

CHAPTER XX.

THE summer had now advanced, when Oswald one day said to Edward,—

“Have you heard the news, sir?”

“Nothing very particular,” replied Edward. “I know that General Cromwell is over in Ireland, and they say very successful; but I have cared little for particulars.”

“They say a great deal more, sir,” replied Oswald. “They say that the King is in Scotland, and that the Scotch have raised an army for him.”

“Indeed!” replied Edward; “that is news indeed! The Intendant has never mentioned it to me.”

“I dare say not, sir, for he knows your feelings, and would be sorry to part with you.”

“I will certainly speak to him on the subject,” said Edward, “at the risk of his displeasure; and, join the army I will, if I find what you say is true. I should hold myself a craven to remain here while the King is fighting for his own, and not to be at his side.”

“Well, sir, I think it is true, for I heard that the Parliament had sent over for General Cromwell to leave Ireland and lead the troops against the Scotch army.”

“You drive me mad, Oswald! I will go to the Intendant immediately!”

Edward, much excited by the intelligence, went into the room where he usually sat with the Intendant. The

latter, who was at his desk, looked up, and saw how flushed Edward was, and said very quietly,—

“Edward, you are excited, I presume, from hearing the news which has arrived?”

“Yes, sir, I am very much so; and I regret very much that I should be the last to whom such important news is made known.”

“It is, as you say, important news,” replied the Intendant; “but if you will sit down, we will talk a little upon the subject.”

Edward took a chair, and the Intendant said,—

“I have no doubt that your present feeling is to go to Scotland and join the army without delay?”

“Such is my intention, I candidly confess, sir. It is my duty.”

“Perhaps you may be persuaded to the contrary before we part,” replied the Intendant. “The first duty you owe is to your family in their present position. They depend upon you, and a false step on your part would be their ruin. How can you leave them, and leave my employ, without it being known for what purpose you are gone? It is impossible! I must myself make it known; and even then it would be very injurious to me, the very circumstance of my having one of your party in my service. I am suspected by many already in consequence of the part I have taken against the murder of the late King, and also of the lords who have since suffered. But, Edward, I did not communicate this intelligence to you for many reasons. I knew that it would soon come to your ears, and I thought it better that I should be more prepared to show you that you may do yourself and me harm, and can do no good to the King. I will now show you that I do put confidence in you; and if you will read these letters they will prove to you that I am correct in what I assert.”

The Intendant handed three letters to Edward, by which it was evident that all the King's friends in England were of opinion that the time was not ripe for the attempt, and that it would be only a sacrifice to stir in the matter; that the Scotch army raised was composed of those who were the greatest enemies to the King, and that the best thing that could happen for the King's interest would be that they were destroyed by Cromwell; that it was impossible for the English adherents of Charles to join them, and that the Scotch did not wish them so to do.

"You are no politician, Edward," said the Intendant, smiling as Edward laid the letters down on the table. "You must admit that on showing you these letters I have put the utmost confidence in you?"

"You have indeed, sir; and thanking you for having so done, I hardly need add that your confidence will never be betrayed."

"That I am sure of; and I trust you will now agree with me and my friends that the best thing is to remain quiet?"

"Certainly, sir, and for the future I will be guided by you."

"That is all I require of you; and after that promise you shall hear all the news as soon as it arrives. There are thousands who are just as anxious to see the King on the throne again as you are, Edward—and you now know that I am one of them; but the time is not yet come, and we must bide our time. Depend upon it that General Cromwell will scatter that army like chaff. He is on his march now. After what has passed between us this day, Edward, I shall talk unreservedly to you on what is going on."

"I thank you, sir, and I promise you faithfully, as I said before, not only to be guided by your advice, but

to be most secret in all that you may trust me with."

"I have confidence in you, Edward Armitage. And now we will drop the subject for the present. Patience and Clara want you to walk with them, so good-bye for the present."

Edward left the Intendant, much pleased with the interview. The Intendant kept his word, and concealed nothing from Edward. All turned out as the Intendant had foretold. The Scotch army were cut to pieces by Cromwell, and the King retreated to the Highlands; and Edward now felt satisfied that he could do no better than be guided by the Intendant in all his future undertakings.

