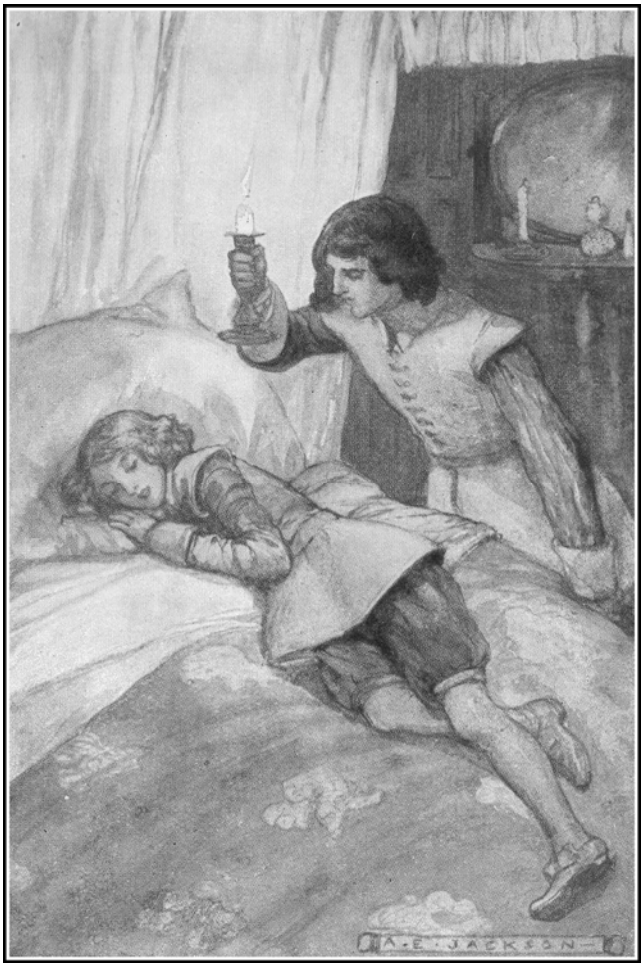
THE CHILDREN OF THE NEW FOREST



He found him in a sound sleep.

THE CHILDREN OF THE NEW FOREST

BY

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CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

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CHAPTER I

CAVALIERS AND ROUNDHEADS

The circumstances which I am about to relate to my juvenile readers took place in the year 1647. By referring to the history of England of that date they will find that King Charles the First, against whom the Commons of England had rebelled, after a civil war of nearly five years, had been defeated, and was confined as a prisoner at Hampton Court. The Cavaliers, or the party who fought for King Charles, had all been dispersed, and the Parliamentary army under the command of Cromwell were beginning to control the Commons.

It was in the month of November in this year that King Charles, accompanied by Sir John Berkely Ashburnham and Legg, made his escape from Hampton Court, and rode as fast as the horses could carry them towards that part of Hampshire which led to the New Forest. The King expected that his friends had provided a vessel in which he might escape to France; but in this he was disappointed. There was no vessel ready, and after riding for some time along the shore, he resolved to go to Titchfield, a seat belonging to the Earl of Southampton. After a long consultation with those who attended him, he yielded to their advice, which was, to trust to Colonel Hammond, who was governor of the Isle of Wight for the Parliament, but who was supposed to be friendly to the King. Whatever might be the feelings of commiseration of Colonel Hammond towards a King so unfortunately situated, he was

firm in his duties towards his employers, and the consequence was that King Charles found himself again a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle.

But we must now leave the King, and retrace history to the commencement of the civil war. A short distance from the town of Lymington, which is not far from Titchfield, where the King took shelter, but on the other side of the Southampton Water, and south of the New Forest, to which it adjoins, was a property called Arnwood, which belonged to a Cavalier of the name of Beverley. It was at that time a property of considerable value, being very extensive, and the park ornamented with valuable timber; for it abutted on the New Forest, and might have been supposed to have been a continuation of it. This Colonel Beverley, as we must call him, for he rose to that rank in the King's army, was a valued friend and companion of Prince Rupert's, and commanded several troops of cavalry. He was ever at his side in the brilliant charges made by this gallant Prince, and at last fell in his arms at the battle of Naseby. Colonel Beverley had married into the family of the Villiers, and the issue of his marriage was two sons and two daughters; but his zeal and sense of duty had induced him, at the commencement of the war, to leave his wife and family at Arnwood, and he was fated never to meet them again. The news of his death had such an effect upon Mrs. Beverley, already worn with anxiety on her husband's account, that a few months afterwards she followed him to an early tomb, leaving the four children under the charge of an elderly relative till such time as the family of the Villiers could protect them; but, as will appear by our history, this was not at that period possible. The life of a king and many other lives were in jeopardy, and the orphans remained at Arnwood, still under the care of their elderly relation, at the time that our history commences.

The New Forest, my readers are perhaps aware, was first enclosed by William the Conqueror as a royal forest for his own amusement, for in those days most crowned heads were passionately fond of the chase; and they may also recollect that his successor, William Rufus, met his death in this forest by the

glancing of an arrow shot by Sir Walter Tyrrell. Since that time to the present day it has continued a royal domain. At the period of which we are writing it had an establishment of verderers and keepers, paid by the Crown, amounting to some forty or fifty men. At the commencement of the civil war they remained at their posts, but soon found, in the disorganised state of the country, that their wages were no longer to be obtained; and then, when the King had decided upon raising an army, Beverley, who held a superior office in the forest, enrolled all the young and athletic men who were employed in the forest, and marched them away with him to join the King's army. Some few remained, their age not rendering their services of value, and among them was an old and attached servant of Beverley's, a man above sixty years of age, whose name was Jacob Armitage, and who had obtained the situation through Colonel Beverley's interest. Those who remained in the forest lived in cottages many miles asunder, and indemnified themselves for the non-payment of their salaries by killing the deer for sale and for their own subsistence.

The cottage of Jacob Armitage was situated on the skirts of the New Forest, about a mile and a half from the mansion of Arnwood; and when Colonel Beverley went to join the King's troops, feeling how little security there would be for his wife and children in those troubled times, he requested the old man, by his attachment to the family, not to lose sight of Arnwood, but to call there as often as possible to see if he could be of service to Mrs. Beverley. The colonel would have persuaded Jacob to have altogether taken up his residence at the mansion; but to this the old man objected. He had been all his life under the greenwood tree, and could not bear to leave the forest. He promised the colonel that he would watch over his family, and ever be at hand when required; and he kept his word. The death of Colonel Beverley was a heavy blow to the old forester, and he watched over Mrs. Beverley and the orphans with the greatest solicitude; but when Mrs. Beverley followed her husband to the tomb he then redoubled his attentions, and was seldom more than a few hours at a time away from the mansion. The two boys were his inseparable companions, and he instructed

them, young as they were, in all the secrets of his own calling. Such was the state of affairs at the time that King Charles made his escape from Hampton Court; and I now shall resume my narrative from where it was broken off.

As soon as the escape of Charles I. was made known to Cromwell and the Parliament, troops of horse were despatched in every direction to the southward, towards which the prints of the horses' hoofs proved that he had gone. As they found that he had proceeded in the direction of the New Forest, the troops were subdivided and ordered to scour the forest, in parties of twelve to twenty, while others hastened down to Southampton, Lymington, and every other seaport or part of the coast from which the King might be likely to embark. Old Jacob had been at Arnwood on the day before, but on this day he had made up his mind to procure some venison, that he might not go there again empty-handed; for Miss Judith Villiers was very partial to venison, and was not slow to remind Jacob if the larder was for many days deficient in that meat. Jacob had gone out accordingly; he had gained his leeward position of a fine buck, and was gradually nearing him by stealth, now behind a huge oak-tree, and then crawling through the high fern, so as to get within shot unperceived, when on a sudden the animal, which had been quietly feeding, bounded away and disappeared in the thicket. At the same time Jacob perceived a small body of horse galloping through the glen in which the buck had been feeding. Jacob had never yet seen the Parliamentary troops, for they had not during the war been sent into that part of the country, but their iron skull-caps, their buff accoutrements, and dark habiliments, assured him that such these must be; so very different were they from the gaily-equipped Cavalier cavalry commanded by Prince Rupert. At the time that they advanced, Jacob had been lying down in the fern near to some low blackthorn-bushes; not wishing to be perceived by them, he drew back between the bushes, intending to remain concealed until they should gallop out of sight; for Jacob thought, "I am a King's forester, and they may consider me as an enemy; and who knows how I may be treated by them?" But Jacob was disappointed in his expectations of the

troops riding past him; on the contrary, as soon as they arrived at an oak-tree within twenty yards of where he was concealed, the order was given to halt and dismount; the sabres of the horsemen clattered in their iron sheaths as the order was obeyed, and the old man expected to be immediately discovered; but one of the thorn-bushes was directly between him and the troopers, and effectually concealed him. At last Jacob ventured to raise his head and peep through the bush; and he perceived that the men were loosening the girths of their black horses, or wiping away the perspiration from their sides with handfuls of fern.

A powerfully-framed man, who appeared to command the others, was standing with his hand upon the arched neck of his steed, which appeared as fresh and vigorous as ever, although covered with foam and perspiration. "Spare not to rub down, my men," said he, "for we have tried the mettle of our horses, and have now but one half-hour's breathing-time. We must be on, for the work of the Lord must be done."

"They say that this forest is many miles in length and breadth," observed another of the men, "and we may ride many a mile to no purpose; but here is James Southwold, who once was living in it as a verderer; nay, I think that he said that he was born and bred in these woods. Was it not so, James Southwold?"

"It is even as you say," replied an active-looking young man; "I was born and bred in this forest, and my father was a verderer before me."

Jacob Armitage, who listened to the conversation, immediately recognised the young man in question. He was one of those who had joined the King's army with the other verderers and keepers. It pained him much to perceive that one who had always been considered a frank, true-hearted young man, and who left the forest to fight in defence of his king, was now turned a traitor, and had joined the ranks of the enemy; and Jacob thought how much better it had been for James Southwold if he had never quitted the New Forest, and had not been

corrupted by evil company: "he was a good lad," thought Jacob, "and now he is a traitor and a hypocrite."

"If born and bred in this forest, James Southwold," said the leader of the troop, "you must fain know all its mazes and paths. Now call to mind, are there no secret hiding-places in which people may remain concealed; no thickets which may cover both man and horse? Peradventure thou mayst point out the very spot where this man Charles may be hidden."

