

## CHAPTER IX.

EDWARD having finished his meal, and had a good pull at the jug of ale, which was a liquor he had not tasted for a long while, rose from the table and went out of the back door and found there Oswald Partridge. He accosted him, stating the reason for his coming over to him. "I did not know that Jacob had a grandson; indeed I never knew that he had a son. Have you been living with him long?"

"More than a year," replied Edward; "before that I was in the household at Arnwood."

"Then you are of the King's side, I presume?" replied Oswald.

"To death," replied Edward, "when the time comes."

"And I am also; that you may suppose, for never would I give a hound to any one that was not. But we had better go to the kennels; dogs may hear, but they can't repeat."

"I little thought to have met any one but you here when I came," said Edward; "and I will now tell you all that passed between me and the new Intendant." Edward then related the conversation.

"You have been bold," said Oswald; "but perhaps it is all the better. I am to retain my situation, and so are two others; but there are many new hands coming in as rangers. I know nothing of them but that they are little fitted for their places, and rail against

the King all day long, which I suppose is their chief merit in the eyes of those who appoint them. However, one thing is certain, that if those fellows cannot stalk a deer themselves, they will do all they can to prevent others; so you must be on the alert, for the punishment is severe."

"I fear them not; the only difficulty is that we shall not be able to find a sale for the venison now," replied Edward.

"Oh, never fear that; I will give you the names of those who will take all your venison off your hands without any risk on your part, except in the killing of it. They will meet you in the park, lay down ready money, and take it away. I don't know, but I have an idea that this new Intendant, or what you may call him, is not so severe as he pretends to be. Indeed, his permitting you to say what he did, and his own words relative to the colonel, convince me that I am right in the opinion that I formed."

"Do you know who he is?"

"Not much about him, but he is a great friend of General Cromwell's, and they say has done good service to the Parliamentary cause. But we shall meet again, for the forest is free, at all events."

"If you come here," continued Oswald, "do not carry your gun, and see that you are not watched home. There are the dogs for your grandfather. Why, how old must you be? for Jacob is not more than sixty or thereabout."

"I am fifteen past, nevertheless."

"I should have put you down for eighteen or nineteen at least. You are well grown indeed for that age. Well, nothing like a forest life to turn a boy into a man! Can you stalk a deer?"

"I seldom go out without bringing one down."

"Indeed! That Jacob is a master of his craft is certain. But you are young to have learnt it so soon. Can you tell the slot of a brocket from a stag?"

"Yes, and the slot of a brocket from a doe."

"Better still. We must go out together; and besides, I must know where the old man's cottage is (for I do not exactly): in the first place, because I may want to come to you; and in the next, that I may put others on a false scent.—Do you know the clump of large oaks, which they call the Clump Royal?"

"Yes, I do."

"Will you meet me there the day after to-morrow, at early dawn?"

"If I live and do well."

"That's enough. Take the dogs in the leashes, and go away now."

"Many thanks. But I must not leave the pony; he is in the stable."

The keeper nodded adieu to Edward, who left him to go to the stable for the pony. Edward saddled White Billy, and rode away across the forest with the dogs trotting at the pony's heels.

Edward had much to reflect upon as he rode back to the cottage. He felt that his position was one of more difficulty than before. That old Jacob Armitage would not last much longer he was convinced; even now the poor old man was shrunk away to a skeleton with pain and disease. That the livelihood to be procured from the forest would be attended with peril, now that order had been restored and the forest was no longer neglected, was certain; and he rejoiced that Humphrey had, by his assiduity and intelligence, made the farm so profitable as it promised to be. Indeed he felt that, if necessary, they could live upon the proceeds of the farm, and not run the risk of imprisonment by stalking

the deer. But he had told the Intendant that he considered the game as the King's property, and he was resolved that he would at all events run the risk, although he would no longer permit Humphrey so to do. "If anything happens to me," thought Edward, "Humphrey will still be at the cottage to take care of my sisters; and if I'm obliged to fly the country, it will suit well my feelings, as I can then offer my services to those who still support the King." With these thoughts, and many others, he amused himself until, late in the evening, he arrived at the cottage. He found all in bed except Humphrey, who had waited for him, and to whom he narrated all that had passed. Humphrey said little in reply; he wished to think it over before he gave any opinion. He told Edward that Jacob had been very ill the whole of the day, and had requested Alice to read the Bible to him during the evening.