We must now pass over some time in a few words. Edward continued at the Intendant's, and gave great satisfaction to Mr. Heatherstone. He passed his time very agreeably, sometimes going out to shoot deer with Oswald, and often supplying venison to his brothers and sisters at the cottage. During the autumn Patience very often went to the cottage, and occasionally Mr. Heatherstone paid them a visit; but after the winter set in, Edward came over by himself, shooting as he went; and when he and Smoker came to the cottage, Billy always had a journey to go for the venison left in the forest. Patience sent Alice many little things for the use of her and Edith, and some very good books for them to read; and Humphrey, during the evenings, read with his sisters, that they might learn what he could teach them. Pablo also learned to read and write. Humphrey and Pablo had worked at the sawpit, and had sawed out a large quantity of boards and timber for building; but the building was put off till the spring.

The reader may recollect that Edward had proposed to Humphrey that he should ascertain whether what the

robber had stated before his death, relative to his having concealed his ill-gotten wealth under the tree which was struck by lightning, was true. About ten days afterwards Humphrey set off on this expedition. He did not take Pablo with him, as, although he had a very good opinion of him, he agreed with Oswald that temptation should not be put in his way. Humphrey considered that it would be the best plan to go at once to Clara's cottage, and from that proceed to find the oak tree mentioned by the robber. When he arrived at the thicket which surrounded the cottage, it occurred to him that he would just go through it and see if it was in the state which they had left it in; for after the Intendant had been there, he had given directions to his men to remain and bury the bodies, and then to lock up the doors of the cottage and bring the keys to him, which had been done. Humphrey tied Billy and the cart to a tree, and walked through the thicket. As he approached the cottage he heard voices; this induced him to advance very carefully, for he had not brought his gun with him. He crouched down as he came to the opening before the cottage. The doors and windows were open, and there were two men sitting outside, cleaning their guns; and in one of them Humphrey recognized the man Corbould, who had been discharged by the Intendant as soon as his wound had been cured, and who was supposed to have gone to London. Humphrey was too far off to hear what they said. He remained there some time, and three more men came out of the cottage. Satisfied with what he had seen, Humphrey cautiously retreated, and gaining the outside of the thicket, led away Billy and the cart over the turf, that the noise of the wheels might not be heard.

"This bodes no good," thought Humphrey as he went

along, every now and then looking back to ascertain if the men had come out and seen him. "That Corbould, we know, has vowed vengeance against Edward, and all of us, and has, no doubt, joined those robbers—for robbers they must be—that he may fulfil his vow. It is fortunate that I have made the discovery, and I will send over immediately to the Intendant." As soon as a clump of trees had shut out the thicket, and he had no longer any fear of being seen by these people, Humphrey went in the direction which the robber had mentioned, and soon afterwards he perceived the oak scathed with lightning, which stood by itself on a green spot of about twenty acres. It had been a noble tree before it had been destroyed; now it spread its long, naked arms, covering a large space of ground, but without the least sign of vegetation or life remaining. The trunk was many feet in diameter, and was apparently quite sound, although the tree was dead. Humphrey left Billy to feed on the herbage close by; and then, from the position of the sun in the heavens, ascertained the point at which he was to dig. First looking around him to see that he was not overlooked, he took his spade and pickaxe out of the cart and began his task. There was a spot not quite so green as the rest, which Humphrey thought likely to be the very place that he should dig at, as probably it was not green from the soil having been removed. He commenced at this spot, and after a few moments' labour his pickaxe struck upon something hard, which, on clearing away the earth, he discovered to be the wooden lid of a box. Satisfied that he was right, Humphrey now worked hard, and in a few minutes he had cleared away sufficiently to be able to lift out the box and place it on the turf. He was about to examine it, when he perceived, at about five hundred yards' distance, three men coming towards him. "They have

discovered me," thought Humphrey, "and I must be off as soon as I can." He ran to Billy, who was close to him; and bringing the cart to where the box lay, he lifted it in. As he was getting in himself, with the reins in his hands, he perceived that the three men were running towards him as fast as they could, and that they all had guns in their hands. They were not more than a hundred and fifty yards from him when Humphrey set off, putting Billy to a full trot.

The three men, observing this, called out to Humphrey to stop, or they would fire; but Humphrey's only reply was giving a lash to Billy, which set him off at a gallop. The men immediately fired, and the bullets whistled past Humphrey without doing any harm. Humphrey looked round, and finding that he had increased his distance, pulled up the pony, and went a more moderate pace. "You'll not catch me," thought Humphrey; "and your guns are not loaded, so I'll tantalize you a little." He made Billy walk, and turned round to see what the men were about. They had arrived at where he had dug out the box, and were standing round the hole, evidently aware that it was no use following him. "Now," thought Humphrey as he went along at a faster pace, "those fellows will wonder what I have been digging up. The villains little think that I know where to find them, and they have proved what they are by firing at me. Now, what must I do? They may follow me to the cottage, for I have no doubt that they know where we live and that Edward is at the Intendant's. They may come and attack us, and I dare not leave the cottage to-night, or send Pablo away, in case they should; but I will to-morrow morning." Humphrey considered, as he went along, all the circumstances and probabilities, and decided that he would act as he at first proposed to himself. In an hour he was at the

cottage; and as soon as Alice had given him his dinner—for he was later than the usual dinner hour—he told her what had taken place.

