

## CHAPTER VII.

HUMPHREY was now after something else. He had made several traps, and brought in rabbits and hares almost every day. He had also made some bird-traps, and had caught two goldfinches for Alice and Edith, which they put in the cages he had made for them. But as we said, Humphrey was about something else: he was out early in the morning, and in the evening, when the moon was up, he came home late, long after they had all gone to bed; but they never knew why, nor would he tell them. A heavy fall of snow took place, and Humphrey was more out than ever. At last, about a week after the snow had lain on the ground, one morning he came in with a hare and rabbit in his hand, and said,—

“Edward, I have caught something larger than a hare or a rabbit, and you must come and help me, and we must take our guns.—Jacob, I suppose your rheumatism is too bad to let you come too?”

“No; I think I can manage. It's the damp that hurts me so much. This frosty air will do me good, perhaps. I have been much better since the snow fell. Now, then, let us see what you have caught.”

“You will have to walk two miles,” said Humphrey, as they went out.

“I can manage it, Humphrey; so lead the way.”

Humphrey went on till they came close to a clump of

large trees, and then brought them to a pitfall which he had dug, about six feet wide and eight feet long and nine feet deep.

"There's my large trap," said Humphrey, "and see what I have caught in it."

They looked down into the pit, and perceived a young bull in it. Smoker, who was with them, began to bark furiously at it.

"Now, what are we to do? I don't think it is hurt. Can we get it out?" said Humphrey.

"No, not very well. If it was a calf, we might; but it is too heavy: and if we were to get it out alive, we must kill it afterwards, so we had better shoot it at once."

"So I think," replied Humphrey.

"But how did you catch him?" said Edward.

"I read of it in the same book I did about the traps for hares," replied Humphrey. "I dug out the pit and covered it with brambles, and then put snow at the top. This is the thicket that the herd comes to chiefly in winter-time—it is large and dry, and the large trees shelter it; so that is why I chose this spot. I took a large bundle of hay, put some on the snow about the pit, and then strewed some more about in small handfuls, so that the cattle must find it, and pick it up, which I knew they would be glad to do, now that the snow is on the ground. And now, you see, I have succeeded."

"Well, Humphrey, you beat us, I will say," said Edward. "Shall I shoot him?"

"Yes, now that he is looking up."

Edward shot his ball through the forehead of the animal, which fell dead. But they were then obliged to go home for the pony and cart, and ropes to get the animal out of the pit, and a hard job they had of it too; but the pony helped them, and they did get it out at last.

"I will do it easier next time," said Humphrey. "I will make a windlass as soon as I can, and we will soon hoist out another, like they turn a bucket of water up from a well."

"It's nice young meat," said Jacob, who was skinning the bull, "not above eighteen months old, I should think. Had it been a full-grown one, like that we shot, it must have remained where it was, for we never could have got it out."

"Yes, Jacob, we should; for I should have gone down and cut it up in the pit, so that we would have handed it out by bits, if we could not have managed him whole."

They loaded the cart with the skin and quarters of the animal, and then drove home.

"This will go far to pay for the gun, Humphrey," said Jacob, "if it don't pay for more."

"I'm glad of it," said Humphrey; "but I hope it will not be the last which I take."

"That reminds me, Humphrey, of one thing: I think you must come back with the cart and carry away all the entrails of the beast, and remove all the blood which is on the snow, for I've observed that cattle are very scared with the smell and sight of blood. I found that out by once or twice seeing them come to where I have cut the throat of a stag, and as soon as they have put their noses down to where the blood was on the ground, they have put their tails up and galloped away, bellowing at a terrible rate. Indeed I've heard say that if a murder has been committed in a wood, and you want to find the body, that a herd of cattle drove into it will serve you better than even a bloodhound."

"Thank you for telling me that, Jacob, for I should never have supposed it; and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll load the cart with fern litter, and put it at the bottom

of the pit ; so that if I could get a heifer or calf worth taking, it may not be hurt by the fall."

"It must have taken you a long while to dig that pit, Humphrey."

"Yes, it did, and as I got deeper the work was harder, and then I had to carry away all the earth and scatter it about. I was more than a month about it from the time that I began till it was finished, and I had a ladder to go up and down by at last, and carried the baskets of earth up, for it was too deep to throw it out."