The next morning Edward went to Jacob, who for the last ten days had altogether kept his bed, and gave him the detail of what had happened at the keeper's lodge.

"You have been more bold than prudent, Edward," replied Jacob; "but I could not expect you to have spoken otherwise. You are too proud and too manly to tell a lie, and I am glad that it is so. As for your upholding the King, although he is now a prisoner in their hands, they cannot blame you or punish you for that, as long as you have not weapons in your hands; but now that they have taken the forest under their jurisdiction, you must be careful, for they are the ruling powers at present, and must be obeyed, or the forfeit must be paid. Still I do not ask you to promise me this or that; I only point out to you that your sisters will suffer by any imprudence on your part; and for

their sakes be careful. I say this, Edward, because I feel that my days are numbered, and that in a short time I shall be called away. You will then have all the load on your shoulders which has been latterly on mine: I have no fear for the result if you are prudent; these few months past, during which I have only been a burden to you, have proved that you and Humphrey can find a living here for yourselves and your sisters; and it is fortunate, now that the forest laws are about to be put in force, that you have made the farm so profitable. If I might advise, let your hunting in the forest be confined to the wild cattle; they are not game, and the forest laws do not extend to them, and the meat is as valuable as venison—that is to say, it does not sell so dear, but there is more of it. But stick to the farm as much as you can; for you see, Edward, you do not look like a low-born forester, nor ought you to do so, and the more quiet you keep the better. As for Oswald Partridge, you may trust him; I know him well, and he will prove your friend for my sake as soon as he hears that I am dead. Leave me now; I will talk to you again in the evening. Send Alice to me, my dear boy.”

Edward was much distressed to perceive the change which had taken place in old Jacob. He was evidently much worse, but Edward had no idea how much worse he was. Edward assisted Humphrey in the farm, and in the evening again went to Jacob, and then told him of the arrangement he had made to meet Oswald Partridge on the following morning.

“Go, my boy,” said Jacob; “be as intimate with him as you can, and make a friend of him—nay, if it should be necessary, you may tell him who you are. I did think of telling him myself, as it might be important to you one day as evidence. I think you had

better bring him here to-morrow night, Edward; tell him I am dying, and wish to speak to him before I go. Alice will read the Bible to me now, and I will talk with you another time."

Early the next morning Edward set off to the appointed rendezvous with Oswald Partridge. The Clump Royal, as it was called, from the peculiar size and beauty of the oaks, was about seven miles from the cottage; and at the hour and time indicated Edward, with his gun in his hand and Smoker lying beside him, was leaning against one of those monarchs of the forest. He did not wait long. Oswald Partridge, similarly provided, made his appearance, and Edward advanced to meet him.

"Welcome, Oswald," said Edward.

"And welcome to you also, my fine lad," replied Oswald. "I have been hard questioned about you since we parted—first, by the Roundhead Heatherstone, who plied me in all manner of ways to find out whether you are what you assert, the grandson of Jacob—or some other person. I really believe that he fancies you are the Duke of York: But he could not get any more from me than what I knew. I told him that your grandfather's cottage was his own property, and a grant to his forefathers; that you were brought up at Arnwood, and had joined your grandfather after the death of the colonel, and the murderous burning of the house and all within it by his party. But the pretty little daughter was more curious still. She cross-questioned me in every way when her father was not present, and at last begged me as a favour to tell you not to take the deer, as her father was very strict in his duty, and, if caught, you would be imprisoned."

"Many thanks to her for her caution, but I hope to take one to-day, nevertheless," replied Edward; "a

hart royal is not meat for Roundheads, although the King's servants may feast on them."

"That's truly said. Well, now I must see your woodcraft. You shall be the leader of the chase."

"Think you we can harbour a stag about here?"

"Yes, in this month, no doubt."

"Let us walk on," said Edward. "The wind is fresh from the eastern quarter: we will face it, if you please—or rather, keep it blowing on our right cheek for the present."

"'Tis well," replied Oswald: and they walked for about half an hour.

"This is the slot of a doe," said Edward in a low voice, pointing to the marks; "yonder thicket is a likely harbour for the stag." They proceeded, and Edward pointed out to Oswald the slot of the stag into the thicket. They then walked round, and found no marks of the animal having left his lair.