“Where is Pablo?”

“He has been working in the garden with Edith all the day,” replied Alice.

“Well, dear, I hope they will not come to-night: to-morrow I will have them all in custody; but if they do come, we must do our best to beat them off. It is fortunate that Edward left the guns and pistols which he found in Clara’s cottage, as we shall have no want of firearms; and we can barricade the doors and windows, so that they cannot get in in a hurry. But I must have Pablo to help me, for there is no time to be lost.”

“But cannot I help you, Humphrey?” said Alice. “Surely I can do something?”

“We will see, Alice; but I think I can do without you. We have still plenty of daylight. I will take the box into your room.”

Humphrey, who had only taken the box out of the cart and carried it within the threshold of the door, now took it into his sisters’ bedroom, and then went out and called Pablo, who came running to him.

“Pablo,” said Humphrey, “we must bring to the cottage some of the large pieces we sawed out for rafters, for I should not be surprised if the cottage were attacked this night.” He then told Pablo what had taken place. “You see, Pablo, I dare not send to the Intendant to-night, in case the robbers should come here.”

“No, not send to-night,” said Pablo; “stay here and fight them; first make door fast, then cut hole to fire through.”

“Yes, that was my idea. You don’t mind fighting them, Pablo?”

“No; fight hard for Missy Alice and Missy Edith,” said Pablo; “fight for you too, Massa Humphrey, and fight for myself,” added Pablo, laughing.

They then went for the pieces of squared timber, brought them from the saw-pit to the cottage, and very soon fitted them to the doors and windows, so as to prevent several men, with using all their strength, from forcing them open.

“That will do,” said Humphrey; “and now get me the small saw, Pablo, and I will cut a hole or two to fire through.”

It was dark before they had finished, and then they made all fast, and went to Pablo’s room for the arms, which they got ready for service, and loaded.

“Now we are all ready, Alice, so let us have our supper,” said Humphrey. “We will make a fight for it, and they shall not get in so easily as they think.”

After they had had their supper, Humphrey said the prayers, and told his sisters to go to bed.

“Yes, Humphrey, we will go to bed, but we will not undress; for if they come, I must be up to help you. I can load a gun, you know, and Edith can take them to you as fast as I load them.—Won’t you, Edith?”

“Yes, I will bring you the guns, Humphrey, and you shall shoot them,” replied Edith.

Humphrey kissed his sisters, and they went to their room. He then put a light in the chimney, that he might not have to get one in case the robbers came, and then desired Pablo to go and lie down on his bed, as he intended to do the same. Humphrey remained awake till past three o’clock in the morning; but no robbers came. Pablo was snoring loud, and at last Humphrey fell asleep himself, and did not awake till broad daylight. He got up, and found Alice and Edith were already in the sitting-room, lighting the fire.

"I would not wake you, Humphrey, as you had been sitting up so long. The robbers have not made their appearance, that is clear. Shall you unbar the door and window-shutters now?"

"Yes, I think we may.—Here, Pablo!"

"Yes," replied Pablo, coming out half asleep; "what the matter? Thief come?"

"No," replied Edith, "thief not come, but sun shine, and lazy Pablo not get up."

"Up now, Missy Edith."

"Yes, but not awake yet."

"Yes, Missy Edith, quite awake."

"Well, then, help me to undo the door, Pablo."

They took down the barricades, and Humphrey opened the door cautiously, and looked out.

"They won't come now, at all events, I should think," observed Humphrey; "but there is no saying—they may be prowling about, and may think it easier to get in during daytime than a night. Go out, Pablo, and look about everywhere; take a pistol with you, and fire it off if there is any danger, and then come back as fast as you can."

Pablo took the pistol, and then Humphrey went out of the door and looked well round in front of the cottage, but he would not leave the door till he was assured that no one was there. Pablo returned soon after, saying that he had looked round everywhere, and into the cow-house and yard, and there was nobody to be seen. This satisfied Humphrey, and they returned to the cottage.