"I do know one dell, within a mile of Arnwood," replied James Southwold, "which might cover double our troop from the eyes of the most wary."

"We will ride there, then," replied the leader. "Arnwood, sayest thou? is not that the property of the Malignant, Cavalier Beverley, who was shot down at Naseby?"

"Even so," replied Southwold; "and many is the time—that is, in the olden time, before I was regenerated—many is the day of revelry that I have passed there; many the cup of good ale that I have quaffed."

"And thou shalt quaff it again," replied the leader. "Good ale was not intended only for Malignants, but for those who serve diligently. After we have examined the dell which thou speakest of, we will direct our horses' heads towards Arnwood."

"Who knows but what the man Charles may be concealed in the Malignant's house?" observed another.

"In the day, I should say no," replied the leader; "but in the night the Cavaliers like to have a roof over their heads; and therefore at night, and not before, will we proceed thither."

"I have searched many of their abodes," observed another; "but search is almost in vain. What with their spring panels and secret doors, their false ceilings and double walls, one may ferret for ever and find nothing."

"Yes," replied the leader, "their abodes are full of these Popish abominations; but there is one way which is sure; and if

the man Charles be concealed in any house, I venture to say that I will find him. Fire and smoke will bring him forth; and to every Malignant's house within twenty miles will I apply the torch; but it must be at night, for we are not sure of his being housed during the day. James Southwold, thou knowest well the mansion of Arnwood?"

"I know well my way to all the offices below—the buttery, the cellar, and the kitchen; but I cannot say that I have ever been into the apartments of the upper house."

"That it needeth not; if thou canst direct us to the lower entrance, it will be sufficient."

"That can I, Master Ingram," replied Southwold, "and to where the best ale used to be found."

"Enough, Southwold, enough; our work must be done, and diligently. Now, my men, tighten your girths; we will just ride to the dell: if it conceals not whom we seek, it shall conceal us till night, and then the country shall be lighted up with the flames of Arnwood, while we surround the house and prevent escape. Levellers, to horse!"

The troopers sprang upon their saddles, and went off at a hard trot, Southwold leading the way. Jacob remained among the fern until they were out of sight, and then rose up. He looked for a short time in the direction in which the troopers had gone, stooped down again to take up his gun, and then said, "There's providence in this; yes, and there's providence in my not having my dog with me, for he would not have remained quiet for so long a time. Who would ever have thought that James Southwold would have turned a traitor! more than traitor, for he is now ready to bite the hand that has fed him, to burn the house that has ever welcomed him. This is a bad world, and I thank heaven that I have lived in the woods. But there is no time to lose;" and the old forester threw his gun over his shoulder and hastened away in the direction of his own cottage.

"And so the King has escaped," thought Jacob, as he went along, "and he may be in the forest! Who knows but he

may be at Arnwood, for he must hardly know where to go for shelter? I must haste and see Miss Judith immediately. 'Levellers, to horse!' the fellow said. What's a Leveller?" thought Jacob.

As perhaps my readers may ask the same question, they must know that a large proportion of the Parliamentary army had at this time assumed the name of Levellers, in consequence of having taken up the opinion that every man should be on an equality, and property should be equally divided. The hatred of these people to any one above them in rank or property, especially towards those of the King's party, which mostly consisted of men of rank and property, was unbounded, and they were merciless and cruel to the highest degree; throwing off much of that fanatical bearing and language which had before distinguished the Puritans. Cromwell had great difficulty in eventually putting them down, which he did at last accomplish by hanging and slaughtering many. Of this Jacob knew nothing; all he knew was, that Arnwood was to be burnt down that night, and that it would be necessary to remove the family. As for obtaining assistance to oppose the troopers, that he knew to be impossible. As he thought of what must take place, he thanked God for having allowed him to gain the knowledge of what was to happen, and hastened on his way. He had been about eight miles from Arnwood when he had concealed himself in the fern. Jacob first went to his cottage to deposit his gun, saddled his forest pony, and set off for Arnwood. In less than two hours the old man was at the door of the mansion; it was then about three o'clock in the afternoon, and being in the month of November, there was not so much as two hours of daylight remaining. "I shall have a difficult job with the stiff old lady," thought Jacob, as he rang the bell; "I don't believe that she would rise out of her high chair for old Noll and his whole army at his back. But we shall see."

CHAPTER II

THE BURNING OF ARNWOOD

Before Jacob is admitted to the presence of Miss Judith Villiers, we must give some account of the establishment at Arnwood. With the exception of one male servant, who officiated in the house and stable as his services might be required, every man of the household of Colonel Beverley had followed the fortunes of their master; and as none had returned, they, in all probability, had shared his fate. Three female servants, with the man above mentioned, composed the whole household. Indeed, there was every reason for not increasing the establishment; for the rents were either paid in part or not paid at all. It was generally supposed that the property, now that the Parliament had gained the day, would be sequestrated, although such was not yet the case; and the tenants were unwilling to pay, to those who were not authorised to receive, the rents which they might be again called upon to make good. Miss Judith Villiers, therefore, found it difficult to maintain the present household; and although she did not tell Jacob Armitage that such was the case, the fact was, that very often the venison which he brought to the mansion was all the meat that was in the larder. The three female servants held the offices of cook, attendant upon Miss Villiers, and housemaid; the children being under the care of no particular servant, and left much to themselves. There had been a chaplain in the house, but he had quitted before the death of Mrs. Beverley, and the vacancy had not been filled up; indeed, it could not well be, for the one who left had not received his salary for many months, and Miss Judith Villiers, expecting every

day to be summoned by her relations to bring the children and join them, sat in her high chair waiting for the arrival of this summons, which, from the distracted state of the times, had never come.

As we have before said, the orphans were four in number; the two eldest were boys, and the youngest were girls. Edward, the eldest boy, was between thirteen and fourteen years old; Humphrey, the second, was twelve; Alice, eleven; and Edith, eight. As it is the history of these young persons which we are about to narrate, we shall say little about them at present, except that for many months they had been under little or no restraint, and less attended to. Their companions were Benjamin, the man who remained in the house, and old Jacob Armitage, who passed all the time he could spare with them. Benjamin was rather weak in intellect, and was a source of amusement rather than otherwise. As for the female servants, one was wholly occupied with her attendance on Miss Judith, who was very exacting, and had a high notion of her own consequence. The other two had more than sufficient employment; as, when there is no money to pay with, everything must be done at home. That, under such circumstances, the boys became boisterous and the little girls became romps, is not to be wondered at; but their having become so was the cause of Miss Judith seldom admitting them into her room. It is true that they were sent for once a day, to ascertain if they were in the house or in existence, but soon dismissed and left to their own resources. Such was the neglect to which these young orphans were exposed. It must, however, be admitted, that this very neglect made them independent and bold, full of health from constant activity, and more fitted for the change which was so soon to take place.

"Benjamin," said Jacob, as the other came to the door, "I must speak with the old lady."

"Have you brought any venison, Jacob?" said Benjamin, grinning; "else, I reckon, you'll not be over welcome."

"No, I have not; but it is an important business, so send Agatha to her directly."

"I will; and I'll not say anything about the venison."

In a few minutes Jacob was ushered up by Agatha into Miss Judith Villiers's apartment. The old lady was about fifty years of age, very prim and starched, sitting in a high-backed chair, with her feet upon a stool, and her hands crossed before her, her black mittens reposing upon her snow-white apron.

The old forester made his obeisance.

"You have important business with us, I am told," observed Miss Judith.

"Most important, madam," replied Jacob. "In the first place, it is right that you should be informed that his Majesty King Charles has escaped from Hampton Court."

"His Majesty escaped!" replied the lady.

"Yes; and is supposed to be secreted somewhere in this neighbourhood. His Majesty is not in this house, madam, I presume?"

"Jacob, his Majesty is not in this house; if he were, I would suffer my tongue to be torn out sooner than I would confess it, even to you."

"But I have more for your private ear, madam."

"Agatha, retire; and Agatha, be mindful that you go downstairs, and do not remain outside the door."

Agatha, with this injunction, bounced out of the room, slamming to the door so as to make Miss Judith start from her seat.

"Ill-mannered girl!" exclaimed Miss Judith. "Now, Jacob Armitage, you may proceed."

Jacob then entered into the detail of what he had overheard that morning, when he fell in with the troopers, concluding with the information that the mansion would be burnt down

that very night. He then pointed out the necessity of immediately abandoning the house, as it would be impossible to oppose the troopers.

"And where am I to go to, Jacob?" said Miss Judith calmly.

"I hardly know, madam; there is my cottage, it is but a poor place, and not fit for one like you."

"So I should presume, Jacob Armitage; neither shall I accept your offer. It would ill befit the dignity of a Villiers to be frightened out of her abode by a party of rude soldiers. Happen what will, I shall not stir from this—no, not even from this chair. Neither do I consider the danger so great as you suppose. Let Benjamin saddle, and be prepared to ride over to Lymington immediately. I will give him a letter to the magistrate there, who will send us protection."

"But, madam, the children cannot remain here. I will not leave them here. I promised the colonel—"

"Will the children be in more danger than I shall be, Jacob Armitage?" replied the old lady stiffly. "They dare not ill-treat me—they may force the buttery and drink the ale—they may make merry with that and the venison which you have brought with you, I presume; but they will hardly venture to insult a lady of the house of Villiers."

"I fear they will venture anything, madam. At all events, they will frighten the children, and for one night they will be better in my cottage."

"Well, then, be it so; take them to your cottage, and take Martha to attend upon the Miss Beverleys. Go down now, and desire Agatha to come to me, and Benjamin to saddle as fast as he can."

Jacob left the room, satisfied with the permission to remove the children. He knew that it was useless to argue with Miss Judith, who was immovable when once she had declared her intentions. He was debating in his own mind whether he

should acquaint the servants with the threatened danger; but he had no occasion to do so, for Agatha had remained at the door while Jacob was communicating the intelligence, and as soon as he had arrived at that portion of it by which she learnt that the mansion was to be burnt down that night, had run off to the kitchen to communicate the intelligence to the other servants.

"I'll not stay to be burnt to death," exclaimed the cook, as Jacob came in. "Well, Mr. Armitage, this is pretty news you have brought. What does my lady say?"