"He is here," whispered Edward; and Oswald made a sign for Edward to enter the thicket, while he walked to the other side. Edward entered the thicket cautiously. In the centre he perceived, through the trees, a small cleared spot, covered with high fern, and felt certain that the stag was lying there. He forced his way on his knees till he had a better view of the place, and then cocked his gun. The noise induced the stag to move his antlers, and discover his lair. Edward could just perceive the eye of the animal through the heath; he waited till the beast settled again, took steady aim, and fired. At the report of the gun another stag sprang up and burst away. Oswald fired and wounded it, but the animal made off, followed by the dogs. Edward, who hardly knew whether he had missed or not, but felt almost certain that he had not, hastened out of the thicket to join in the chase; and as he passed

through the fern patch, perceived that his quarry lay dead. He then followed the chase, and being very fleet of foot, soon came up with Oswald, and passed him without speaking. The stag made for a swampy ground, and finally took to the water beyond it, and stood at bay. Edward then waited for Oswald, who came up with him.

"He has soiled," said Edward, "and now you may go in and kill him."

Oswald, eager in the chase, hastened up to where the dogs and stag were in the water, and put a bullet through the animal's head.

Edward went to him, assisted to drag the stag out of the water, and then Oswald cut its throat, and proceeded to perform the usual offices.

"How did you happen to miss him?" said Oswald, "for these are my shots?"

"Because I never fired at him," said Edward; "my quarry lies dead in the fern—and a fine fellow he is."

"This is a warrantable stag," said Oswald.

"Yes, but mine is a hart royal, as you will see when we go back."

As soon as Oswald had done his work, he hung the quarters of the animal on an oak tree, and went back with Edward.

"Where did you hit him, Edward?" said Oswald, as they walked along.

"I could only see his eye through the fern, and I must have hit him thereabouts."

On their arrival at the spot Oswald found that Edward had put the ball right into the eye of the stag.

"Well," said he, "you made me suppose that you knew something of our craft, but I did not believe that you were so apt as you thought yourself to be. I now confess that you are a master, as far as I can see, in all



branches of the craft. This is indeed a hart royal. Twenty-five antlers, as I live! Come, out with your knife, and let us finish; for if we are to go to the cottage, we have no time to lose. It will be dark in half an hour." They hung all the quarters of the stag as before, and then set off for Jacob's cottage, Edward proposing that Oswald should take the cart and pony to carry the meat home the next morning, and that he would accompany him to bring it back.

"That will do capitally," said Oswald; "and here we are, if I recollect right, and I hope there is something to eat."

"No fear of that—Alice will be prepared for us," replied Edward.

Their dinner was ready for them; and Oswald praised the cooking. He was much surprised to find that Jacob had four grandchildren. After dinner he went into Jacob's room, and remained with him more than an hour. During this conference Jacob confided to Oswald that the four children were the sons and daughters of Colonel Beverley, supposed to have been burnt in the firing of Arnwood. Oswald came out, much surprised as well as pleased with the information, and with the confidence reposed in him. He saluted Edward and Humphrey respectfully, and said, "I was not aware with whom I was in company, sir, as you may well imagine; but the knowledge of it has made my heart glad."

"Nay, Oswald," replied Edward, "remember that I am still Edward Armitage, and that we are the grandchildren of old Jacob."

"Certainly, sir, I will, for your own sake, not forget that such is to be supposed to be the case. I assure you I think it very fortunate that Jacob has confided the secret to me, as it may be in my power to be useful.

I little thought that I should ever have had my dinner cooked by a daughter of Colonel Beverley."

They then entered into a long conversation, during which Oswald expressed his opinion that the old man was sinking fast, and would not last more than three or four days. Oswald had a bed made up for him on the floor of the room where Edward and Humphrey slept, and the next morning they set off, at an early hour, with the pony and cart, loaded it with the venison, and took it across the forest to the keeper's lodge. It was so late when they arrived that Edward consented to pass the night there, and return home on the following morning. Oswald went into the sitting-room to speak with the Intendant of the forest, leaving Edward in the kitchen with Phœbe, the maid-servant. He told the Intendant that he had brought home some fine venison, and wished his orders about it. He also stated that he had been assisted by Edward Armitage, who had brought the venison home for him in his cart, and who was now in the kitchen, as he would be obliged to pass the night there; and on being questioned, he was lavish in his praises of Edward's skill and knowledge of woodcraft, which he declared to be superior to his own.