"Now, Pablo, get your breakfast, while I write the letter to the Intendant," said Humphrey; "and then you must saddle Billy, and go over to him as fast as you can with the letter. You can tell him all I have not said in it. I shall expect you back at night, and some people with you."

"I see," said Pablo, who immediately busied himself with some cold meat which Alice put before him. Pablo had finished his breakfast and brought Billy to the door before Humphrey had finished his letter. As soon as it was written and folded, Pablo set off, as fast as Billy could go, to the other side of the forest.

Humphrey continued on the lookout during the whole day, with his gun on his arm, and his two dogs by his side; for he knew the dogs would give notice of the approach of any one long before he might see them. But nothing occurred during the whole day; and when the evening closed in he barricaded the doors and windows, and remained on the watch with the dogs, waiting for the coming of the robbers, or for the coming of the party which he expected would be sent by the Intendant to take the robbers. Just as it was dark, Pablo returned with a note from Edward, saying that he would be over and at the cottage by ten o'clock with a large party.

Humphrey had said in his letter that it would be better that any force sent by the Intendant should not arrive till after dark, as the robbers might be near and perceive them, and then they might escape; he did not therefore expect them to come till some time after dark. Humphrey was reading a book, Pablo was dozing in the chimney-corner, the two girls had retired into their room and had lain down on the bed in their clothes, when the dogs both gave a low growl.

"Somebody come," said Pablo, starting up.

Again the dogs growled, and Humphrey made a sign to Pablo to hold his tongue. A short time of anxious silence succeeded, for it was impossible to ascertain whether the parties were friends or enemies. The dogs now sprang up and barked furiously at the door, and as soon as Humphrey had silenced them a voice was

heard outside, begging for admission to a poor, benighted traveller. This was sufficient: it could not be the party from the Intendant's, but the robbers, who wished to induce them to open the door. Pablo put a gun into Humphrey's hand and took another for himself; he then removed the light into the chimney, and on the application from outside being repeated, Humphrey answered,—

“That he never opened the door at that hour of the night, and that it was useless their remaining.”

No answer or repetition of the request was made; but as Humphrey retreated with Pablo into the fireplace a gun was fired into the lock of the door, which was blown off into the room; and had it not been for the barricades the door must have flown open. The robbers appeared surprised at such not being the case, and one of them inserted his arm into the hole made in the door, to ascertain what might be the further obstacle to open it, when Pablo slipped past Humphrey, and gaining the door, discharged his gun under the arm which had been thrust into the hole in the door. The party, whoever it might have been, gave a loud cry, and fell at the threshold outside.

“I think that will do,” said Humphrey; “we must not take more life than is necessary. I had rather that you had fired through his arm; it would have disabled him, and that would have sufficed.”

“Kill much better,” said Pablo. “Corbould shot through leg, come again to rob; suppose shot dead, never rob more.”

The dogs now flew to the back of the cottage, evidently pointing out that the robbers were attempting that side. Humphrey put his gun through the hole in the door, and discharged it.

“Why you do that, Massa Humphrey? Nobody there.”

"I know that, Pablo; but if the people are coming from the Intendant's, they will see the flash and perhaps hear the report, and it will let them know what is going on."

"There is another gun loaded, Humphrey," said Alice, who with Edith had joined them without Humphrey observing it.

"Thanks, love; but you and Edith must not remain here. Sit down on the hearth, and then you will be sheltered from any bullet which they may fire into the house. I have no fear of their getting in, and we shall have help directly, I have no doubt.—Pablo, I shall fire through the back door; they must be there, for the dogs have their noses under it, and are so violent. Do you fire another gun, as a signal, through the hole in the front door."

Humphrey stood within four feet of the back door, and fired just above where the dogs held their noses and barked. Pablo discharged his gun as directed, and then returned to reload the guns. The dogs were now more quiet, and it appeared as if the robbers had retreated from the back door. Pablo blew out the light, which had been put more in the centre of the room when Alice and Edith took possession of the fireplace.

"No fear, Missy Edith; I know where find everything," said Pablo, who now went and peered through the hole in the front door, to see if the robbers were coming to it again; but he could see and hear nothing for some time.