"She desires that Benjamin saddles immediately, to carry a letter to Lymington; and you, Agatha, are to go upstairs to her."

"But what does she mean to do? Where are we to go?" exclaimed Agatha.

"Miss Judith intends to remain where she is."

"Then she will remain alone for me," exclaimed the housemaid, who was admired by Benjamin. "It's bad enough to have little victuals and no wages; but as for being burnt to death—Benjamin, put a pillion behind your saddle, and I'll go to Lymington with you. I won't be long in getting my bundle."

Benjamin, who was in the kitchen with the maids at the time that Jacob entered, made a sign significant of consent, and went away to the stable. Agatha went up to her mistress in a state of great perturbation, and the cook also hurried away to her bedroom.

"They'll all leave her," thought Jacob; "well, my duty is plain; I'll not leave the children in the house." Jacob then went in search of them, and found them playing in the garden. He called the two boys to him, and told them to follow him. "Now, Mr. Edward," said he, "you must prove yourself your father's own son. We must leave this house immediately; come up with me to your rooms, and help me to pack up yours and your sisters' clothes, for we must go to my cottage this night. There is no time to be lost."

"But why, Jacob; I must know why?"

"Because the Parliamentary troopers will burn it down this night."

"Burn it down! Why, the house is mine, is it not? Who dares to burn down this house?"

"They will dare it, and will do it."

"But we will fight them, Jacob; we can bolt and bar; I can fire a gun, and hit too, as you know; then there's Benjamin and you."

"And what can you and two men do against a troop of horse, my dear boy? If we could defend the place against them, Jacob Armitage would be the first; but it is impossible, my dear boy. Recollect your sisters. Would you have them burnt to death, or shot by these wretches? No, no, Mr. Edward; you must do as I say, and lose no time. Let us pack up what will be most useful, and load White Billy with the bundles; then you must all come to the cottage with me, and we will make it out how we can."

"That will be jolly," said Humphrey; "come, Edward."

But Edward Beverley required more persuasion to abandon the house; at last old Jacob prevailed, and the clothes were put up in bundles as fast as they could collect them.

"Your aunt said Martha was to go with your sisters, but I doubt if she will," observed Jacob, "and I think we shall have no room for her, for the cottage is small enough."

"Oh no, we don't want her," said Humphrey; "Alice always dresses Edith and herself too, ever since mamma died."

"Now we will carry down the bundles, and you make them fast on the pony while I go for your sisters."

"But where does Aunt Judith go?" inquired Edward.

"She will not leave the house, Master Edward; she intends to stay and speak to the troopers."

"And so an old woman like her remains to face the enemy, while I run away from them!" replied Edward. "I will not go."

"Well, Master Edward," replied Jacob, "you must do as you please; but it will be cruel to leave your sisters here; they and Humphrey must come with me, and I cannot manage to get them to the cottage without you go with us; it is not far, and you can return in a very short time."

To this Edward consented. The pony was soon loaded, and the little girls, who were still playing in the garden, were called in by Humphrey. They were told that they were going to pass the night in the cottage, and were delighted at the idea.

"Now, Master Edward," said Jacob, "will you take your sisters by the hand and lead them to the cottage? Here is the key of the door; Master Humphrey can lead the pony; and Master Edward," continued Jacob, taking him aside, "I'll tell you one thing which I will not mention before your brother and sisters: the troopers are all about the New Forest, for King Charles has escaped, and they are seeking for him. You must not, therefore, leave your brother and sisters till I return. Lock the cottage door as soon as it is dark. You know where to get a light, over the cupboard; and my gun is loaded, and hangs above the mantelpiece. You must do your best, if they attempt to force an entrance; but above all, promise me not to leave them till I return. I will remain here to see what I can do with your aunt; and when I come back, we can then decide how to act."

This latter ruse of Jacob's succeeded. Edward promised that he would not leave his sisters, and it wanted but a few minutes of twilight when the little party quitted the mansion of Arnwood. As they went out of the gates, they were passed by Benjamin, who was trotting away with Martha behind him on a pillion, holding a bundle as large as herself. Not a word was exchanged, and Benjamin and Martha were soon out of sight.

"Why, where can Martha be going?" said Alice. "Will she be back when we come home to-morrow?"

Edward made no reply, but Humphrey said, "Well, she has taken plenty of clothes in that huge bundle, for one night, at least."

Jacob, as soon as he had seen the children on their way, returned to the kitchen, where he found Agatha and the cook collecting their property, evidently bent upon a hasty retreat.

"Have you seen Miss Judith, Agatha?"

"Yes; and she told me that she should remain, and that I should stand behind her chair, that she might receive the troopers with dignity; but I don't admire the plan. They might leave her alone, but I am sure that they will be rude to me."

"When did Benjamin say he would be back?"

"He don't intend coming back. He said he would not, at all events, till to-morrow morning, and then he would ride out this way, to ascertain if the report was false or true. But Martha has gone with him."

"I wish I could persuade the old lady to leave the house," said Jacob thoughtfully. "I fear they will not pay her the respect that she calculates upon. Go up, Agatha, and say I wish to speak with her."

"No, not I; I must be off, for it is dark already."

"And where are you going, then?"

"To Gossip Allwood's. It's a good mile, and I have to carry my things."

"Well, Agatha, if you'll take me up to the old lady, I'll carry your things for you."

Agatha consented, and as soon as she had taken up the lamp, for it was now quite dark, Jacob was once more introduced.

"I wish, madam," said Jacob, "you would be persuaded to leave the house for this night."

"Jacob Armitage, leave this house I will not, if it were filled with troopers; I have said so."

"But, madam—"

"No more, sir; you are too forward," replied the old lady haughtily.

"But, madam—"

"Leave my presence, Jacob Armitage, and never appear again. Quit the room, and send Agatha here."

"She has left, madam, and so has the cook, and Martha went away behind Benjamin; when I leave, you will be alone."

"They have dared to leave?"

"They dared not stay, madam."

"Leave me, Jacob Armitage, and shut the door when you go out." Jacob still hesitated. "Obey me instantly," said the old lady; and the forester, finding all remonstrance useless, went out, and obeyed her last commands by shutting the door after him.

Jacob found Agatha and the other maid in the courtyard; he took up their packages, and, as he promised, accompanied them to Gossip Allwood, who kept a small ale-house about a mile distant.

"But, mercy on us! what will become of the children?" said Agatha, as they walked along, her fears for herself having, up to this time, made her utterly forgetful of them. "Poor things! and Martha has left them."

"Yes, indeed; what will become of the dear babes?" said the cook, half-crying.

Now Jacob, knowing that the children of such a Malignant as Colonel Beverley would have sorry treatment if discovered—and knowing also that women were not always to be trusted, determined not to tell them how they were disposed of. He therefore replied:

"Who would hurt such young children as those? No, no, they are safe enough; even the troopers would protect them."

"I should hope so," replied Agatha.

"You may be sure of that; no man would hurt babies," replied Jacob. "The troopers will take them with them to Lymington, I suppose. I've no fear for them; it's the proud old lady whom they will be uncivil to."

The conversation here ended, and in due time they arrived at the inn. Jacob had just put the bundles down on the table when the clattering of horses' hoofs was heard. Shortly afterwards the troopers pulled their horses up at the door, and dismounted. Jacob recognised the party he had met in the forest, and among them Southwold. The troopers called for ale, and remained some time in the house, talking and laughing with the women, especially Agatha, who was a very good-looking girl. Jacob would have retreated quietly, but he found a sentinel posted at the door to prevent the egress of any person. He reseated himself, and while he was listening to the conversation of the troopers, he was recognised by Southwold, who accosted him. Jacob did not pretend not to know him, as it would have been useless; and Southwold put many questions to him as to who were resident at Arnwood. Jacob replied that the children were there, and a few servants, and he was about to mention Miss Judith Villiers, when a thought struck him—he might save the old lady.

"You are going to Arnwood, I know," said Jacob, "and I have heard who you are in search of. Well, Southwold, I'll give you a hint. I may be wrong; but if you should fall in with an old lady, or something like one, when you go to Arnwood, mount her on your crupper, and away with her to Lymington as fast as you can ride. You understand me." Southwold nodded significantly, and squeezed Jacob's hand.

"One word, Jacob Armitage; if I succeed in the capture by your means, it is but fair that you should have something for your hint. Where can I find you the day after to-morrow?"

"I am leaving the country this night, and go I must. I am in trouble, that's the fact; when all is blown over, I will find you out. Don't speak to me any more just now." Southwold again squeezed Jacob's hand, and left him. Shortly afterwards the order was given to mount, and the troopers set off.

Armitage followed slowly and unobserved. They arrived at the mansion and surrounded it. Shortly afterwards he perceived the glare of torches, and in a quarter of an hour more thick smoke rose up in the dark but clear sky; at last the flames burst forth from the lower windows of the mansion, and soon afterwards they lighted up the country round to some distance.

"It is done," thought Jacob, and he turned to bend his hasty steps towards his own cottage, when he heard the galloping of a horse and violent screams; a minute afterwards James Southwold passed him with the old lady tied behind him, kicking and struggling as hard as she could. Jacob smiled, as he thought that he had by his little stratagem saved the old woman's life, for that Southwold imagined that she was King Charles dressed up as an old woman was evident; and he then returned as fast as he could to the cottage.

In half an hour Jacob had passed through the thick woods which were between the mansion and his own cottage, occasionally looking back, as the flames of the mansion rose higher and higher, throwing their light far and wide. He knocked at the cottage-door; Smoker, a large dog, cross-bred between the fox and bloodhound, growled till Jacob spoke to him, and then Edward opened the door.

"My sisters are in bed and fast asleep, Jacob," said Edward, "and Humphrey has been nodding this half-hour; had he not better go to bed before we go back?"

"Come out, Master Edward,"—replied Jacob, "and look." Edward beheld the flames and fierce light between the trees, and was silent.

"I told you that it would be so, and you would all have been burnt in your beds, for they did not enter the house to see who was in it, but fired it as soon as they had surrounded it."

"And my aunt!" exclaimed Edward, clasping his hands.

"Is safe, Master Edward, and by this time at Lymington."

"We will go to her to-morrow."

"I fear not; you must not risk so much, Master Edward. These Levellers spare nobody, and you had better let it be supposed that you are all burnt in the house."