"It proves that the young man has had much practice, at all events," replied Mr. Heatherstone, smiling. "He has been living at the King's expense, but he must not follow it up at the cost of the Parliament. It would be well to take this young man as a ranger if we could; for although he is opposed to us, yet, if he once took our service, he would be faithful, I am sure. You can propose it to him, Oswald. The haunches of that hart royal must be sent up to General Cromwell to-morrow; the remainder we will give directions for, as soon as I have made up my mind how to dispose of it."

Oswald left the room, and came back to Edward.

"General Cromwell is to have the haunches of your stag," said he to Edward, smiling; "and the Intendant proposes that you should take service as one of the rangers."

"I thank you," replied Edward, "but I've no fancy to find venison for General Cromwell and his Roundheads, and so you may tell the Intendant, with many thanks for his good-will towards me, nevertheless."

"I thought as much; but the man meant kindly, that I really think.—Now, Phœbe, what can you give us to eat, for we are hungry?"

"You shall be served directly," replied Phœbe. "I have some steaks on the fire."

"And you must find a bed for my young friend here."

"I have none in the house, but there is plenty of good straw over the stables."

"That will do," replied Edward; "I'm not particular."

"I suppose not. Why should you be?" replied Phœbe, who was rather old and rather cross. "If you mount the ladder that you will see against the wall, you will find a good bed when you are at the top of it."

Oswald was about to remonstrate, but Edward held up his finger, and no more was said.

As soon as they had finished their supper Phœbe proposed that they should go to bed. It was late, and she would sit up no longer. Edward rose and went out, followed by Oswald, who had given up the keeper's house to the Intendant and his daughter, and slept in the cottage of one of the rangers, about a quarter of a mile off. After some conversation they shook hands and parted, as Edward intended returning very early the next morning, being anxious about old Jacob.

Edward went up the ladder into the loft. There was no door to shut out the wind, which blew piercingly

cold, and after a time he found himself so chilled that he could not sleep. He rose to see if he could not find some protection from the wind, by getting more into a corner; for although Phœbe had told him that there was plenty of straw, it proved that there was very little indeed in the loft, barely enough to lie down upon. Edward, after a time, descended the ladder to walk in the yard, that by exercise he might recover the use of his limbs. At last, turning to and fro, he cast his eyes up to the window of the bedroom above the kitchen, where he perceived a light was still burning. He thought it was Phœbe, the maid, going to bed; and with no very gracious feelings towards her for having deprived him of his own night's rest, he was wishing that she might have the toothache or something else to keep her awake, when suddenly through the white window curtain he perceived a broad light in the room. It increased every moment; and he saw the figure of a female rush past it, and attempt to open the window: the drawing of the curtains showed him that the room was on fire. A moment's thought, and he ran for the ladder by which he had ascended to the loft, and placed it against the window. The flames were less bright, and he could not see the female who had been at the window when he went for the ladder. He ascended quickly and burst open the casement: the smoke poured out in such volumes that it nearly suffocated him, but he went in; and as soon as he was inside, he stumbled against the body of the person who had attempted to open the window, but who had fallen down senseless. As he raised the body the fire, which had been smothered from want of air when all the windows and doors were closed, now burst out, and he was scorched before he could get on the ladder again, with the body in his arms; but he succeeded in getting it down safe. Perceiving that the

clothes were on fire, he held them till they were extinguished, and then, for the first time, discovered that he had brought down the daughter of the Intendant of the forest. There was no time to be lost, so Edward carried her into the stable and left her there, still insensible, upon the straw, in a spare stall, while he hastened to alarm the house. The watering butt for the horses was outside the stable; Edward caught up the pail, filled it, and hastening up the ladder threw it into the room, and then descended for more.

By this time Edward's continual calls of "Fire! fire!" had aroused the people of the house, and also of the cottages adjacent. Mr. Heatherstone came out half dressed, and with horror on his countenance. Phœbe followed screaming, and the other people now hastened from the cottages.

"Save her! my daughter is in the room!" exclaimed Mr. Heatherstone. "Oh, save her, or let me do so!" cried the poor man in agony; but the fire burst out of the window in such force that any attempt would have been in vain.

"Oswald," cried Edward to him, "let the people pass the water up to me as fast as possible. They can do no good looking on."

Oswald set the men to the work, and Edward was now supplied with water so fast that the fire began to diminish. The window was now approachable, and a few more buckets enabled him to put one foot into the room, and then every moment the flames and smoke decreased.

