but Master Heatherstone knows more on that score than any one, I should think; but he is very close."

The conversation then changed, and after a ride of eight hours, they arrived at the Intendant's house. Edward gave Billy into Oswald's charge, and knocked at the door. Phœbe let him in, and asked him into the sitting-room, where he found the Intendant alone.

"Edward Armitage, I am glad to see you; and shall be still more so if I find that you have made up your mind to accept my proposition. What is your reply?"

"I am very thankful to you for the offer, sir," replied Edward, "and will accept it if you think that I am fitting for it, and if I find that I am equal to it: I can but give it a trial, and leave if I find it too arduous or too irksome."

"Too arduous it shall not be—that shall be my concern; and too irksome I hope you will not find it. My letters are not so many but that I could answer them myself, were it not that my eyes are getting weak, and I wish to save them as much as possible. You will therefore have to write chiefly what I shall dictate. But it is not only for that I require a person that I can confide in: I very often shall send you to London instead of going myself, and to that, I presume, you will have no objection?"

"Certainly none, sir."

"Well, then, it is no use saying any more just now. You will have a chamber in this house, and you will live with me, and at my table altogether. Neither shall I say anything just now about remuneration, as I am convinced that you will be satisfied. All that I require now is to know the day that you will come, that everything may be ready."

"I suppose, sir, I must change my attire!" replied Edward, looking at his forester's dress; "that will hardly accord with the office of secretary."

"I agree with you that it will be better to keep that dress for your forest excursions, as I presume you will not altogether abandon them," replied the Intendant. "You can provide yourself with a suit at Lymington. I will furnish you the means."

"I thank you, sir; I have means, much more than sufficient," replied Edward, "although not quite so wealthy as little Clara appeared to be."

"Wealthy, indeed!" replied the Intendant. "I had no idea that poor Ratcliffe possessed so much ready money and jewels. Well, then, this is Wednesday; can you come over next Monday?"

"Yes, sir," replied Edward. "I see no reason to the contrary."

"Well, then, that is settled; and I suppose you would like to see your accommodation. Patience and Clara are in the next room. You can join them, and you will make my daughter very happy by telling her that you are to become a resident with us. You will, of course, dine with us to-day, and sleep here to-night."

Mr. Heatherstone then opened the door, and saying to his daughter Patience, "My dear, I leave you to entertain Edward Armitage till dinner-time," he ushered Edward in, and closed the door again. Clara ran up

to Edward as soon as he went in; and having kissed him, Edward then took Patience's offered hand.

"Then you have consented?" said Patience inquiringly.

"Yes, I could not refuse such kindness," replied Edward.

"And when do you come?"

"On Monday night, if I can be ready by that time."

"Why, what have you to get ready?" said Clara.

"I must not appear in a forester's dress, my little Clara. I can wear that with a gun in my hand, but not with a pen; so I must go to Lymington and see what a tailor can do for me."

"You will feel as strange in a secretary's dress as I did in boys' clothes," said Clara.

"Perhaps I may," said Edward, although he felt that such would not be the case, having been accustomed to much better clothes when at Arnwood than what were usually worn by secretaries; and this remembrance brought back Arnwood in its train, and Edward became silent and pensive.

Patience observed it, and after a time said,—

"You will be able to watch over your sisters, Mr. Armitage, as well here almost as if you were at the cottage. You do not return till to-morrow? How did you come over?"

"I rode the pony Billy, Mistress Patience."

"Why do you call her Mistress Patience, Edward?" said Clara. "You call me Clara; why not call her Patience?"

"You forget that I am only a forester, Clara," replied Edward with a grave smile.

"No, you are a secretary now," replied Clara.

"Mistress Patience is older than you by several years. I call you Clara because you are but a little

girl; but I must not take that liberty with Mistress Heatherstone."

"Do you think so, Patience?" said Clara.

"I certainly do not think that it would be a liberty in a person, after being well acquainted with me, to call me Patience," replied she, "especially when that person lives in the house with us, eats and associates with us as one of the family, and is received on an equality; but I dare say, Clara, that Master Armitage will be guided by his own feelings, and act as he considers to be proper."

"But you give him leave, and then it is proper," replied Clara.

"Yes, if he gave himself leave, Clara," said Patience. "But we will now show him his own room, Clara," continued Patience, wishing to change the subject of conversation.—"Will you follow us, sir?" said Patience, with a little mock ceremony.

Edward did so without replying, and was ushered into a large airy room, very neatly furnished.

"This is your future lodging," said Patience. "I hope you will like it."

"Why, he never saw anything like it before," said Clara.