"Nothing like patience and perseverance, Humphrey. You've more than I have."

"I'm sure he has more than I have, or shall ever have, I'm afraid," replied Edward.

During this winter, which passed rapidly away, very few circumstances of any consequence occurred. Old Jacob was more or less confined to the cottage by the rheumatism, and Edward hunted either by himself or occasionally with Humphrey. Humphrey was fortunate enough to take a bull and cow calf in his pitfall, both of them about a year and fifteen months old, and by a rude invention of his, by way of windlass, contrived, with the assistance of Edward, to hoist them uninjured out of the pit. They were put into the yard, and after having been starved till they were tamed, they followed the example of the heifer and calf, and became quite tame. These were an important addition to their stock, as may well be imagined. The only mishap under which they laboured was old Jacob's confinement to the cottage, which, as the winter advanced, prevented him from going to Lymington ; they could not, therefore, sell any venison, and Humphrey, by way of experiment, smoked some venison hams, which he hung up with the others. There was another point on which they felt anxiety, which was

that Jacob could not cross the forest to get the puppies which had been promised them; and the time was passed, for it was now January, when he was to have called for them. Edward and Humphrey pressed the old man very hard to let one of them go; but the only answer they could obtain was, "that he'd be better soon." At last, finding that he got worse instead of better, he consented that Edward should go. He gave directions how to proceed, the way he was to take, and a description of the keeper's lodge; cautioned him to call himself by the name of Armitage, and describe himself as his grandson. Edward promised to obey Jacob's directions, and the next morning he set off, mounted upon White Billy, with a little money in his pocket, in case he should want it.

"I wish I was going with you," said Humphrey, as he walked by the side of the pony.

"I wish you were, Humphrey: for my part, I feel as if I were a slave set at liberty. I do justice to old Jacob's kindness and good will, and acknowledge how much we are indebted to him; but still, to be housed up here in the forest, never seeing or speaking to any one, shut out from the world, does not suit Edward Beverley. Our father was a soldier, and a right good one, and if I were old enough, I think even now I should escape and join the royal party, broken as it may be, and by all accounts is, at this moment. Deerstalking is all very well, but I fly at higher game."

"I feel the same as you do," replied Humphrey; "but recollect, Edward, that the old man's very infirm; and what would become of our sisters if we were to leave them?"

"I know that well, Humphrey—I have no idea of leaving them, you may be sure—but I wish they were

with our relations in safety, and then we should be free to act."

"Yes, we should, Edward; but recollect that we are not yet men, and boys of fifteen and thirteen cannot do much, although they may wish to do much."

"It's true that I am only fifteen," replied Edward, "but I am strong enough, and so are you. I think if I had a fair cut at a man's head, I would make him stagger under it, were he as big as a buffalo. As young as I have been to the wars, that I know well; and I recollect my father promising me that I should go with him as soon as I was fifteen."

"What puzzles me," replied Humphrey, "is the fear that old Jacob has of our being seen at Lymington."

"Why, what fear is there?"

"I cannot tell more than you; in my opinion, the fear is only in his own imagination. They surely would not hurt us (if we walked about without arms like other people) because our father had fought for the King? That they have beheaded some people is true; but then they were plotting in the King's favour, or in other ways opposed to Parliament. This I have gathered from Jacob; but I cannot see what we have to fear, if we remain quiet. But now comes the question, Edward (for Jacob has, I believe, said more to me on one subject than he has to you): Suppose you were to leave the forest, what would be the first step which you would take?"

"I should of course state who I was, and take possession of my father's property at Arnwood, which is mine by descent."

"Exactly; so Jacob thinks, and he says that would be your ruin, for the property is sequestered, as they call it, or forfeited to the Parliament, in consequence of your father having fought against it on the King's side. It no

longer belongs to you, and you would not be allowed to take it; on the contrary, you would, in all probability, be imprisoned, and who knows what might then take place? You see there is danger."

"Did Jacob say this to you?"