Meanwhile it would be imprissible to describe the agony of the Intendant, who would have rushed up the ladder into the flames, had he not been held by some of the men. "My daughter! my child!—burnt—burnt to death!" exclaimed he, clasping his hands.

At that moment a voice in the crowd called out, "There were four burnt at Arnwood!"

"God of heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Heatherstone, falling down into a swoon, in which state he was carried to a neighbouring cottage.

Meanwhile the supply of water enabled Edward to put out the fire altogether. The furniture of the room was burnt, but the fire had extended no further; and when Edward was satisfied that there was no more danger, he descended the ladder, and left it to others to see that all was safe. He then called Oswald to him, and desired that he would accompany him to the stable.

"O sir," replied Oswald, "this is dreadful! and such a sweet young lady too."

"She is safe and well," replied Edward; "I think so, at least. I brought her down the ladder, and put her in the stable before I attempted to put out the fire. See, there she is; she has not recovered yet from her swoon. Bring some water. She breathes! thank God! There, that will do, Oswald; she is recovering. Now let us cover her up in your cloak, and carry her to your cottage. We will recover her there."

Oswald folded up the still unconscious girl in his cloak, and carried her away in his arms, followed by Edward.

As soon as they arrived at the cottage, the inmates of which were all busy at the keeper's lodge, they put her on a bed, and very soon restored her to consciousness.

"Where is my father?" cried Patience, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered.

"He is safe and well, miss," replied Oswald.

"Is the house burnt down?"

"No. The fire is all out again."

"Who saved me? Tell me."

"Young Armitage, miss."

"Who is he? Oh, I recollect now. But I must go to my father. Where is he?"

"In the other cottage, miss."

Patience attempted to stand, but found that she was too much exhausted, and she fell back again on the bed. "I can't stand," said she. "Bring my father to me."

"I will, miss," replied Oswald.—"Will you stay here, Edward?"

"Yes," replied Edward. He went out of the cottage door, and remained there while Oswald went to Mr. Heatherstone.

Oswald found him sensible, but in deep distress, as may be imagined. "The fire is all out, sir," said Oswald.

"I care not for that. My poor, poor child!"

"Your child is safe, sir," replied Oswald.

"Safe, did you say?" cried Mr. Heatherstone, starting up. "Safe! Where?"

"In my cottage. She has sent me for you."

Mr. Heatherstone rushed out, passed by Edward, who was standing at the door of the other cottage, and was in his daughter's arms. Oswald came out to Edward, who then detailed to him the way in which he had saved the girl.

"Had it not been for the ill-nature of that girl Phœbe, in sending me to sleep where there was no straw, they would all have been burnt," observed Edward.

"She gave you an opportunity of rewarding good for evil," observed Oswald.

"Yes; but I am burnt very much in my arm," said Edward. "Have you anything that will be good for it?"

"Yes, I think I have. Wait a moment."

Oswald went into the cottage and returned with some salve, with which he dressed Edward's arm, which proved to be very severely burnt.

“How grateful the Intendant ought to be—and will be, I have no doubt!” observed Oswald.

“And for that very reason I shall saddle my pony and ride home as fast as I can; and—do you hear, Oswald?—do not show him where I live.”

“I hardly know how I can refuse him if he requires it.”

“But you must not. He will be offering me a situation in the forest by way of showing his gratitude, and I will accept of none. I have no objection to save his daughter, as I would save the daughter of my worst enemy, or my worst enemy himself, from such a dreadful death; but I do not want their thanks or offers of service. I will accept nothing from a Roundhead; and as for the venison in the forest, it belongs to the King, and I shall help myself whenever I think proper. Good-bye, Oswald. You will call and see us when you have time?”

“I will be with you before the week is out, depend upon it,” replied Oswald.

Edward then asked Oswald to saddle his pony for him, as his arm prevented him from doing it himself, and as soon as it was done he rode away for the cottage.

Edward rode fast, for he was anxious to get home and ascertain the state of poor old Jacob; and, moreover, his burnt arm was very painful. He was met by Humphrey about a mile from the cottage, who told him that he did not think that the old man could last many hours, and that he was very anxious to see him. As the pony was quite tired with the fast pace that Edward had ridden, Edward pulled up to a walk, and, as they went along, acquainted Humphrey with what had passed.

“Is your arm very painful?”