"Yes, I have, Clara," replied Edward.

"Where did you?"

"At Arnwood; the apartments were on a much larger scale."

"Arnwood! Oh yes, I have heard my father speak of it," said Clara, with the tears starting in her eyes at his memory. "Yes, it was burnt down, and all the children burnt to death."

"So they say, Clara; but I was not there when it was burnt."

"Where were you, then?"

"I was at the cottage where I now live." Edward turned round to Patience, and perceived that her eyes were fixed upon him, as if she would have read his thoughts. Edward smiled, and said,—

"Do you doubt what I say?"

"No, indeed!" said she—"I have no doubt that you were at the cottage at the time; but I was thinking that if the apartments at Arnwood were more splendid, those at your cottage are less comfortable. You have been used to better and to worse, and therefore will, I trust, be content with these."

"I trust I have shown no signs of discontent. I should indeed be difficult to please if an apartment like this did not suit me. Besides, allow me to observe that, although I stated that the apartments at Arnwood were on a grander scale, I never said that I had ever been a possessor of one of them."

Patience smiled and made no reply.

"Now that you know your way to your apartment, Master Armitage, we will, if you please, go back to the sitting-room," said she. As they were going back into the sitting-room she said, "When you come over on Monday, you will, I presume, bring your clothes in a cart? I ask it because I promised some flowers and other things to your sisters, which I can send back by the cart."

"You are very kind to think of them, Mistress Patience," replied Edward; "they are fond of flowers, and will be much pleased with possessing any."

"You sleep here to-night, I think my father said?" inquired Patience.

"He did make the proposal, and I shall gladly avail myself of it, as I am not to trust to Phœbe's ideas of comfort this time," said Edward, smiling.

"Yes, that was a cross action of Phœbe's, and I can

tell you, Master Armitage, that she is ashamed to look you in the face ever since. But how fortunate for me that she was cross, and turned you out as she did! You must forgive her, as she was the means of your performing a noble action; and I must forgive her, as she was the means of my life being saved."

"I have no feeling except kindness towards Phœbe," replied Edward. "Indeed, I ought to feel grateful to her; for if she had not given me so bad a bed that night I never should have been so comfortably lodged as it is proposed that I shall be now."

"I hope you are hungry, Edward," said Clara. "Dinner is almost ready."

"I dare say I shall eat more than you do, Clara."

"So you ought, a great big man like you. How old are you, Edward?" said Clara. "I am thirteen; Patience is past sixteen; now how old are you?"

"I am not yet eighteen, Clara; so that I can hardly be called a man."

"Why, you are as tall as Mr. Heatherstone."

"Yes, I believe I am."

"And can't you do everything that a man can do?"

"I really don't know; but I certainly shall always try so to do."

"Well, then, you must be a man."

"Well, Clara, if it pleases you, I will be a man."

"Here comes Mr. Heatherstone, so I know dinner is ready.—Is it not, sir?"

"Yes, my child, it is," replied Mr. Heatherstone, kissing Clara; "so let us all go in."

Mr. Heatherstone, as was usual at that time with the people to whose party he ostensibly belonged, said a grace before meat, of considerable length, and then they sat down to table. As soon as the repast was over, Mr. Heatherstone returned to his study, and Edward went

out to find Oswald Partridge, with whom he remained the larger portion of the afternoon, going to the kennel, and examining the dogs, and talking of matters connected with the chase.

"I have not two men that can stalk a deer," observed Oswald. "The men appointed here as verderers and keepers have not one of them been brought up to the business. Most of them are men who have been in the army, and I believe have been appointed to these situations to get rid of them, because they were troublesome; and they are anything but good characters. The consequence is that we kill but few deer, for I have so much to attend to here, as none of them know their duties, that I can seldom take my own gun out. I stated so to the Intendant, and he said that if you accepted an offer he had made you, and came over here, we should not want venison; so it is clear that he does not expect you to have your pen always in your hand."

"I am glad to hear that," replied Edward. "Depend upon it, his own table, at all events, shall be well supplied. Is not that fellow Corbould who is leaning against the wall?"

"Yes. He is to be discharged, as he cannot walk well, and the surgeon says he will always limp. He owes you a grudge, and I am glad that he is going away, for he is a dangerous man. But the sun is setting, Mr. Edward, and supper will soon be on the table; you had better go back to the house."

Edward bade Oswald farewell, and returned to the Intendant's, and found that Oswald was correct, as supper was being placed on the table.

