

CHAPTER VI.

ALICE and Edith were very anxious to see the cow, and especially to see the calf; but Humphrey told them that they must not go near till he went with them, and then they should see it. After dinner was over, Jacob and Edward took their guns, and Humphrey put Billy in the cart and followed them. They found the bull where they left him, standing quite still. He tossed his head when they approached him, which they did carefully, but he did not attempt to run at them.

"It's my idea that he has nearly bled to death," said Jacob; "but there's nothing like making sure. Edward, put a bullet just three inches behind his shoulder, and that will make all safe."

Edward did so, and the animal fell dead. They went up to the carcass, which they estimated to weigh at least fifty stone.

"It is a noble beast," said Edward; "I wonder we never thought of killing one before."

"They aren't game, Edward," replied Jacob.

"No, they are not now, Jacob," said Humphrey. "As you and Edward claim all the game, I shall claim the cattle as my portion of the forest. Recollect, there are more, and I mean to have more of them yet."

"Well, Humphrey, I give you up all my rights, if I have any."

“And I all mine,” added Edward.

“Be it so. Some day you’ll see what I shall do,” replied Humphrey. “Recollect, I am to sell the cattle for my own self-advantage until I buy a gun, and one or two things which I want.”

“I agree to that too, Humphrey,” replied Jacob; “and now to skin the beast.”

The skinning and quartering took up the whole afternoon, and Billy was heavily laden when he drew his cart home. The next day Jacob went to Lymington to sell the bull and the skin, and returned home well satisfied with the profit he had made. He had procured, as Humphrey requested, some milk-pans, a small churn, and milk-pail, out of the proceeds, and had still money left. Humphrey told them that he had not been to see the heifer yet, as he thought it better not.

“She will be tame to-morrow morning, depend upon it,” said he.

“But if you give her nothing to eat, will not the calf die?”

“Oh no, I should think not. I shall not starve her, but I will make her thankful for her food before she gets it. I shall cut her some grass to-morrow morning.”

We may as well here say that the next morning Humphrey went in to the heifer. At first she tossed about and was very unruly. He gave her some grass, and patted her and coaxed her for a long while, till at last she allowed him to touch her gently. Every day for a fortnight he brought her her food, and she became quieter every day, till at last, if he went up to her, she never pushed with her horns. The calf became quite tame, and as the heifer perceived that the calf was quiet, she became more quiet herself. After the fortnight, Humphrey would not allow the heifer to receive anything

except from the hand of Alice, that the animal might know her well; and when the calf was a month old, Humphrey made the first attempt to milk her. This was resisted at first by kicking, but in the course of ten days she gave down her milk. Humphrey then let her loose for a few days to run about the yard, still keeping the calf in the cowhouse, and putting the heifer in to her at night, milking her before the calf was allowed to suck. After this, he ventured upon the last experiment, which was to turn her out of the yard to graze in the forest. She went away to some distance, and he was fearful that she would join the herd, but in the evening she came back again to her calf. After this he was satisfied, and turned her out every day, and they had no further trouble with her. He would not, however, wean the calf till the winter time, when she was shut up in the yard and fed on hay. He then weaned the calf, which was a cow calf, and they had no more trouble with the mother. Alice soon learnt to milk her, and she became very tractable and good-tempered. Such was the commencement of the dairy at the cottage.

“Jacob,” said Humphrey, “when do you go to Lymington again?”

“Why, I do not know. The end of August, as it is now, and the month of September is not good for venison, and therefore I do not see what I shall have to go for.”

“Well, I wish, when you do go, you would get something for Alice and something for me.”

“And what is it that Alice wants?”

“She wants a kitten.”

“Well, I think I may find that. And what do you want, Humphrey?”

“I want a dog. Smoker is yours altogether; I want a dog for myself, to bring up after my own fashion.”

“ Well, I ought to look out for another dog; although Smoker is not old, yet one ought to have two dogs to one’s gun, in case of accident.”

“ I think so too,” replied Edward. “ See if you can get two puppies, one for Humphrey, and one for myself.”

“ Well, I must not go to Lymington for them. I must cross the forest, to see some friends of mine whom I have not seen for a long while, and I may get some of the right sort of puppies there, just like Smoker. I’ll do that at once, as I may have to wait for them, even if I do have the promise.”

“ May I go with you, Jacob? ” said Edward.

“ Why, I would rather not; they may ask questions.”

“ And so would I rather he would not, for he will shirk his work here.”

“ Why, what is there to do, Humphrey? ”

“ Plenty to do, and hard work, Edward; the acorns are fit for beating down, and we want a great many bushels for the pigs. We have to fatten three, and to feed the rest during the winter. I cannot get on well with only Alice and Edith; so if you are not very lazy, you will stay with us and help us.”

“ Humphrey, you think of nothing but your pigs and farmyard.”

“ And you are too great a hunter to think of anything but a stag; but a bird in the hand’s worth two in the bush, in my opinion; and I’ll make more by my farmyard than you ever will by the forest.”

“ Humphrey has nothing to do with the poultry and eggs, has he, Edward? they belong to Edith and me; and Jacob shall take them to Lymington and sell them for us, and get us some new clothes for Sunday, for these begin to look rather worn—and no wonder.”

