

## CHAPTER XXII.

EDWARD was certain that Mr. Laigton would not have advised him to leave London if he had not considered that it was dangerous to remain. He therefore first called upon the Hamburg merchant, who, upon his explanation, gave him a letter of credit to a friend who resided in the city of York; and then returned to the hotel, packed up his saddle-bags, paid his reckoning, and, mounting his horse, set off on the northern road. As it was late in the afternoon before he was clear of the metropolis, he did not proceed farther than Barnet, where he pulled up at the inn. As soon as he had seen his horse attended to, Edward, with his saddle-bags on his arm, went into the room in the inn where all the travellers congregated. Having procured a bed, and given his saddle-bags into the charge of the hostess, he sat down by the fire, which, although it was warm weather, was nevertheless kept alight.

Edward had made no alteration in the dress which he had worn since he had been received in the house of Mr. Heatherstone. It was plain, although of good materials. He wore a high-crowned hat, and altogether would, from his attire, have been taken for one of the Roundhead party. His sword and shoulder-belt were indeed of more gay appearance than those usually worn by the Roundheads; but this was the only difference.

When Edward first entered the room there were three persons in it whose appearance was not very prepossessing. They were dressed in what had once been very gay attire, but which now exhibited tarnished lace, stains of wine, and dust from travelling. They eyed him as he entered with his saddle-bags, and one of them said,—

“That’s a fine horse you were riding, sir. Has he much speed?”

“He has,” replied Edward as he turned away and went into the bar to speak with the hostess and give his property into her care.

“Going north, sir?” inquired the same person when Edward returned.

“Not exactly,” replied Edward, walking to the window to avoid further conversation.

“The Roundhead is on the stilts,” observed another of the party.

“Yes,” replied the first. “It is easy to see that he has not been accustomed to be addressed by gentlemen. For half a pin I would slit his ears.”

Edward did not choose to reply; he folded his arms, and looked at the man with contempt.

The hostess, who had overheard the conversation, now called for her husband, and desired him to go into the room and prevent any further insults to the young gentleman who had just come in. The host, who knew the parties, entered the room, and said,—

“Now you’ll clear out of this as fast as you can; be off with you, and go to the stables, or I’ll send for somebody whom you will not like.”

The three men rose and swaggered, but obeyed the host’s orders, and left the room.

“I am sorry, young master, that these roisterers should have affronted you, as my wife tells me that

they have. I did not know that they were in the house. We cannot well refuse to take in their horses; but we know well who they are, and if you are travelling far you had better ride in company."

"Thank you for your caution, my good host," replied Edward. "I thought that they were highwaymen, or something of that sort."

"You have made a good guess, sir; but nothing has yet been proved against them, or they would not be here. In these times we have strange customers, and hardly know who we take in. You have a good sword there, sir, I have no doubt; but I trust that you have other arms."

"I have," replied Edward, opening his doublet, and showing his pistols.

"That's right, sir. Will you take anything before you go to bed?"

"Indeed I will, for I am hungry; anything will do, with a pint of wine."

As soon as he had supped, Edward asked the hostess for his saddle-bags, and went up to his bed.

Early the next morning he rose and went to the stable to see his horse fed. The three men were in the stables, but they did not say anything to him. Edward returned to the inn, called for breakfast, and, as soon as he had finished, took out his pistols to renew the priming. While so occupied he happened to look up, and perceived one of the men with his face against the window, watching him. "Well, now you see what you have to expect if you try your trade with me," thought Edward. "I am very glad that you have been spying." Having replaced his pistols, Edward paid his reckoning, and went to the stable, desiring the hostler to saddle his horse and fix on his saddle-bags. As soon as this was done he mounted and rode off. Before he was well clear of

the town the highwaymen cantered past him on three well-bred active horses. "I presume we shall meet again," thought Edward, who for some time cantered at a gentle pace; and then, as his horse was very fresh, he put him to a faster pace, intending to do a long day's work. He had ridden about fifteen miles when he came to a heath, and as he continued at a fast trot he perceived the three highwaymen about a quarter of a mile in advance of him. They were descending a hill which was between them, and he soon lost sight of them again. Edward now pulled up his horse to let him recover his wind, and walked him gently up the hill. He had nearly gained the summit when he heard the report of firearms, and soon afterwards a man on horseback, in full speed, galloped over the hill towards him. He had a pistol in his hand, and his head turned back. The reason for this was soon evident, as immediately after him appeared the three highwaymen in pursuit. One fired his pistol at the man who fled, and missed him. The man then fired in return, and with true aim, as one of the highwaymen fell. All this was so sudden that Edward had hardly time to draw his pistol and put spurs to his horse before the parties were upon him and were passing him. Edward levelled at the second highwayman as he passed him, and the man fell. The third highwayman, perceiving this, turned his horse to the side of the road, cleared a ditch, and galloped away across the heath. The man who had been attacked had pulled up his horse when Edward came to his assistance, and now rode up to him, saying,—

"I have to thank you, sir, for your timely aid; for these rascals were too many for me."