"But my aunt knows the contrary, Jacob."

"Very true; I quite forgot that." And so Jacob had. He expected that the old woman would have been burnt, and then nobody would have known of the existence of the children; he forgot, when he planned to save her, that she knew where the children were.

"Well, Master Edward, I will go to Lymington to-morrow and see the old lady; but you must remain here, and take charge of your sisters till I come back, and then we will consider what is to be done. The flames are not so bright as they were."

"No. It is my house that these Roundheads have burned down," said Edward, shaking his fist.

"It was your house, Master Edward, and it was your property; but how long it will be so remains to be seen. I fear it will be forfeited."

"Woe to the people who dare take possession of it!" cried Edward; "I shall, if I live, be a man one of these days."

"Yes, Master Edward, and then you will reflect more than you do now, and not be rash. Let us go into the cottage, for it's no use remaining out in the cold; the frost is sharp to-night."

Edward slowly followed Jacob into the cottage. His little heart was full. He was a proud boy and a good boy, but the destruction of the mansion had raised up evil thoughts in his heart—hatred to the Covenanters, who had killed his father and now burnt the property—revenge upon them (how, he knew not); but his hand was ready to strike, young as he was. He lay down on the bed, but he could not sleep. He turned and turned again, and his brain was teeming with thoughts and plans of vengeance. Had he said his prayers that night, he would have been obliged to repeat, "Forgive us, as we forgive them who trespass against us." At last he fell fast asleep, but his dreams were wild, and he often called out during the night, and woke his brother and sisters.

CHAPTER III

FROM MANSION TO COTTAGE

The next morning, as soon as Jacob had given the children their breakfast, he set off towards Arnwood. He knew that Benjamin had stated his intention to return with the horse and see what had taken place, and he knew him well enough to feel sure that he would do so. He thought it better to see him, if possible, and ascertain the fate of Miss Judith. Jacob arrived at the still smoking ruins of the mansion, and found several people there, mostly residents within a few miles, some attracted by curiosity, others busy in collecting the heavy masses of lead which had been melted from the roof, and appropriating them to their own benefit; but much of it was still too hot to be touched, and they were throwing snow on it to cool it, for it had snowed during the night. At last Jacob perceived Benjamin on horseback riding leisurely towards him, and immediately went up to him.

"Well, Benjamin, this is a woeful sight. What is the news from Lymington?"

"Lymington is full of troopers, and they are not over civil," replied Benjamin.

"And the old lady—where is she?"

"Ah, that's a sad business," replied Benjamin, "and the poor children, too. Poor Master Edward! he would have made a brave gentleman."

"But the old lady is safe," rejoined Jacob. "Did you see her?"

"Yes, I saw her; they thought she was King Charles—poor old soul."

"But they have found out their mistake by this time?"

"Yes, and James Southwold has found it out, too," replied Benjamin; "to think of the old lady breaking his neck!"

"Breaking his neck! You don't say so! How was it?"

"Why, it seems that Southwold thought that she was King Charles dressed up as an old woman, so he seized her and strapped her fast behind him, and galloped away with her to Lymington; but she struggled and kicked so manfully, that he could not hold on, and off they went together, and he broke his neck."

"Indeed!—a judgment—a judgment upon a traitor," said Jacob.

"They were picked up, strapped together as they were, by the other troopers, and carried to Lymington."

"Well, and where is the old lady, then? Did you see and speak to her?"

"I saw her, Jacob, but I did not speak to her. I forgot to say, that when she broke Southwold's neck, she broke her own too."

"Then the old lady is dead?"

"Yes, that she is," replied Benjamin; "but who cares about her? it's the poor children that I pity. Martha has been crying ever since."

"I don't wonder."

"I was at the 'Cavalier,' and the troopers were there, and they were boasting of what they had done, and called it a righteous work. I could not stand that, and I asked one of them if it were a righteous work to burn poor children in their beds? So

he turned round, and struck his sword upon the floor, and asked me whether I was one of them—'Who are you then?' and I—all my courage went away, and I answered I was a poor rat-catcher. 'A rat-catcher, are you? Well then, Mr. Rat-catcher, when you are killing rats, if you find a nest of young ones, don't you kill them too? or do you leave them to grow, and become mischievous, eh?'—'I kill the young ones, of course,' replied I. 'Well, so do we Malignants whenever we find them.' I didn't say a word more, so I went out of the house as fast as I could."

"Have you heard anything about the King?" inquired Jacob.

"No, nothing; but the troopers are all out again, and, I hear, are gone to the forest."

"Well, Benjamin, good-bye; I shall be off from this part of the country—it's no use my staying here. Where's Agatha and cook?"

"They came to Lymington early this morning."

"Wish them good-bye for me, Benjamin."

"Where are you going then?"

"I can't exactly say, but I think London way. I only stayed here to watch over the children; and now that they are gone, I shall leave Arnwood for ever."

Jacob, who was anxious, on account of the intelligence he had received of the troopers being in the forest, to return to the cottage, shook hands with Benjamin, and hastened away. "Well," thought Jacob, as he wended his way, "I'm sorry for the poor old lady; but still, perhaps, it's all for the best. Who knows what they might do with these children!—Destroy the nest as well as the rats, indeed!— they must find the nest first." And the old forester continued his journey in deep thought.

We may here observe that, bloodthirsty as many of the Levellers were, we do not think that Jacob Armitage had grounds for the fears which he expressed and felt; that is to say, we believe that he might have made known the existence of the

children to the Villiers family, and that they would never have been harmed by anybody. That by the burning of the mansion they might have perished in the flames, had they been in bed, as they would have been at that hour, had he not obtained intelligence of what was about to be done, is true; but that there was any danger to them on account of their father having been such a staunch supporter of the King's cause, is very unlikely, and not borne out by the history of the times; but the old forester thought otherwise; he had a hatred of the Puritans, and their deeds had been so exaggerated by rumour that he fully believed that the lives of the children were not safe. Under this conviction, and feeling himself bound by his promise to Colonel Beverley to protect them, Jacob resolved that they should live with him in the forest, and be brought up as his own grandchildren. He knew that there could be no better place for concealment; for, except the keepers, few people knew where his cottage was; and it was so out of the usual paths, and so embosomed in lofty trees, that there was little chance of its being seen, or being known to exist. He resolved, therefore, that they should remain with him till better times; and then he would make known their existence to the other branches of the family, but not before. "I can hunt for them, and provide for them," thought he, "and I have a little money, when it is required; and I will teach them to be useful; they must learn to provide for themselves. There's the garden, and the patch of land: in two or three years the boys will be able to do something. I can't teach them much; but I can teach them to fear God. We must get on how we can, and put our trust in Him who is a Father to the fatherless."

With such thoughts running in his head, Jacob arrived at the cottage, and found the children outside the door, watching for him. They all hastened to him, and the dog rushed before them, to welcome his master. "Down, Smoker, good dog. Well, Mr. Edward, I have been as quick as I can. How have Mr. Humphrey and your sisters behaved? But we must not remain outside to-day, for the troopers are scouring the forest, and may see you. Let us come in directly; for it would not do that they should come here."

"Will they burn the cottage down?" inquired Alice, as she took Jacob's hand.

"Yes, my dear, I think they would, if they found that you and your brothers were in it: but we must not let them see you."

They all entered the cottage, which consisted of one large room in front, and two back rooms for bedrooms. There was also a third bedroom, which was behind the other two, but which had not any furniture in it.

"Now let's see what we can have for dinner—there's venison left, I know," said Jacob: "come, we must all be useful. Who will be cook?"

"I will be cook," said Alice, "if you will show me how."

"So you shall, my dear," said Jacob, "and I will show you how. There's some potatoes in the basket in the corner—and some onions hanging on the string—we must have some water—who will fetch it?"

"I will," said Edward; who took up a pail and went out to the spring.

The potatoes were peeled and washed by the children—Jacob and Edward cut the venison into pieces—the iron pot was cleaned—and then the meat and potatoes put with water into the pot, and placed on the fire.

"Now I'll cut up the onions, for they will make your eyes water."

"I don't care," said Humphrey; "I'll cut and cry at the same time."

And Humphrey took up a knife, and cut away most manfully, although he was obliged to wipe his eyes with his sleeve very often.

"You are a fine fellow, Humphrey," said Jacob. "Now we'll put the onions in, and let it all boil up together. Now, you see you have cooked your own dinner; ain't that pleasant?"

The children set about their tasks.

"Yes," cried they all; "and we will eat our own dinner as soon as it is ready."

"Then, Humphrey, you must get some of the platters down which are on the dresser; and Alice, you will find some knives in the drawer. And let me see, what can little Edith do? Oh, she can go to the cupboard and find the salt-cellar. Edward, just look out, and if you see anybody coming or passing, let me know. We must put you on guard till the troopers leave the forest."

The children set about their tasks, and Humphrey cried out, as he very often did, "Now, this is jolly!"

While the dinner was cooking Jacob amused the children by showing them how to put things in order; the floor was swept, the hearth was made tidy. He showed Alice how to wash out a cloth, and Humphrey how to dust the chairs. They all worked merrily, while little Edith stood and clapped her hands.

But just before dinner was ready Edward came in and said, "Here are troopers galloping in the forest!" Jacob went out, and observed that they were coming in a direction that would lead near to the cottage.

He walked in, and after a moment's thought, he said, "My dear children, those men may come and search the cottage; you must do as I tell you, and mind that you are very quiet. Humphrey, you and your sisters must go to bed, and pretend to be very ill. Edward, take off your coat and put on this old hunting-frock of mine. You must be in the bedroom attending your sick brother and sisters. Come, Edith dear, you must play at going to bed, and have your dinner afterwards."

Jacob took the children into the bedroom, and removing the upper dress, which would have betrayed that they were not the children of poor people, put them in bed, and covered them up to the chins with the clothes. Edward had put on the old hunting-shirt, which came below his knees, and stood with a mug of water in his hand by the bedside of the two girls. Jacob went to the outer room, to remove the platters laid out for din-

ner; and he had hardly done so, when he heard the noise of the troopers, and soon afterwards a knock at the cottage-door.

"Come in," said Jacob.

"Who are you, my friend?" said the leader of the troop, entering the door.

"A poor forester, sir," replied Jacob, "under great trouble."