“Yes, it is indeed,” replied Edward; “but it can't be helped.”

“No, of course not; but it may be made more easy.



I know what will do it some good ; for I recollect when Benjamin burnt his hand at Arnwood what they applied to it, and it gave him great relief."

" Yes, very likely ; but I am not aware that we have any drugs or medicine in the cottage. But here we are : will you take Billy to the stable, while I go on to old Jacob ? "

" Thank God that you are come, Edward," said the old forester, " for I was anxious to see you before I die ; and something tells me that I have but a short time to remain here."

" Why should you say so ? Do you feel very ill ? "

" No, not ill ; but I feel that I am sinking fast. Recollect that I am an old man, Edward."

" Not so very old, Jacob. Oswald said that you were not more than sixty years old."

" Oswald knows nothing about it. I am past seventy-six, Edward ; and you know, Edward, the Bible says that the days of men are threescore years and ten ; so that I am beyond the mark. And now, Edward, I have but few words to say. Be careful—if not for your own sake, at least for your little sisters'. You are young, but you are strong and powerful above your years, and can better protect them than I could. I see darker days yet coming ; but it is His will, and who shall doubt that that is right ? I pray you not to make your birth and lineage known as yet—it can do no good, and it may do harm—and if you can be persuaded to live in the cottage, and to live on the farm, which will now support you all, it will be better. Do not get into trouble about the venison, which they now claim as their own. You will find some money in the bag in my chest, sufficient to buy all you want for a long while ; but take care of it, for there is no saying but you may require it. And now, Edward, call your brother and

sisters to me, that I may bid them farewell. I am, as we all are, sinful, but I trust in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. Edward, I have done my duty towards you as well as I have been able; but promise me one thing—that you will read the Bible and prayers every morning and evening, as I have always done, after I am gone. Promise me that, Edward.”

“I promise you that it shall be done, Jacob,” replied Edward, “and I will not forget your other advice.”

“God bless you, Edward. Now call the children.”

Edward summoned his sisters and Humphrey.

“Humphrey, my good boy,” said Jacob, “recollect that in the midst of life we are in death, and that there is no security for young or old. You or your brother may be cut off in your youth; one may be taken and the other left. Recollect your sisters depend upon you, and do not therefore be rash. I fear that you will run too much risk after the wild cattle, for you are always scheming after taking them. Be careful, Humphrey, for you can ill be spared. Hold to the farm as it now is; it will support you all.—My dear Alice and Edith, I am dying; very soon I shall be laid by your brothers in my grave. Be good children, and look up to your brothers for everything.—And now kiss me, Alice. You have been a great comfort to me, for you have read the Bible to me when I could no longer read myself. May your deathbed be as well attended as mine has been, and may you live happily, and die the death of a Christian! Good-bye, and may God bless you!—Bless you, Edith; may you grow up as good and as innocent as you are now.—Farewell, Humphrey!—farewell, Edward!—my eyes are dim—pray for me, children.—O God of mercy, pardon my many sins, and receive my soul, through Jesus Christ! Amen, amen.”

These were the last words spoken by the old forester.

The children, who were kneeling by the side of the bed, praying as he had requested, when they rose up found that he was dead. They all wept bitterly, for they dearly loved the good old man. Alice remained sobbing in Edward's arms, and Edith in Humphrey's, and it was long before the brothers could console them. Humphrey at last said to Alice, "You hurt poor Edward's arm—you don't know how painful it is!—Come, dears, let us go into the other room and get something to take the pain away."

These requests diverted the attention, at the same time that it roused fresh sympathy in the little girls. They all went into the sitting-room. Humphrey gave his sisters some potatoes to scrape upon a piece of linen, while he took off Edward's coat, and turned up his shirt sleeves. The scraped potatoes were then laid on the burn, and Edward said they gave him great relief. Some more were then scraped by the little girls, who could not, however, repress their occasional sobs. Humphrey then told them that Edward had had nothing to eat, and that they must get him some supper. This again occupied them for some time; and when the supper was ready they all sat down to it. They went to bed early, but not before Edward had read a chapter out of the Bible, and the prayers, as old Jacob had always done; and this again caused their tears to flow afresh.

"Come, Alice dear, you and Edith must go to bed," said Humphrey.

The little girls threw themselves into their brothers' arms; and having wept for some time, Alice raised herself, and taking Edith by the hand, led her away to the bedroom.