"You are not hurt, I trust, sir?" replied Edward.

"No, not the least; the fellow singed my curls, though, as you may perceive. They attacked me about

half a mile from here. I was proceeding north when I heard the clatter of hoofs behind me ; I looked round, and saw at once what they were, and I sprung my horse out of the road to a thicket close to it, that they might not surround me. One of the three rode forward to stop my passage, and the other two rode round to the back of the thicket to get behind me. I then saw that I had separated them, and could gain a start upon them by riding back again, which I did as fast as I could, and they immediately gave chase. The result you saw. Between us we have broken up the gang ; for both these fellows seem dead, or nearly so."

"What shall we do with them ?"

"Leave them where they are," replied the stranger. "I am in a hurry to get on. I have important business at the city of York, and cannot waste my time in depositions and such nonsense. It is only two scoundrels less in the world, and there's an end of the matter."

As Edward was equally anxious to proceed, he agreed with the stranger that it was best to do as he proposed.

"I am also going north," replied Edward, "and am anxious to get there as soon as I can."

"With your permission we will ride together," said the stranger. "I shall be the gainer, as I shall feel that I have one with me who is to be trusted to in case of any further attacks during our journey."

There was such a gentlemanlike, frank, and courteous air about the stranger that Edward immediately assented to his proposal of their riding in company for mutual protection. He was a powerful, well-made man, of apparently about one or two and twenty, remarkably handsome in person, dressed richly, but not gaudily, in the Cavalier fashion, and wore a hat with a feather. As they proceeded, they entered into conversation on indifferent matters for some time, neither party attempt-

ing by any question to discover who his companion might be. Edward had more than once, when the conversation flagged for a minute, considered what reply he should give in case his companion should ask him the cause of his journey, and at last had made up his mind what to say.

A little before noon they pulled up to bait their horses at a small village, the stranger observing that he avoided St. Albans, and all other large towns, as he did not wish to satisfy the curiosity of people, or to have his motions watched; and therefore, if Edward had no objection, he knew the country so well that he could save time by allowing him to direct their path. Edward was, as may be supposed, very agreeable to this, and during their whole journey they never entered a town except they rode through it after dark, and put up at humble inns on the roadside, where, if not quite so well attended to, at all events they were free from observation.

It was, however, impossible that this reserve could continue long, as they became more and more intimate every day. At last the stranger said,—

“Master Armitage, we have travelled together for some time, interchanging thoughts and feelings, but with due reserve as respects ourselves and our own plans. Is this to continue? If so, of course you have but to say so; but if you feel inclined to trust me, I have the same feeling towards you. By your dress I should imagine that you belonged to a party to which I am opposed; but your language and manners do not agree with your attire; and I think a hat and feathers would grace that head better than the steeple-crowned affair which now covers it. It may be that the dress is only assumed as a disguise—you know best. However, as I say, I feel confidence in you, to whatever party you may belong, and I give you credit for your prudence

and reserve in these troubled times. I am a little older than you, and may advise you; and I am indebted to you, and cannot therefore betray you—at least I trust you believe so.”

“I do believe it,” replied Edward; “and I will so far answer you, Master Chaloner, that this attire of mine is not the one which I would wear if I had my choice.”

“I believe that,” replied Chaloner; “and I cannot help thinking you are bound north on the same business as myself—which is, I confess to you honestly, to strike a blow for the King. If you are on the same errand, I have two old relations in Lancashire who are staunch to the cause, and I am going to their house to remain until I can join the army. If you wish it, you shall come with me, and I will promise you kind treatment and safety while under their roof.”

“And the names of these relatives of yours, Master Chaloner?” said Edward.

“Nay, you shall have them; for when I trust I trust wholly. Their name is Conynghame.”

Edward took his letters from out of his side-pocket, and handed one of them to his fellow-traveller. The address was, “To the worthy Mistress Conynghame of Portlake, near Bolton, county of Lancaster.”

“It is to that address that I am going myself,” said Edward, smiling. “Whether it is the party you refer to, you best know.”

Chaloner burst out with a loud laugh.

“This is excellent! Two people meet, both bound on the same business, both going to the same rendezvous, and for three days do not venture to trust each other.”

“The times require caution,” replied Edward, as he replaced his letter.

“You are right,” answered Chaloner, “and you are

of my opinion. I know now that you have both prudence and courage. The first quality has been scarcer with us Cavaliers than the last; however now all reserve is over, at least on my part."