"What trouble, my man?"

"I have the children all in bed with the smallpox."

"Nevertheless, we must search your cottage."

"You are welcome," replied Jacob; "only don't frighten the children if you can help it."

The man, who was now joined by others, commenced his search. Jacob opened all the doors of the rooms, and they passed through. Little Edith shrieked when she saw them; but Edward patted her, and told her not to be frightened. The troopers, however, took no notice of the children; they searched thoroughly, and then came back to the front room.

"It's no use remaining here," said one of the troopers. "Shall we be off? I'm tired and hungry with the ride."

"So am I; and there's something that smells well," said another. "What's this, my good man," continued he, taking off the lid of the pot.

"My dinner for a week," replied Jacob. "I have no one to cook for me now, and can't light a fire every day."

"Well, you appear to live well, if you have such a mess as that every day in the week. I should like to try a spoonful or two."

"And welcome, sir," replied Jacob; "I will cook some more for myself."

The troopers took him at his word; they sat down to the table, and very soon the whole contents of the kettle had disap-

peared. Having satisfied themselves, they got up, told him that his rations were so good that they hoped to call again; and, laughing heartily, they mounted their horses, and rode away.

"Well," said Jacob, "they are very welcome to the dinner; I little thought to get off so cheap." As soon as they were out of sight Jacob called to Edward and the children to get up again, which they soon did. Alice put on Edith's frock, Humphrey put on his jacket, and Edward pulled off the hunting-shirt.

"They're gone now," said Jacob, coming in from the door.

"And our dinners are gone," said Humphrey, looking at the empty pot and dirty platters.

"Yes; but we can cook another: and that will be more play, you know," said Jacob. "Edward, go for the water; Humphrey, cut the onions; Alice, wash the potatoes; and Edith, help everybody, while I cut up some more meat."

"I hope it will be as good," observed Humphrey; "that other did smell so nice."

"Quite as good, if not better; for we shall improve by practice, and we shall have a better appetite to eat it with," said Jacob.

"Nasty men eat our dinner," said Edith. "Shan't have any more. Eat this ourselves."

And so they did as soon as it was cooked; but they were very hungry before they sat down.

"This is jolly!" said Humphrey, with his mouth full.

"Yes, Master Humphrey. I doubt if King Charles gets so good a dinner this day. Mr. Edward, you are very grave and silent."

"Yes, I am, Jacob. Have I not cause? Oh! if I could but have mauled those troopers!"

"But you could not; so you must make the best of it. They say that every dog has his day, and who knows but King Charles may be on the throne again!"

There were no more visits to the cottage that day, and they all went to bed and slept soundly.

The next morning Jacob, who was most anxious to learn the news, saddled the pony, having first given his injunctions to Edward how to behave in case any troopers should come to the cottage. He told him to pretend that the children were in bed with the smallpox, as they had done the day before. Jacob then travelled to Gossip Allwood's, and he there learnt that King Charles had been taken prisoner, and was at the Isle of Wight, and that the troopers were all going back to London as fast as they came. Feeling that there was now no more danger to be apprehended from them, Jacob set off as fast as he could for Lymington. He went to one shop and purchased two peasant dresses which he thought would fit the two boys, and at another he bought similar apparel for the two girls. Then with several other ready-made articles, and some other things which were required for the household, he made a large package, which he put upon the pony, and taking the bridle, set off home, and arrived in time to superintend the cooking of the dinner, which was this day venison steaks fried in a pan, and boiled potatoes.

When dinner was over he opened his bundle, and told the little ones that now they were to live in a cottage they ought to wear cottage clothes, and that he had brought them some to put on, which they might rove about the woods in, and not mind tearing them. Alice and Edith went into the bedroom, and Alice dressed Edith and herself, and came out quite pleased with their change of dress. Humphrey and Edward put theirs on in the sitting-room, and they all fitted pretty well, and certainly were very becoming to the children.

"Now, recollect, you are all my grandchildren," said Jacob; "for I shall no longer call you Miss and Master—that we never do in a cottage. You understand me, Edward, of course?" added Jacob.

Edward nodded his head, and Jacob telling the children that they might now go out of the cottage and play, they all set off quite delighted with clothes which procured them their liberty.

We must now describe the cottage of Jacob Armitage, in which the children have in future to dwell. As we said before, it contained a large sitting-room, or kitchen, in which were a spacious hearth and chimney, table, stools, cupboards, and dressers; the two bedrooms which adjoined it were now appropriated, one for Jacob and the other for the two boys; the third, or inner bedroom, was arranged for the two girls, as being more retired and secure. But there were outhouses belonging to it: a stall, in which White Billy, the pony, lived during the winter; a shed and pigsty rudely constructed, with an enclosed yard attached to them; and it had, moreover, a piece of ground of more than an acre, well fenced in to keep out the deer and game, the largest portion of which was cultivated as a garden and potato-ground, and the other, which remained in grass, contained some fine old apple and pear trees. Such was the domicile; the pony, a few fowls, a sow and two young pigs, and the dog Smoker, were the animals on the establishment. Here Jacob Armitage had been born—for the cottage had been built by his grandfather—but he had not always remained at the cottage. When young, he felt an inclination to see more of the world, and had for several years served in the army. His father and brother had lived in the establishment at Arnwood, and he was constantly there as a boy. The chaplain of Arnwood had taken a fancy to him, and taught him to read—writing he had not acquired. As soon as he grew up he served, as we have said, in the troop commanded by Colonel Beverley's father; and after his death, Colonel Beverley had procured him the situation of forest ranger, which had been held by his father, who was then alive, but too aged to do the duty. Jacob Armitage married a good and devout young woman, with whom he lived several years, when she died, without bringing him any family; after which, his father being also dead, Jacob Armitage had lived alone until the period at which we have commenced this history.

CHAPTER IV

PITCHING IN

The old forester lay awake the whole of this night, reflecting how he should act relative to the children; he felt the great responsibility that he had incurred, and was alarmed when he considered what might be the consequences if his days were shortened. What would become of them—living in so sequestered a spot that few knew even of its existence—totally shut out from the world, and left to their own resources? He had no fear, if his life was spared, that they would do well; but if he should be called away before they had grown up and were able to help themselves, they might perish. Edward was not fourteen years old; it was true that he was an active, brave boy, and thoughtful for his years; but he had not yet strength or skill sufficient for what would be required. Humphrey, the second, also promised well; but still they were all children. "I must bring them up to be useful—to depend upon themselves; there is not a moment to be lost, and not a moment shall be lost; I will do my best, and trust to God; I ask but two or three years, and by that time I trust that they will be able to do without me. They must commence to-morrow the life of foresters' children."

Acting upon this resolution, Jacob, as soon as the children were dressed and in the sitting-room, opened his Bible, which he had put on the table, and said:

"My dear children, you know that you must remain in this cottage, that the wicked troopers may not find you out; they killed your father, and if I had not taken you away, they would

have burnt you in your beds. You must therefore live here as my children, and you must call yourselves by the name of Armitage, and not that of Beverley; and you must dress like children of the forest, as you do now, and you must do as children of the forest do; that is, you must do everything for yourselves, for you can have no servants to wait upon you. We must all work; but you will like to work if you all work together, for then the work will be nothing but play. Now, Edward is the oldest, and he must go out with me in the forest, and I must teach him to kill deer and other game for our support; and when he knows how, then Humphrey shall come out and learn how to shoot."

"Yes," said Humphrey, "I'll soon learn."

"But not yet, Humphrey, for you must do some work in the meantime; you must look after the pony and the pigs, and you must learn to dig in the garden with Edward and me when we do not go out to hunt; and sometimes I shall go by myself, and leave Edward to work with you when there is work to be done. Alice, dear, you must, with Humphrey, light the fire and clean the house in the morning. Humphrey will go to the spring for water, and do all the hard work; and you must learn to wash, my dear Alice—I will show you how; and you must learn to get dinner ready with Humphrey, who will assist you; and to make the beds. And little Edith shall take care of the fowls, and feed them every morning, and look for the eggs—will you, Edith?"

"Yes," replied Edith, "and feed all the little chickens when they are hatched, as I did at Arnwood."

"Yes, dear, and you'll be very useful. Now you know that you cannot do all this at once. You will have to try and try again; but very soon you will, and then it will be all play. I must teach you all, and every day you will do it better, till you want no teaching at all. And now, my dear children, as there is no chaplain here, we must read the Bible every morning. Edward can read, I know; can you, Humphrey?"

"Yes, all except the big words."

"Well, you will learn them by-and-by. And Edward and I will teach Alice and Edith to read in the evenings, when we have nothing to do. It will be an amusement. Now tell me, do you all like what I have told you?"

"Yes," they all replied; and then Jacob Armitage read a chapter in the Bible, after which they all knelt down and said the Lord's Prayer. As this was done every morning and every evening, I need not repeat it again. Jacob then showed them again how to clean the house, and Humphrey and Alice soon finished their work under his directions; and then they all sat down to breakfast, which was a very plain one, being generally cold meat, and cakes baked on the embers, at which Alice was soon very expert; and little Edith was very useful in watching them for her, while she busied herself about her other work. But the venison was nearly all gone; and after breakfast Jacob and Edward, with the dog Smoker, went out into the woods. Edward had no gun, as he only went out to be taught how to approach the game, which required great caution; indeed Jacob had no second gun to give him, if he had wished so to do.

"Now, Edward, we are going after a fine stag, if we can find him—which I doubt not—but the difficulty is to get within shot of him. Recollect that you must always be hid, for his sight is very quick; never be heard, for his ear is sharp; and never come down to him with the wind, for his scent is very fine. Then you must hunt according to the hour of the day. At this time he is feeding; two hours hence he will be lying down in the high fern. The dog is of no use unless the stag is badly wounded, when the dog will take him. Smoker knows his duty well, and will hide himself as close as we do. We are now going into the thick wood ahead of us, as there are many little spots of cleared ground in it where we may find the deer; but we must keep more to the left, for the wind is to the eastward, and we must walk up against it. And now that we are coming into the wood, recollect not a word must be said, and you must walk as quietly as possible, keeping behind me. Smoker, to heel!" They proceeded through the wood for more than a mile, when Jacob made a sign to Edward, and dropped down into the fern, crawl-

ing along to an open spot, where, at some distance, were a stag and three deer grazing. The deer grazed quietly, but the stag was ever and anon raising up his head and snuffing the air as he looked round, evidently acting as a sentinel for the females.