At last the attack was renewed; the dogs flew backwards and forwards, sometimes to one door and then to another, as if both were to be assailed; and at the same time a crash in Alice's bedchamber told them that the robbers had burst in the small window in that room, which Humphrey had not paid any attention to, as it

was so small that a man could hardly introduce his body through it. Humphrey immediately called Holdfast and opened the door of the room; for he thought that a man forcing his way in would be driven back or held by the dog, and he and Pablo dared not leave the two doors. Watch, the other dog, followed Holdfast into the bedroom, and oaths and curses, mingled with the savage yells of the dogs, told them that a conflict was going on. Both doors were now battered with heavy pieces of timber at the same time, and Pablo said,—

“Great many robbers here.”

A moment or more had passed, during which Pablo and Humphrey had both again fired their guns through the door, when of a sudden other sounds were heard—shots fired outside, loud cries, and angry oaths and exclamations.

“The Intendant’s people are come,” said Humphrey; “I am sure of it.”

Shortly afterwards Humphrey heard his name called by Edward, and he replied, and went to the door and undid the barricades.

“Get a light, Alice dear,” said Humphrey; “we are all safe now.—I will open the door directly, Edward, but in the dark I cannot see the fastenings.”

“Are you all safe, Humphrey?”

“Yes, all safe, Edward. Wait till Alice brings a light.”

Alice soon brought one, and then the door was unfastened. Edward stepped over the body of a man which lay at the threshold, saying,—

“You have settled somebody there, at all events,” and then caught Edith and Alice in his arms.

He was followed by Oswald and some other men, leading in the prisoners.

“Bind that fellow fast, Oswald,” said Edward.—“Get

another light, Pablo; let us see who it is that lies outside the door."

"First see who is in my bedroom, Edward," said Alice, "for the dogs are still there."

"In your bedroom, dearest? Well, then, let us go there first."

Edward went in with Humphrey, and found a man half in the window and half out, held by the throat, and apparently suffocated, by the two dogs. He took the dogs off, and desiring the men to secure the robber, and ascertain whether he was alive or not, he returned to the sitting-room, and then went to examine the body outside the door.

"Corbould, as I live!" cried Oswald.

"Yes," replied Edward; "he has gone to his account. God forgive him!"

On inquiry they found that of all the robbers, to the number of ten, not one had escaped: eight they had made prisoners; Corbould and the man whom the dogs had seized, and who was found to be quite dead, made up the number. The robbers were all bound and guarded; and then leaving them under the charge of Oswald and five of his men, Edward and Humphrey set off with seven more to Clara's cottage, to ascertain if there were any more to be found there. They arrived by two o'clock in the morning, and on knocking several times the door was opened, and they seized another man, the only one who was found in it. They then went back to the cottage with their prisoner, and by the time that they had arrived it was daylight. As soon as the party sent by the Intendant had been supplied with a breakfast, Edward bade farewell to Humphrey and his sisters, that he might return and deliver up his prisoners. Pablo went with him to bring back the cart which carried the two dead bodies. This capture cleared the forest of

the robbers who had so long infested it, for they never had any more attempts made from that time.

Before Edward left, Humphrey and he examined the box which Humphrey had dug up from under the oak, and which had occasioned such danger to the inmates of the cottage; for one of the men stated to Edward that they suspected that the box which they had seen Humphrey dig out contained treasure, and that without they had seen him in possession of it they never should have attacked the cottage, although Corbould had often persuaded them so to do; but as they knew that he was only seeking revenge—and they required money to stimulate them—they had refused, as they considered that there was nothing to be obtained in the cottage worth the risk; as they knew that the inmates had fire-arms, and would defend themselves. On examination of its contents they found in the box a sum of forty pounds in gold, a bag of silver, and some other valuables in silver spoons, candlesticks, and ornaments for women. Edward took a list of the contents, and when he returned he stated to the Intendant all that had occurred, and requested to know what should be done with the money and other articles which Humphrey had found.

“I wish you had said nothing to me about it,” said the Intendant, “although I am pleased with your open and fair dealing. I cannot say anything, except that you had better let Humphrey keep it till it is claimed—which, of course, it never will be. But, Edward, Humphrey must come over here and make his deposition, as I must report the capture of these robbers and send them to trial. You had better go with the clerk and take the depositions of Pablo and your sisters, while Humphrey comes here. You can stay till his return. Their depositions are not of so much consequence as

Humphrey's, as they can only speak as to the attack; but Humphrey's I must take down myself."

When Patience and Clara heard that Edward was going over, they obtained leave to go with him to see Alice and Edith, and were to be escorted back by Humphrey. This the Intendant consented to, and they had a very merry party. Humphrey remained two days at the Intendant's house, and then returned to the cottage, where Edward had taken his place during his absence.