"And on mine also," replied Edward.

Chaloner then talked about the chances of the war. He stated that King Charles's army was in a good state of discipline, and well found in everything; that there were hundreds in England who would join it as soon as it had advanced far enough into England; and that everything wore a promising appearance.

"My father fell at the battle of Naseby, at the head of his retainers," said Chaloner, after a pause; "and they have contrived to fine the property, so that it has dwindled from thousands down to hundreds. Indeed, were it not for my good old aunts, who will leave me their estates, and who now supply me liberally, I should be but a poor gentleman."

"Your father fell at Naseby?" said Edward. "Were you there?"

"I was," replied Chaloner.

"My father also fell at Naseby," said Edward.

"Your father did?" replied Chaloner. "I do not recollect the name—Armitage—he was not in command there, was he?" continued Chaloner.

"Yes, he was," replied Edward.

"There was none of that name among the officers that I can recollect, young sir," replied Chaloner, with an air of distrust. "Surely you have been misinformed."

"I have spoken the truth," replied Edward, "and have now said so much that I must, to remove your suspicion, say more than perhaps I should have done. My name is not Armitage, although I have been so called for some time. You have set me the example of



confidence, and I will follow it. My father was Colonel Beverley, of Prince Rupert's troop."

Chaloner started with astonishment.

"I'm sure that what you say is true," at last said he; "for I was thinking who it was that you reminded me of. You are the very picture of your father. Although a boy at the time, I knew him well, Master Beverley; a more gallant Cavalier never drew sword. Come, we must be sworn friends in life and death, Beverley," continued Chaloner, extending his hand, which was eagerly grasped by Edward, who then confided to Chaloner the history of his life. When he had concluded, Chaloner said,—

"We all heard of the firing of Arnwood, and it is at this moment believed that all the children perished. It is one of the tales of woe that our nurses repeat to the children, and many a child has wept at your supposed deaths. But tell me, now—had you not fallen in with me, was it your intention to have joined the army under your assumed name of Armitage?"

"I hardly know what I intended to do. I wanted a friend to advise me."

"And you have found one, Beverley. I owe my life to you, and I will repay the debt as far as is in my power. You must not conceal your name to your sovereign; the very name of Beverley is a passport; but the son of Colonel Beverley will be indeed welcomed. Why, the very name will be considered as a harbinger of good fortune. Your father was the best and truest soldier that ever drew sword, and his memory stands unrivalled for loyalty and devotion. We are near to the end of our journey; yonder is the steeple of Bolton church. The old ladies will be out of their wits when they find that they have a Beverley under their roof."

Edward was much delighted at this tribute paid to his father's memory, and the tears more than once started into his eyes as Chaloner renewed his praise.

Late in the evening they arrived at Portlake, a grand old mansion situated in a park crowded with fine old timber. Chaloner was recognized as they rode up the avenue by one of the keepers, who hastened forward to announce his arrival; and the domestics had opened the door for them before they arrived at it. In the hall they were met by the old ladies, who expressed their delight at seeing their nephew, as they had had great fear that something had happened to him.

"And something did very nearly happen to me," replied Chaloner, "had it not been for the timely assistance of my friend here, who, notwithstanding his Puritan attire, I hardly need tell you is a Cavalier devoted to the good cause, when I state that he is the son of Colonel Beverley, who fell at Naseby with my good father."

"No one can be more welcome, then," replied the old ladies, who extended their hands to Edward. They then went into a sitting-room, and supper was ordered to be sent up immediately.

"Our horses will be well attended to, Edward," said Chaloner. "We need not any longer look after them ourselves.—And now, good aunts, have you no letters for me?"

"Yes, there are several; but you had better eat first."

"Not so; let me have the letters. We can read them before supper, and talk them over when at table."

One of the ladies produced the letters, which Chaloner, as he read them, handed over to Edward for his perusal. They were from General Middleton and some other friends of Chaloner's who were with the army, giving him information as to what was going on, and what their prospects were supposed to be.

“ You see that they have marched already,” said Chaloner, “ and I think the plan is a good one, and it has put General Cromwell in an awkward position. Our army is now between his and London, with three days’ march in advance. And we shall now be able to pick up our English adherents, who can join us without risk as we go along. It has been a bold step, but a good one ; and if they only continue as well as they have begun, we shall succeed. The Parliamentary army is not equal to ours in numbers as it is, and we shall add to ours daily. The King has sent to the Isle of Man for the Earl of Derby, who is expected to join to-morrow.”

“ And where is the army at this moment ? ” inquired Edward.

“ They will be but a few miles from us to-night, their march is so rapid. To-morrow we will join if it pleases.”

“ Most willingly,” replied Edward.

After an hour’s more conversation, they were shown into their rooms, and retired for the night.