The stag was perhaps a long quarter of a mile from where they had crouched down in the fern. Jacob remained immovable till the animal began to feed again, and then he advanced crawling through the fern, followed by Edward and the dog, who dragged himself on his stomach after Edward. This tedious approach was continued for some time, and they had neared the stag to within half the original distance, when the animal again lifted up his head and appeared uneasy. Jacob stopped and remained without motion. After a time the stag walked away, followed by the does, to the opposite side of the clear spot on which they had been feeding, and, to Edward's annoyance, the animal was now half a mile from them. Jacob turned round and crawled into the wood, and when he knew that they were concealed he rose on his feet and said:

"You see, Edward, that it requires patience to stalk a deer. What a princely fellow! but he has probably been alarmed this morning, and is very uneasy. Now we must go through the woods till we come to the lee of him on the other side of the dell. You see he has led the does close to the thicket, and we shall have a better chance when we get there, if we are only quiet and cautious."

"What startled him, do you think?" said Edward.

"I think, when you were crawling through the fern after me, you broke a piece of rotten stick that was under you, did you not?"

"Yes, but that made but little noise."

"Quite enough to startle a red deer, Edward, as you will find out before you have been long a forester. These checks will happen, and have happened to me a hundred times, and then all the work is to be done over again. Now then to make the cir-

cuit—we had better not say a word. If we get safe now to the other side we are sure of him."

They proceeded at a quick walk through the forest, and in half an hour had gained the side where the deer were feeding. When about three hundred yards from the game, Jacob again sank down on his hands and knees, crawling from bush to bush, stopping whenever the stag raised his head, and advancing again when it resumed feeding; at last they came to the fern at the side of the wood, and crawled through it as before, but still more cautiously as they approached the stag. In this manner they arrived at last to within eighty yards of the animal, and then Jacob advanced his gun ready to put it to his shoulder, and as he cocked the lock, raised himself to fire. The click occasioned by the cocking of the lock roused up the stag instantly, and he turned his head in the direction from whence the noise proceeded; as he did so Jacob fired, aiming behind the animal's shoulder: the stag made a bound, came down again, dropped on his knees, attempted to run, and fell dead, while the does fled away with the rapidity of the wind.

Edward started up on his legs with a shout of exultation. Jacob commenced reloading his gun, and stopped Edward as he was about to run up to where the animal lay.

"Edward, you must learn your craft," said Jacob; "never do that again; never shout in that way—on the contrary, you should have remained still in the fern."

"Why so? the stag is dead."

"Yes, my dear boy, that stag is dead; but how do you know but what there may be another lying down in the fern close to us, or at some distance from us, which you have alarmed by your shout? Suppose that we both had had guns, and that the report of mine had started another stag lying in the fern within shot, you would have been able to shoot it; or if a stag was lying at a distance, the report of the gun might have startled him so as to induce him to move his head without rising. I should have seen his antlers move and have marked his

lair, and we should then have gone after him and stalked him too."

"I see," replied Edward, "I was wrong; but I shall know better another time."

"That's why I tell you, my boy," replied Jacob; "now let us go to our quarry. Ay, Edward, this is a noble beast. I thought that he was a hart royal, and so he is."

"What is a hart royal, Jacob?"

"Why, a stag is called a brocket until he is three years old; at four years he is a staggart; at five years a warrantable stag; and after five years he becomes a hart royal."

"And how do you know his age?"

"By his antlers: you see that this stag has nine antlers; now, a brocket has but two antlers, a staggart three, and a warrantable stag but four; at six years old, the antlers increase in number until they sometimes have twenty or thirty. This is a fine beast, and the venison is now getting very good. Now you must see me do the work of my craft."

Jacob then cut the throat of the animal, and afterwards cut off its head, and took out its bowels.

"Are you tired, Edward?" said Jacob, as he wiped his hunting-knife on the coat of the stag.

"No, not the least."

"Well, then, we are now, I should think, about four or five miles from the cottage. Could you find your way home? But that is of no consequence, Smoker will lead you home by the shortest path. I will stay here, and you can saddle White Billy and come back with him, for he must carry the venison back. It's more than we can manage—indeed, as much as we can manage with White Billy to help us. There's more than twenty stone of venison lying there, I can tell you."

Edward immediately assented, and Jacob desiring Smoker to go home, set about flaying and cutting up the animal

for its more convenient transportation. In an hour and a half Edward, attended by Smoker, returned with the pony, on whose back the chief portion of the venison was packed. Jacob took a large piece on his own shoulders, and Edward carried another, and Smoker, after regaling himself with a portion of the inside of the animal, came after them. During the walk home Jacob initiated Edward into the terms of venery and many other points connected with deer-stalking, with which we shall not trouble our readers. As soon as they arrived at the cottage the venison was hung up, the pony put in the stable, and then they sat down to dinner with an excellent appetite after their long morning's walk. Alice and Humphrey had cooked the dinner themselves, and it was in the pot, smoking hot, when they returned; and Jacob declared he never ate a better mess in his life. Alice was not a little proud of this, and of the praises she received from Edward and the old forester. The next day Jacob stated his intention of going to Lymington to dispose of a large portion of the venison, and bring back a sack of oatmeal for their cakes. Edward asked to accompany him, but Jacob replied:

"Edward, you must not think of showing yourself at Lymington, or anywhere else, for a long while, until you are grown out of memory. It would be folly, and you would risk your sisters' and brother's lives, perhaps, as well as your own. Never mention it again: the time will come when it will be necessary, perhaps; if so, it cannot be helped. At present you would be known immediately. No, Edward, I tell you what I do mean to do: I have a little money left, and I intend to buy you a gun, that you may learn to stalk deer yourself without me: for recollect, if any accident should happen to me, who is there but you to provide for your brother and sisters? At Lymington I am known to many; but out of all who know me, there is not one who knows where my cottage is; they know that I live in the New Forest, and that I supply them venison, and purchase other articles in return. That is all that they know; and I may therefore go without fear. I shall sell the venison to-morrow, and bring you back a good gun; and Humphrey shall have the carpenter's tools which he wishes for—for I think, by what he does with his knife, that he has a turn that way, and it may be

useful. I must also get some other tools for Humphrey and you, as we shall then be able to work all together; and some threads and needles for Alice, for she can sew a little, and practice will make her more perfect."

Jacob went off to Lymington as he had proposed, and returned late at night with White Billy well loaded; he had a sack of oatmeal, some spades and hoes, a saw and chisels, and other tools; two scythes and two three-pronged forks; and when Edward came to meet him he put into his hand a gun with a very long barrel.

"I believe, Edward, that you will find that a good one, for I know where it came from. It belonged to one of the rangers, who was reckoned the best shot in the forest. I know the gun, for I have seen it on his arm, and have taken it in my hand to examine it more than once. He was killed at Naseby with your father, poor fellow! and his widow sold the gun to meet her wants."

"Well!" replied Edward, "I thank you much, Jacob, and I will try if I cannot kill as much venison as will pay back the purchase money—I will, I assure you."

"I shall be glad if you do, Edward; not because I want the money back, but because then I shall be more easy in my mind about you all, if anything happens to me. As soon as you are perfect in your woodcraft, I shall take Humphrey in hand, for there is nothing like having two strings to your bow. To-morrow we will not go out: we have meat enough for three weeks or more; and now the frost has set in, it will keep well. You shall practise at a mark with your gun, that you may be accustomed to it; for all guns, even the best, require a little humouring."

Edward, who had often fired a gun before, proved the next morning that he had a very good eye; and after two or three hours' practice, hit the mark at a hundred yards almost every time.

"I wish you would let me go out by myself," said Edward, overjoyed at his success.

"You would bring home nothing, boy," replied Jacob. "No, no, you have a great deal to learn yet; but I tell you what we shall do; any time that we are not in great want of venison, you shall have the first fire."

"Well, that will do," replied Edward.

The winter now set in with great severity, and they remained almost altogether within doors. Jacob and the boys went out to get firewood, and dragged it home through the snow.

"I wish, Jacob," said Humphrey, "that I was able to build a cart, for it would be very useful, and White Bill would then have something to do; but I can't make the wheels, and there is no harness."

"That's not a bad idea of yours, Humphrey," replied Jacob; "we will think about it. If you can't build a cart, perhaps I can buy one. It would be useful if it were only to take the manure out of the yard to the potato-ground; for I have hitherto carried it out in baskets, and it's hard work."

"Yes, and we might saw the wood into billets, and carry it home in the cart instead of dragging it this way: my shoulder is quite sore with the rope, it cuts me so."

"Well, when the weather breaks up, I will see what I can do, Humphrey; but just now the roads are so blocked up, that I do not think we could get a cart from Lymington to the cottage, although we can a horse perhaps."

But if they remained indoors during the inclement weather, they were not idle. Jacob took this opportunity to instruct the children in everything. Alice learnt how to wash and how to cook. It is true that sometimes she scalded herself a little, sometimes burnt her fingers; and other accidents did occur, from the articles employed being too heavy for them to lift by themselves; but practice and dexterity compensated for want of strength, and fewer accidents happened every day. Humphrey had his carpenter's tools; and although at first he had many fail-

ures, and wasted nails and wood, by degrees he learnt to use his tools with more dexterity, and made several little useful articles. Little Edith could now do something, for she made and baked all the oatmeal cakes, which saved Alice a good deal of time and trouble in watching them. It was astonishing how much the children could do, now that there was no one to do it for them; and they had daily instruction from Jacob. In the evening Alice sat down with her needle and thread to mend the clothes; at first they were not very well done; but she improved every day. Edith and Humphrey learnt to read while Alice worked, and then Alice learnt; and thus passed the winter away so rapidly, that although they had been five months at the cottage, it did not appear as if they had been there as many weeks. All were happy and contented, with the exception, perhaps, of Edward, who had fits of gloominess, and occasionally showed signs of impatience as to what was passing in the world, of which he remained in ignorance.