"Yes, he did: he told me he dare not speak to you on the subject, you were so fiery; and if you heard that the property was confiscated, you would certainly do some rash act, and that anything of the kind would be a pretence for laying hold of you; and then he said that he did not think that he would live long, for he was weaker every day, and that he only hoped his life would be spared another year or two, that he might keep you quiet till better times came. He said that if they supposed that we were all burnt in the house when it was fired, it would give them a fair opportunity of calling you an impostor and treating you accordingly, and that there were so many anxious to have a gift of the property, that you would have thousands of people compassing your death. He said that your making known yourself and claiming your property would be the very conduct that your enemies would wish you to follow, and would be attended with most fatal consequences; for he said, to prove that you were Edward Beverley, you must declare that I and your sisters were in the forest with him, and this disclosure would put the whole family in the power of their bitterest enemies; and what would become of your sisters it would be impossible to say, but most likely they would be put under the charge of some Puritan family, who would have a pleasure in ill-treating and humiliating the daughters of such a man as Colonel Beverley."

"And why did he not tell me all this?"

"He was afraid to say anything to you—he thought

that you would be so mad at the idea of this injustice, that you would do something rash; and he said, 'I pray every night that my otherwise useless life may be spared, for were I to die, I know that Edward would quit the forest.'"

"Never, while my sisters are under my protection," replied Edward; "were they safe, I would be out of it to-morrow."

"I think, Edward, that there is great truth in what Jacob says; you could do no good (for they would not restore your property) by making your seclusion known at present, and you might do a great deal of harm. 'Bide your time' is good advice in such troubled times. I therefore think that I should be very wary if I were you; but I still think that there is no fear of either you or I going out of the forest in our present dresses and under the name Armitage. No one would recognize us: you are grown tall, and so am I, and we are so tanned and sunburnt with air and exercise, that we do look more like children of the forest than the sons of Colonel Beverley."

"Humphrey, you speak very sensibly, and I agree with you. I am not quite so fiery as the old man thinks; and if my bosom burns with indignation, at all events I have sufficient power to conceal my feelings when it is necessary. I can oppose art to art if it becomes requisite, and which, from what you have said, I believe now is really so. One thing is certain, that while King Charles is a prisoner, as he now is, and his party dispersed or gone abroad, I can do nothing, and to make myself known would only be to injure myself and all of us. Keep quiet, therefore, I certainly shall, and also remain as I am now under a false name; but still I must and will mix up with other people and know what is going on. I am willing to live in this forest and protect my sisters as long as it is necessary so



to do; but although I will reside here, I will not be confined to the forest altogether."

"That's exactly what I think too, Edward, what I wish myself; but let us not be too hasty even in this. And now I will wish you a pleasant ride, and, Edward, if you can, procure of the keepers some small shot for me; I much wish to have some."

"I will not forget; good-bye, brother."

Humphrey returned home to attend his farm-yard, while Edward continued his journey through the forest. Some estimate of the character of the two boys may be formed from the above conversation. Edward was courageous and impetuous—hasty in his resolves, but still open to conviction. Brought up as the heir to the property, he felt, more than Humphrey could be expected to do, the mortification of being left a pauper, after such high prospects in his early days; his vindictive feelings against the opposite party were therefore more keen, and his spirit mounted more under the conviction which he laboured. His disposition was naturally warlike, and this disposition had been fostered by his father when he was a child; still a kinder heart or a more generous lad never existed.

Humphrey was of a much more subdued and philosophical temperament, not perhaps so well calculated to lead as to advise; there was great prudence in him united with courage, but his was a passive courage rather than an active one—a courage which if assailed would defend itself valiantly, but would be wary and reflective before it would attack. Humphrey had not that spirit of chivalry possessed by Edward. He was a younger son, and had to earn, in a way, his own fortune, and he felt that his inclinations were more for peace than strife. Moreover, Humphrey had talents which Edward had

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not—a natural talent for mechanics, and an inquisitive research into science, as far as his limited education would permit him. He was more fitted for an engineer or an agriculturist than for a soldier, although there is no doubt that he would have made a very brave soldier, if such was to have become his avocation.

For kindness and generosity of nature he was equal to his brother, and this was the reason why an angry word never passed between them; for the question between them was, not which should have his way, but which should give up most to the wishes of the other. We hardly need say that there never were two brothers who were more attached, and who so mutually respected each other.