Soon after supper, Phœbe and the menservants were summoned, and prayers offered up by the Intendant; after which Patience and Clara retired. Edward remained in conversation with the Intendant for about an

hour, and then was conducted by him to his room, which had already been shown to him by Patience.

Edward did not sleep much that night. The novelty of his situation—the novelty of his prospects, and his speculations thereon—kept him awake till near morning. He was, however, up in good time, and having assisted at the morning prayers, and afterwards eaten a most substantial breakfast, he took his leave of the Intendant and the two girls, and set off on his return to the cottage, having renewed his promise of coming on the following Monday to take up his abode with them. Billy was fresh, and cantered gaily along, so that Edward was back early in the afternoon, and once more welcomed by his household. He stated to Humphrey all that had occurred, and Humphrey was much pleased at Edward having accepted the offer of the Intendant. Alice and Edith did not quite so much approve of it, and a few tears were shed at the idea of Edward leaving the cottage. The next day Edward and Humphrey set off for Jymington, with Billy in the cart.

“Do you know, Edward,” said Humphrey, “what I am going to try and purchase? I will tell you: as many kids as I can, or goats and kids—I don’t care which.”

“Why, have you not stock enough already? You will this year have four cows in milk, and you have two cow calves bringing up.”

“That is very true; but I do not intend to have goats for their milk, but simply for eating in lieu of mutton. Sheep I cannot manage, but goats with a little hay in winter will do well, and will find themselves in the forest all the year round. I won’t kill any of the females for the first year or two, and after that I expect we shall have a flock sufficient to meet any demand upon it.”

“It is not a bad idea, Humphrey; they will always

come home if you have hay for them during the winter."

"Yes, and a large shed for them to lie in when the snow is on the ground."

"Now I recollect, when we used to go to Lymington, I saw a great many goats, and I have no doubt that they are to be purchased. I will soon ascertain that for you from the landlord of the hostelrie," replied Edward. "We will drive there first, as I must ask him to recommend me a tailor."

On their arrival at Lymington they went straight to the hostelrie, and found the landlord at home. He recommended a tailor to Edward, who sent for him to the inn, and was measured by him for a plain suit of dark cloth. Edward and Humphrey then went out, as Edward had to procure boots, and many other articles of dress, to correspond with the one which he was about to assume.

"I am most puzzled about a hat, Humphrey," said Edward. "I hate those steeple-crowned hats worn by the Roundheads; yet the hat and feather is not proper for a secretary."

"I would advise you to submit to wear the steeple-crowned hats, nevertheless," said Humphrey. "Your dress, as I consider, is a sort of disgrace to a Cavalier born, and the heir of Arnwood; why not, therefore, take its hat as well? As secretary to the Intendant, you should dress like him; if not, you may occasion remarks, especially when you travel on his concerns."

"You are right, Humphrey; I must not do things by halves; and unless I wear the hat, I might be suspected."

"I doubt if the Intendant wears it for any other reason," said Humphrey.

"At all events I will not go to the height of the

fashion," replied Edward, laughing. "Some of the hats are not quite so tall as the others."

"Here is the shop for the hat and for the sword-belt."

Edward chose a hat and a plain sword-belt, paid for them, and desired the man to carry them to the hostellerie.

While all these purchases on the part of Edward, and many others by Humphrey, such as nails, saws, tools, and various articles which Alice required for the household, were gathered together, the landlord had sent out to inquire for the goats, and found out at what price they were to be procured. Humphrey left Edward to put away these in the cart, while he went out a second time to see the goats. He made an agreement with the man who had them for sale, for a male and three females with two kids each at their sides, and ten more female kids which had just been weaned.

The man engaged to drive them from Lymington, as far as the road went into the forest, on the following day; when Humphrey would meet them, pay him his money, and drive them to the cottage, which would be only three miles from the place agreed upon. Having settled that satisfactorily, he returned to Edward, who was all ready, and they went back home.

"We have dipped somewhat into the bag to-day, Edward," said Humphrey; "but the money is well spent."

"I think so, Humphrey; but I have no doubt that I shall be able to replace the money very soon, as the Intendant will pay me for my services. The tailor has promised the clothes on Saturday without fail, so that you or I must go for them."

"I will go, Edward; my sisters will wish you to stay with them now, as you are so soon to leave them; and I will take Pablo with me, that he may know his way to

the town, and I will show him where to buy things, in case he goes there by himself."

"It appears to me to have been a most fortunate thing your having caught Pablo as you did, Humphrey, for I do not well know how I could have left you if you had not."