That Edward Beverley had fits of gloominess and impatience is not surprising. Edward had been brought up as the heir of Arnwood; and a boy at a very early age imbibes notions of his position, if it promises to be a high one. He was not two miles from that property which by right was his own. His own mansion had been reduced to ashes—he himself was hidden in the forest, and he could not but feel his position. He sighed for the time when the King's cause should be again triumphant, and his arrival at that age when he could in person support and uphold the cause. He longed to be in command as his father had been—to lead his men on to victory—to recover his property, and to revenge himself on those who had acted so cruelly towards him. This was human nature; and much as Jacob Armitage would expostulate with him, and try to divert his feelings into other channels; long as he would preach to him about forgiveness of injuries, and patience until better times should come, Edward could not help brooding over these thoughts, and if ever there was a breast animated with intense hatred against the Puritans, it was that of Edward Beverley. Although this was to be lamented, it could not create surprise or wonder

in the old forester. All he could do was, as much as possible to reason with him, to soothe his irritated feelings, and by constant employment try to make him forget for a time the feelings of ill-will which he had conceived.

One thing was, however, sufficiently plain to Edward, which was, that whatever might be his wrongs, he had not the power at present to redress them; and this feeling, perhaps, more than any other, held him in some sort of check; and as the time when he might have an opportunity appeared far distant, even to his own sanguine imagination, so by degrees did he contrive to dismiss from his thoughts what it was no use to think about at present.

CHAPTER V

STALKING DEER AND CATCHING COWS

As we have before said, time passed rapidly; with the exception of one or two excursions after venison, they remained in the cottage, and Jacob never went to Lymington. The frost had broken up, the snow had long disappeared, and the trees began to bud. The sun became powerful, and in the month of May the forest began again to look green.

"And now, Edward," said Jacob Armitage, one day at breakfast, "we will try for venison again to sell at Lymington, for I must purchase Humphrey's cart and harness, so let us get our guns, and go out this fine morning. The stags are mostly by themselves at this season, for the does are with their young calves. We must find the slot of a deer, and track him to his lair, and you shall have the first shot if you like; but that, however, depends more upon the deer than upon me."

They had walked four or five miles when they came upon the slot or track of a deer, but Jacob's practised eye pointed out to Edward that it was the slot of a young one, and not worth following. He explained to Edward the difference in the hoof-marks and other signs by which this knowledge was gained, and they proceeded onwards until they found another slot, which Jacob declared to be that of a warrantable stag—that is, one old enough to kill and to be good venison.

"We must now track him to his lair, Edward."

This took them about a mile farther, when they arrived at a small thicket of thorns about an acre in extent.

"Here he is, you see, Edward; let me now see if he is harboured."

They walked round the thicket, and could not find any slot or track by which the stag had left the covert, and Jacob pronounced that the animal must be hid in it.

"Now, Edward, do you stay here while I go back to the lee side of the covert; I will enter it with Smoker, and the stag will, in all probability, when he is roused, come out to breast the wind. You will then have a good shot at him; recollect to fire so as to hit him behind the shoulder: if he is moving quick, fire a little before the shoulder; if slow, take aim accurately; but recollect, if I come upon him in the covert, I shall kill him if I can, for we want the venison, and then we will go after another to give you a chance."

Jacob then left Edward, and went down to the lee side of the covert, where he entered it with Smoker. Edward was stationed behind a thorn-bush, which grew a few yards clear of the covert, and he soon heard the creaking of the branches.

A short time elapsed, and a fine stag came out at a trot; he turned his head, and was just bounding away, when Edward fired, and the animal fell. Remembering the advice of Jacob, Edward remained where he was, in silence reloading his piece, and was soon afterwards joined by Jacob and the dog.

"Well done, Edward!" said the forester in a low voice, and covering his forehead to keep off the glare of the sun, he looked earnestly at a high brake between some thorn-trees, about half a mile to windward. "I think I see something there—look, Edward, your eyes are younger than mine. Is that the branch of a tree in the fern, or is it not?"

"I see what you mean," replied Edward. "It is not, it moves."

"I thought so, but my eyes are not so good as they once were. It's another stag, depend upon it; but how to get near

him? we never can get across this patch of clear grass without being seen."

"No, we cannot get at him from this spot," replied Edward; "but if we were to fall back to leeward, and gain the forest again, I think that there are thorns sufficient from the forest to where he lies, to creep from behind one to the other, so as to get a shot at him; don't you?"

"It will require care and patience to manage that; but I think it might be done. I will try; it is my turn now, you know. You had better stay here with the dog, for only one can hide from thorn to thorn."

Jacob, ordering Smoker to remain, then set off. He had to make a circuit of three miles to get to the spot where the thorns extended from the forest, and Edward saw no more of him, although he strained his eyes, until the stag sprung out, and the gun was discharged. Edward perceived that the stag was not killed, but severely wounded, running towards the covert near which he was hid. "Down, Smoker," said he, as he cocked his gun. The stag came within shot, and was coming nearer when, seeing Edward, it turned. Edward fired, and then cheered on the dog, who sprang after the wounded animal, giving tongue, as he followed him. Edward, perceiving Jacob hastening towards him, waited for him.

"He's hard hit, Edward," cried Jacob, "and Smoker will have him, but we must follow as fast as we can."

They both caught up their guns and ran as fast as they could, when, as they entered the wood, they heard the dog at bay.

"We shan't have far to go, Edward; the animal is done up, Smoker has him at bay."

They hastened on another quarter of a mile, when they found that the stag had fallen on his knees, and had been seized by the throat by Smoker.

"Mind, Edward, now, how I go up to him, for the wound from the horn of the deer is very dangerous."

Jacob advanced from behind the stag, and cut his throat with his hunting-knife. "He is a fine beast, and we have done well to-day; but we shall have two journeys to make to get all this venison home. I could not get a fair shot at him—and see, I have hit him here in the flank."

"And here is my ball in his throat," said Edward.

"So it is. Then it was a good shot that you made, and you are master of the hunt this day, Edward. Now, I'll remain, and you go home for White Billy; Humphrey is right about the cart. If we had one, we could have carried all home at once; but I must go now and cut the throat of the other stag which you killed so cleverly. You will be a good hunter one of these days, Edward. A little more knowledge, and a little more practice, and I will leave it all to you, and hang my gun up over the chimney."

It was late in the evening before they had made their two trips and taken all the venison home, and very tired were they before it was all safely housed. Edward was delighted with his success, but not more so than was old Jacob. The next morning Jacob set off for Lymington, with the pony loaded with venison, which he sold, as well as two more loads which he promised to bring the next day, and the day after. He then looked out for a cart, and was fortunate in finding a small one just fitted to the size of the pony, who was not tall, but very strong, as all New Forest ponies are. He also procured harness, and then put Billy in the cart to draw him home; but Billy did not admire being put in a cart, and for some time was very restive, and backed and reared, and went every way but the right; but by dint of coaxing and leading, he at last submitted, and went straight on; but then the noise of the cart behind him frightened him, and he ran away. At last, having tired himself out, he thought that he might as well go quietly in harness, as he could not get out of it; and he did so, and arrived safe at the cottage. Humphrey was delighted at the sight of the cart, and said that now they should get on well. The next day Jacob con-

trived to put all the remainder of the venison in the cart, and White Billy made no more difficulty; he dragged it all to Lymington, and returned with the cart as quietly and cleverly as if he had been in harness all his life.

"Well, Edward, the venison paid for the cart, at all events," said Jacob, "and now, I will tell you all the news I collected while I was at Lymington. Captain Burly, who attempted to incite the people to rescue the King, has been hung, drawn, and quartered, as a traitor."

"They are traitors who condemned him," replied Edward in wrath.

"Yes, so they are; but there is better news, which is that the Duke of York has escaped to Holland."

"Yes, that is good news; and the King?"

"He is still a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle. There are many rumours and talks, but no one knows what is true and what is false; but depend upon it, this cannot last long, and the King will have his rights yet."

Edward remained very grave for some time.

"I trust in Heaven we all shall have our rights yet, Jacob," said he at last. "I wish I was a man!"

Here the conversation ended, and they went to bed.

This was now a busy time at the cottage. The manure had to be got out of the stable and pigsties, and carried out to the potato-ground and garden; the crops had to be put in; and the cart was now found valuable. After the manure had been carried out and spread, Edward and Humphrey helped Jacob to dig the ground, and then to put in the seed. The cabbage-plants of last year were then put out, and the turnips and carrots sown. Before the month was over the garden and potato-field were cropped, and Humphrey took upon himself to weed and keep it clean. Little Edith had also employment now; for the hens began to lay eggs, and as soon as she heard them cackling, she ran for the eggs and brought them in; and before the month was

over, Jacob had set four hens upon eggs. Billy, the pony, was now turned out to graze in the forest; he came home every night of his own accord.

"I'll tell you what we want," said Humphrey, who took the command altogether over the farm; "we want a cow."

"Oh yes, a cow," cried Alice; "I have plenty of time to milk her."

"Whose cows are those which I see in the forest sometimes?" said Humphrey to Jacob.

"If they belong to anybody, they belong to the King," replied Jacob; "but they are cattle which have strayed and found their way to the forest, and have remained here ever since. They are rather wild and savage, and you must be careful how you go too near them, as the bulls will run at you. They increase very fast; there were but six a few years ago, and now there are at least fifty in the herd."

"Well, I'll try and get one, if I can," said Humphrey.

"You will be puzzled to do that, boy," replied Jacob, "and as I said before, beware of the bulls."

"I don't want a bull," replied Humphrey; "but a cow would give us milk, and then we should have more manure for the garden. My garden will then grow more potatoes."

"Well, Humphrey, if you can catch a cow, no one will interfere; but I think you will not find it very easy, and you may find it very dangerous."

"I'll look out for one," replied Humphrey, "anyhow. Alice, if we only had a cow, wouldn't that be jolly?"