“ No, dearest, the poultry are yours, and I will sell

them for you as soon as you please, and buy what you wish with the money," replied Jacob. "Let Humphrey make all the money he can with his pigs."

"Yes; and the butter belongs to me, if I make it," said Alice.

"No, no," replied Humphrey, "that's not fair; I find cows, and get nothing for them. We must go halves, Alice."

"Well, I have no objection to that," said Alice, "because you find the cows and feed them. I made a pound of butter yesterday, just to try what I could do; but it's not firm, Jacob. How is that?"

"I have seen the women make butter, and know now, Alice; so next time I will be with you. I suppose you did not wash your buttermilk well out, nor put any salt in it."

"I did not put any salt in it."

"But you must, or the butter will not keep."

It was arranged that Edward should stay at home to assist in collecting the acorns for the pigs, and that Jacob should cross the forest alone to see after the puppies; and he set off the next morning. He was away two days, and then returned; said that he had a promise of two puppies, and that he had chosen them; they were of the same breed as Smoker, but they were only a fortnight old, and could not be taken from the mother yet awhile, so that he had arranged to call again when they were three or four months old, and able to follow him across the forest. Jacob also said that he was very near being hurt by a stag that had made at him—for at that season of the year the stags were very dangerous and fierce—but that he had fired, and struck off one of the animal's horns, which made it turn.

"You must be careful, Edward, how you go about the forest now."

"I have no wish to go," replied Edward; "as we cannot hunt, it is no use; but in November we shall begin again."

"Yes," replied Jacob, "that will be soon enough. To-morrow I will help you with the acorns, and the day afterwards, if I am spared, I will take Alice's poultry to Lymington for her."

"Yes, and when you come back you will help me to churn, for then I shall have a good deal of cream."

"And don't forget to buy the kitten, Jacob," said Edith.

"What's the good of a kitten?" said Humphrey, who was very busy making a birdcage for Edith, having just finished one for Alice; "she will only steal your cream and eat up your birds."

"No, she won't; for we'll shut the door fast where the milk and cream is, and we'll hang the cages so high that Miss Puss won't be able to get at them."

"Well, then, a kitten will be useful," said Edward, "for she will teach you to be careful."

"My coat is a little the worse for wear, and so is yours, Edward. We must try if we cannot, like Alice, find means to pay for another."

"Humphrey," said Jacob, "I'll buy all you want, and trust to you for paying me again as soon as you can."

"That's just what I want," replied Humphrey. "Then you must buy me a gun and a new suit of clothes first; when I've paid for them, I shall want some more tools, and some nails and screws, and two or three other things; but I will say nothing about them just now. Get me my gun, and I'll try what the forest will do for me—especially after I have my dog."

"Well, we shall see; perhaps you'll like to come out

with me sometimes and learn woodcraft, for Edward knows as much as I do now, and can go out by himself."

"Of course I will, Jacob; I want to learn everything."

"Well, there's a little money left in the bag yet, and I will go to Lymington to-morrow. Now I think it is time that we went to bed; and if you are all as tired as I am, you will sleep soundly."

Jacob put into the cart the next day about forty of the chickens which Alice had reared; the others were kept to increase the number in the poultry-yard. They had cost little or nothing bringing up; for when quite young they only had a little oatmeal cake, and afterwards, with the potatoes which were left, they found themselves, as fowls can always do when they have a great range of ground to go over.

Jacob came back at sunset with all the articles. He brought a new suit for Alice and Edith, with some needles, and thread, and worsted, and gave her some money which was left from the sale of the chickens, after he had made the purchases. He also bought a new suit for Edward and Humphrey, and a gun, which was much approved of by Humphrey, as it had a larger bore and carried a heavier bullet than either Jacob's or Edward's; and there was a white kitten for Alice and Edith. There was no news, only that the Levellers had opposed Cromwell, and he had put them down with the other troops, and Jacob said that it appeared that they were all squabbling and fighting with each other.

Time passed, the month of November came on without anything to disturb the daily employments of the family in the forest, when one evening Jacob, who had returned from hunting with Edward (the first time they had been out since the season commenced), told Alice

that she must do all she could to give them a good dinner the next day, as it was to be a feast.

“Why so, Jacob?”

“If you cannot guess, I won't tell you till the time comes,” replied Jacob.

“Well, then, Humphrey must help us,” replied Alice, “and we will do what we can. I will try, now that we have some meat, to make a grand dinner.”

Alice made all the preparations, and had for dinner the next day a piece of baked venison, a venison stew, a pair of roast chickens, and an apple pie—which, for them, was a very grand dinner indeed. And it was very well dressed: for Jacob had taught her to cook, and by degrees she improved upon Jacob's instruction. Humphrey was quite as clever at it as she was; and little Edith was very useful, as she plucked the fowls, and watched the things while they were cooking.

“And now I'll tell you,” said Jacob, after saying grace, “why I asked you for a feast this day. It is because exactly on this day twelvemonth I brought you all to the cottage. Now you know.”

“I did not know it certainly, but I dare say you are right,” replied Edward.