"At all events I can do much better without you than I should have done," replied Humphrey. "Although I think now that I could get on by myself; but still, Edward, you know we cannot tell what a day may bring forth, and I might fall sick, or something happen which might prevent my attending to anything; and then without you or Pablo everything might have gone to wrack and ruin. Certainly, when we think how we were left, by the death of old Jacob, to our own resources, we have much to thank God for in having got on so well."

"I agree with you, and also that it has pleased Heaven to grant us all such good health. However, I shall be close at hand if you want me, and Oswald will always call and see how you get on."

"I hope you will manage that he calls once a week."

"I will if I can, Humphrey, for I shall be just as anxious as you are to know if all goes on well. Indeed, I shall insist upon coming over to you once a fortnight; and I hardly think the Intendant will refuse me—indeed I am sure that he will not."

"So am I," replied Humphrey. "I am certain that he wishes us all well, and has, in a measure, taken us under his protection; but, Edward, recollect I shall never kill any venison after this, and so you may tell the Intendant."

"I will, and that will be an excuse for him to send some over, if he pleases. Indeed, as I know I shall be permitted to go out with Oswald, it will be hard if a stray buck does not find its way to the cottage."

Thus did they continue talking over matters till they arrived at the cottage. Alice came out to them, saying to Humphrey,—

“Well, Humphrey, have you brought my geese and ducks?”

Humphrey had forgotten them, but he replied,—

“You must wait till I go to Lymington again on Saturday, Alice, and then I hope to bring them with me. As it is, look how poor Billy is loaded. Where’s Pablo?”

“In the garden. He has been working there all day, and Edith is with him.”

“Well, then, we will unload the cart while you get us something to eat, Alice, for we are not a little hungry, I can tell you.”

“I have some rabbit stew on the fire, Humphrey, all ready for you, and you will find it very good.”

“Nothing I like better, my dear girl. Pablo won’t thank me for bringing this home,” continued Humphrey, taking the long saw out of the cart. “He will have to go to the bottom of the pit again as soon as the pit is made.”

The cart was soon unloaded, Billy taken out and turned out to feed, and then they went in to the supper.

Humphrey was off the next morning with Pablo, at an early hour, to meet the farmer of whom he had purchased the goats and kids. He found them punctual to the time, at the place agreed upon; and being satisfied with the lot, paid the farmer his money, and drove them home through the forest.

“Goat very good, kid better; always eat kid in Spain,” said Pablo.

“Were you born in Spain, Pablo?”

“Not sure, but I think so. First recollect myself in that country.”

“Do you recollect your father?”

“No; never see him.”

“Did your mother never talk about him?”

“Call her mother, but think no mother at all. Custom with Gitanas.”

“Why did you call her mother?”

“’Cause she feed me when little, beat me when I get big.”

“All mothers do that. What made you come to England?”

“I don’t know, but I hear people say, Plenty of money in England—plenty to eat—plenty to drink; bring plenty money back to Spain.”

“How long have you been in England?”

“One, two, three year; yes, three year and a bit.”

“Which did you like best, England or Spain?”

“When with my people, like Spain best; warm sun—warm night. England little sun, cold night, much rain, snow, and air always cold; but now I live with you, have warm bed, plenty victuals, like England best.”

“But when you were with the gipsies, they stole everything, did they not?”

“Not steal everything,” replied Pablo, laughing; “sometimes take and no pay when nobody there; farmer look very sharp—have big dog.”

“Did you ever go out to steal?”

“Make me go out. Not bring back something, beat me very hard; suppose farmer catch me, beat hard too; nothing but beat, beat, beat.”

“Then they obliged you to steal?”

“Suppose bring nothing home, first beat, and then not have to eat for one, two, three days. How you like that, Master Humphrey? I think you steal, after no victuals for three days?”

“I should hope not,” replied Humphrey, “although

I have never been so severely punished; and I hope, Pablo, you will never steal any more."

"Why steal any more?" replied Pablo. "I not like to steal; but because hungry I steal. Now I never hungry, always have plenty to eat; no one beat me now; sleep warm all night. Why I steal, then? No, Massa Humphrey, I never steal more, 'cause I have no reason why, and 'cause Missy Alice and Missy Edith tell me how the good God up there say must not steal."

"I am glad to hear you give that as a reason, Pablo," replied Humphrey, "as it proves that my sisters have not been teaching you in vain."

"Like to hear Missy Alice talk; she talk grave. Missy Edith talk too, but she laugh very much; very fond Missy Edith, very happy little girl; jump about just like one of these kids we drive home; always merry. Hah! see cottage now; soon get home, Massa Humphrey. Missy Edith like see kids very much. Where we put them?"