The crops were now all up, and as the days began to be long, the work became comparatively light and easy. Humphrey was busy making a little wheelbarrow for Edith, that she might barrow away the weeds as he hoed them up; and at last this great performance was completed, much to the admiration of all, and much to his own satisfaction. Indeed, when it is recollected that Humphrey had only the hand-saw and axe, and that

he had to cut down the tree, and then to saw it into plank, it must be acknowledged that it required great patience and perseverance even to make a wheelbarrow; but Humphrey was not only persevering, but was full of invention. He had built up a henhouse with fir poles, and made the nests for the hens to lay and hatch in, and they now had between forty and fifty chickens running about. He had also divided the pigsty, so that the sow might be kept apart from the other pigs; and they expected very soon to have a litter of young pigs. He had transplanted the wild strawberries from the forest, and had by manure made them large and good; and he had also a fine crop of onions in the garden, from seed which Jacob had bought at Lymington; now Humphrey was very busy cutting down some poles in the forest to make a cowhouse, for he declared that he would have a cow somehow or another. June arrived, and it was time to mow down grass to make into hay for the winter, and Jacob had two scythes. He showed the boys how to use them, and they soon became expert; and as there was plenty of long grass at this time of the year, and they could mow when they pleased, they soon had White Billy in full employment carrying the hay home. The little girls helped to make it, for Humphrey had made them two rakes. Jacob thought that there was hay enough made, but Humphrey said that there was enough for the pony, but not enough for the cow.

"But where is the cow to come from, Humphrey?"

"Where the venison comes from," replied he,—"out of the forest."

So Humphrey continued to mow and make hay, while Edward and Jacob went out for venison. After all the hay was made and stacked, Humphrey found out a method of thatching with fern, which Jacob had never thought of; and when that was done, they commenced cutting down fern for fodder. Here again Humphrey would have twice as much as Jacob had ever cut before, because he wanted litter for the cow. At last it became quite a joke between him and Edward, who, when he brought home more venison than would keep in the hot

weather, told Humphrey that the remainder was for the cow. Still Humphrey would not give up the point, and every morning and evening he would be certain to be absent an hour or two, and it was found out he was watching the herd of wild cattle who were feeding; sometimes they were very near, at others a long way off. He used to get up into the trees, and examine them as they passed under him, without perceiving him. One night Humphrey returned very late, and the next morning he was off before daylight. Breakfast was over, and Humphrey did not make his appearance, and they could not tell what was the matter. Jacob felt uneasy, but Edward laughed, and said:

"Oh, depend upon it, he'll come back and bring the cow with him."

Hardly had Edward said these words when in came Humphrey red with perspiration.

"Now then, Jacob and Edward, come with me; we must put Billy in the cart, and take Smoker and a rope with us. Take your guns too, for fear of accident."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I'll tell you as we go along, but I must put Billy in the cart, for there is no time to be lost."

Humphrey disappeared, and Jacob said to Edward, "What can it be?"

"It can be nothing but the cow he is so mad about," replied Edward. "However, when he comes with the pony, we shall know; let us take our guns and the dog Smoker as he wishes."

Humphrey now drove up the pony and cart, and they set off.

"Well, I suppose you'll tell us now what we are going for?" said Edward.

"Yes, I will. You know I've been watching the cattle for a long while, because I wanted a cow. I have been in a tree when they have passed under me several times, and I observed

that one or two of the heifers were very near calving. Yesterday evening I thought one could not help calving very soon indeed, and as I was watching I saw that she was uneasy, and that she at last left the herd and went into a little copse of wood. I remained three hours to see if she came out again, and she did not. It was dark when I came home, as you know. This morning I went before daylight and found the herd. She is very remarkable, being black and white spotted; and, after close examination, I found that she was not with the herd, so I am sure that she went into the copse to calve, and that she has calved before this."

"Well, that may be," replied Jacob; "but now I do not understand what we are to do."

"Nor I," replied Edward.

"Well then, I'll tell you what I hope to do. I have got the pony and cart to take the calf home with us, if we can get it—which I think we can. I have got Smoker to worry the heifer and keep her employed while we put the calf in the cart; a rope that we may tie the cow, if we can; and you with your guns must keep off the herd, if they come to her assistance. Now do you understand my plan?"

"Yes, and I think it very likely to succeed, Humphrey," replied Jacob, "and I give you credit for the scheme. We will help you all we can. Where is the copse?"

"Not half a mile farther," replied Humphrey. "We shall soon be there."

On their arrival they found that the herd were feeding at a considerable distance from the copse, which was perhaps as well.

"Now," said Jacob, "I and Edward will enter into the copse with Smoker, and you follow us, Humphrey. I will make Smoker seize the heifer if necessary; at all events, he will keep her at bay—that is, if she is here. First let us walk round the copse and find her *slot* as we call the track of a deer. See, here is her footing. Now let us go in."

They advanced cautiously into the thicket, following the track of the heifer, and at last came upon her. Apparently she had not calved more than an hour, and was licking the calf which was not yet on its legs. As soon as the animal perceived Jacob and Edward, she shook her head, and was about to run at them; but Jacob told Smoker to seize her, and the dog flew at her immediately. The attack of the dog drove back the heifer quite into the thicket, and as the dog bounded round her, springing this way and that way to escape her horns, the heifer was soon separated from the calf.

"Now then, Edward and Humphrey," said Jacob, advancing between the heifer and the calf, "lift up the calf between you and put it in the cart. Leave Smoker and me to manage the mother."

The boys put their arms under the stomach of the calf, and carried it away. The heifer was at first too busy defending herself against the dog to perceive that the calf was gone; when she did Jacob called Smoker to him, so as to bring him between the heifer and where the boys were going out of the thicket. At last the heifer gave a loud bellow, and rushed out of the thicket in pursuit of her calf checked by Smoker, who held on to her ear, and sometimes stopped her from advancing.

"Hold her, Smoker," said Jacob, who now went back to help the boys. "Hold her, boy. Is the calf in the cart?"

"Yes, and tied fast," replied Edward, "and we are in the cart too."

"That's right," replied Jacob. "Now I'll get in too, and let us drive off. She'll follow us, depend upon it. Here, Smoker! Smoker! let her alone."

Smoker, at this command, came bounding out of the copse, followed by the heifer, lowing most anxiously. Her lowing was responded to by the calf in the cart, and she ran wildly up to it.

"Drive off, Humphrey," said Jacob; "I think I heard the lowing of the heifer answered by some of the herd, and the sooner we are off the better."

Humphrey, who had the reins, drove off; the heifer followed, at one time running at the dog, at another putting her head almost into the hind part of the cart; but the lowing of the heifer was now answered by deeper tones, and Jacob said:

"Edward, get your gun ready, for I think the herd is following. Do not fire, however, till I tell you. We must be governed by circumstances. It won't do to lose the pony, or to run any serious risk, for the sake of the heifer and calf. Drive fast, Humphrey."

A few minutes afterwards they perceived at about a quarter of a mile behind them, not the whole herd, but a single bull, who was coming up at a fast trot, with his tail in the air, and tossing his head, lowing deeply in answer to the heifer.

"There's only one, after all," said Jacob; "I suppose the heifer is his favourite. Well, we can manage him. Smoker, come in. Come in, sir, directly," cried Jacob, perceiving that the dog was about to attack the bull.

Smoker obeyed, and the bull advanced till he was within a hundred yards.

"Now, Edward, do you fire first—aim for his shoulder. Humphrey, pull up."

Humphrey stopped the pony, and the bull continued to advance, but seemed puzzled who to attack, unless it was the dog. As soon as the bull was within sixty yards, Edward fired, and the animal fell down on its knees, tearing the ground with its horns.

"That will do," said Jacob; "drive on again, Humphrey; we will have a look at that fellow by-and-by. At present we had better get home, as others may come. He's up again, but he is at a standstill. I have an idea that he is hit hard."

The cart drove on, followed by the heifer; but no more of the wild herd made their appearance, and they very soon gained the cottage.

"Now, then, what shall we do?" said Jacob. "Come, Humphrey, you have had all the ordering of this, and have done it well."

"Well, Jacob, we must now drive the cart into the yard, and shut the gate upon the cow, till I am ready."

"That's easy done, by setting Smoker at her," replied Jacob; "but, mercy on us, there's Alice and Edith running out!—the heifer may kill them. Go back, Alice, run quite into the cottage, and shut the door till we come."

Alice and Edith hearing this, and Edward also crying out to them, made a hasty retreat to the cottage. Humphrey then backed the cart against the paling of the yard, so as to enable Edward to get on the other side of it, ready to open the gate. Smoker was set at the heifer, and, as before, soon engaged her attention; so that the gate was opened and the cart drove in, and the gate closed again, before the heifer could follow.

"Well, Humphrey, what next?"

"Why, now lift the calf out and put it into the cow-house. I will go into the cowhouse with a rope and a slip-knot at the end of it, get upon the beam above, and drop it over her horns as she's busy with the calf, which she will be as soon as you let her in. I shall pass the end of the rope outside, for you to haul up when I am ready, and then we shall have her fast, till we can secure her properly. When I call out 'ready,' do you open the gate and let her in. You can do that and jump into the cart afterwards, for fear she may run at you; but I don't think that she will, for it's the calf she wants, and not either of you."

As soon as Humphrey was ready with the rope he gave the word, and the gate was opened; the cow ran in immediately, and hearing her calf bleat, went into the cowhouse, the door of which was shut upon her. A minute afterwards Humphrey cried out to them to haul upon the rope, which they did.

"That will do," said Humphrey from the inside; "now make the rope fast, and then you may come in."

They went in, and found the heifer drawn close to the side of the cowhouse by the rope which was round her horns, and unable to move her head.

"Well, Humphrey, that's very clever; but now what's to be done?"

"First I'll saw off the tips of her horns, and then if she does run at us, she won't hurt us much. Wait till I go for the saw."

As soon as the ends of her horns were sawed off, Humphrey took another piece of rope, which he fastened securely round her horns, and then made the other end fast to the side of the building, so that the animal could move about a little and eat out of the crib.

"There," said Humphrey, "now time and patience must do the rest. We must coax her and handle her, and we soon shall tame her. At present let us leave her with the calf. She has a yard of rope, and that is enough for her to lick her calf, which is all that she requires at present. To-morrow we will cut some grass for her."

They then went out, shutting the cowhouse door.

"Well, Humphrey, you've beat us after all, and have the laugh on your side now," said Jacob. " 'Where there's a will, there's a way,' that's certain; and I assure you, that when you were making so much hay, and gathering so much litter, and building a cowhouse, I had no more idea that we should have a cow than that we should have an elephant; and I will say that you deserve great credit for your way of obtaining it."

"That he certainly does," replied Edward. "You have more genius than I have, brother. But dinner must be ready, if Alice has done her duty. What think you, Jacob, shall we after dinner go and look after that bull?"

"Yes, by all means. He will not be bad eating, and I can sell all I can carry in the cart at Lymington. Besides, the skin is worth money."