“And now, children, tell me,” said Jacob, “has not this year passed very quickly and very happily—quite as quickly and quite as happily as if you had been staying at Arnwood?”

“Yes, more so,” replied Humphrey; “for then very often I did not know what to do to amuse myself, and since I have been here the days have always been too short.”

“I agree with Humphrey,” said Edward.

“And I am sure I do,” replied Alice; “I'm always busy, and always happy, and I'm never scolded about

dirtying my clothes or tearing them, as I used to be."

"And what does little Edith say?"

"I like to help Alice, and I like to play with the kitten," replied Edith.

"Well, my children," said Jacob, "depend upon it, you are most happy when your days pass quickest, and that is only the case when you have plenty to do. Here you are in peace and safety; and may it please God that you may continue so! We want very few things in this world—that is, we really want very few things, although we wish and sigh for many. You have health and spirits, which are the greatest blessings in life. Who would believe, to look at you all, that you were the same children that I brought away from Arnwood? You were then very different from what you are now. You are strong and healthy, rosy and brown, instead of being fair and delicate. Look at your sisters, Edward. Do you think that any of your former friends—do you think that Martha, who had the care of them, would know them?"

Edward smiled, and said, "Certainly not; especially in their present dresses."

"Nor would, I think, Humphrey be known again. You, Edward, were always a stout boy; and, except that you have grown very much, and are more brown, there is no great difference. You would be known again, even in your present forester's dress; but what I say is, that we ought to be thankful to the Almighty that you, instead of being burnt in your beds, have found health, and happiness, and security, in a forester's hut; and I ought to be, and am, most thankful to heaven, that it has pleased it to spare my life, and enable me to teach you all to the present how to gain your own livelihoods after I am called away. I have been able so far to fulfil my promise to your noble

father; and you know not what a heavy load on my mind is every day lessened, as I see each day that you are more and more able to provide for yourselves. God bless you, dear children, and may you live to see many returns, and happy returns, of the day;" and Jacob was so much moved as he said this, that a tear was seen rolling down his furrowed cheek.

The second winter now came on. Jacob and Edward went out hunting usually about twice a week; for the old forester complained of stiffness and rheumatism, and not feeling so active as he used to be. Humphrey now accompanied Edward perhaps one day in the week, but not more, and they seldom returned without having procured venison, for Edward knew his business well, and no longer needed the advice of Jacob. As the winter advanced, Jacob gave up going out altogether. He went to Lymington to sell the venison and procure what was necessary for the household; such as oatmeal and flour, which were the principal wants; but even these journeys weakened him, and it was evident that the old man's constitution was breaking fast. Humphrey was always busy. One evening he was making something which puzzled them all. They asked him what it was for, but he would not tell them.

"It's an experiment that I am trying," said he, as he was bending a hazel stick. "If it answers, you shall know; if it does not, I've only had a little trouble for nothing. Jacob, I hope you will not forget the salt tomorrow when you go to Lymington, for my pigs are ready for killing, and we must salt the greatest part of the pork. After the legs and shoulders have lain long enough in salt, I mean to try if I cannot smoke them, and if I do, I'll then smoke some bacon. Won't that be jolly, Alice? Won't you like to have a great piece of bacon hanging up

there, and only to have to get on a stool to cut off what you want, when Edward and I come home hungry, and you've nothing to give us to eat? "

" I shall be very glad to have it, and I think so will you too, by the way you talk."

" I shall, I assure you.—Jacob, didn't you say the ash sticks were the best to smoke bacon with? "

" Yes, boy : when you are ready, I'll tell you how to manage. My poor mother used to smoke very well up this very chimney."

" I think that will do," said Humphrey, letting his hazel stick spring up, after he had bent it down, " but to-morrow I shall find out."

" But what is it for, Humphrey? " said Edith.

" Go away, puss, and play with your kitten," replied Humphrey, putting away his tools and his materials in a corner. " I've a great deal on my hands now, but I must kill my pigs before I think of anything else."

The next day Jacob took the venison into Lymington, and brought back the salt and other articles required. The pigs were then killed, and salted down under Jacob's directions ; his rheumatism did not allow him to assist, but Humphrey and Edward rubbed in the salt, and Alice took the pieces of pork away to the tub when they were finished. Humphrey had been out the day before with the unknown article he had been so long about. The next morning he went out early before breakfast, and when he returned he brought a hare in his hand, which he laid on the table.

" There," said he, " my spring has answered, and this is the fruits of it. Now I'll make some more, and we will have something by way of a change for dinner."

They were very much pleased with Humphrey's success, and he was not a little proud of it.

“ How did you find out how to make it? ”

“ Why, I read in the old book of travels, which Jacob brought home with him last summer, of people catching rabbits and hares in some way like this; I could not make it out exactly, but it gave me the idea.”

We ought to have told the reader that Jacob had more than once brought home an old book or two which he had picked up, or had given him, and that these had been occasionally looked into by Humphrey and Edward, but only now and then, as they had too much to do to find much time for reading, although sometimes, in the evening, they did take them up. When it is considered how young they were and what a practical and busy life they led, this cannot be surprising.