

## IN THE NEW FOREST.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, AUTHOR OF "ROUND ABOUT NORWAY."



A FOREST OWL.

THOSE who know nothing of the New Forest have yet to become acquainted with one of the loveliest and most charming spots in England. So near the Metropolis, the wonder is that it is not as much sought after as the popular and often more remote sea-side places to which people crowd in multitudes. And probably this would be the case if inns were as plentiful in the Forest as the bracken and the bright scarlet fungi that adorn it; beneath which the fairies encamp and hold their moonlit revels, dancing and capering on midsummer nights to the music of the leaves gently stirred by the night breezes: melodies too refined and ethereal for our coarser natures to enter into and comprehend.

We can only listen to the murmur that is going on: we hear the sighing and the souging: the surgings that sweep and vibrate through the long ferny glades and overarching avenues, finding most voice where the forest grows most dense. But we stand without the charmed circle, and listen as we listen to the murmur of the streams that are everywhere at hand; enchanted, awestruck, perhaps wondering what all these Voices of Nature are saying one to another, but not understanding. The fairy folk alone are in perfect sympathy with the music of their own special realm. We are not admitted into their secrets.

But the inns and hostelries in and about the New Forest are few and far between. When people go down in multitudes, they will have to camp out; take their own tents and beds with them: just as in the old days, when people went out to tea, they carried their own cup and saucer. Or some might prefer the more substantial comforts

of a caravan: one day settling down upon the borders of the Forest, overlooking acres and acres of heathery moorland, that in its season blooms out in rich colours, delighting the eye and the senses, charging the breezes with rich fragrance; the next pitching their tent in the very heart of a dense wood, where the branches meet overhead and shut out the hot sun, and where the eye may trace forests of aisles and arches, and trees intersecting each other like the pillars of a cathedral.

What an experience it would be! A caravan and a chosen few, and for the hottest, brightest month of the year, to pass a roving, gipsy, Bohemian existence, throwing aside all the trammels and constraints of society, and living a pure, free life, glorying in the beauties of Nature, as pristine and primitive as she was a thousand years ago; revelling in the scent of the firs, the sweet incense of the burning, crackling cones that boiled our kettle; rejoicing in the crisp sound of the bracken, as, wandering beside the streams, we trod it under foot—and cannot help treading it under foot, it grows in such wealth and profusion. Each day given to a section of the forest; and some sections should be so beautiful that to each two or three days might be devoted.

And at night, sitting round a crackling, scent-laden fire lighting up happy faces, one of our "chosen few" should play the zither, and draw out its heart-touching notes; another should have a sweet, far-reaching voice; a third should be a learned fiddler, and give us strains more fantastic and weird than those with which Paganini was wont to astonish his hearers: whilst a fourth, with a gift of memory, should thrill us with stories full of ghostly, legendary lore, repeating by the way all that Shakespeare had to say about the present scene.

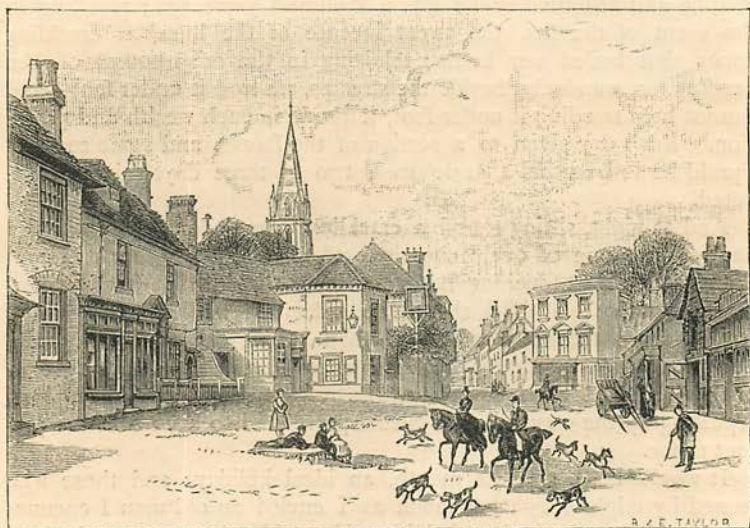
It would be a glorious month, an ideal holiday: and those who passed by might envy us as much as I envied an old man I encountered one day, who had settled himself outside the trees overlooking one of the splendid moors. *His* caravan looked the essence of cleanliness and comfort, he the picture of a patriarch. Long, grey, flowing locks, a ruddy countenance, a bright eye, clear-cut features; a quiet, patient expression, such as we not infrequently see on the aged, when life's evening is closing, and the sun draws near the horizon, and they have a more glorious dawn to look forward to than this world can ever show them.

The old man's pot was swung on a tripod, and the fire beneath was blazing and crackling, but the blue smoke curling about the *marmite* was not allowed to enter. I felt inclined to lift the lid, and acquaint myself with the savoury mess it contained—very savoury of its kind, be sure. I daresay the old man would have been glad enough of company at his midday meal; but my little horse was restive, and declared, as plainly as if he had spoken, that if I dismounted and tied him to the wheel, beside the caravan horse, I should never mount him again. For this little horse was not a common every-day horse;



he was swift of foot and sure of temper (especially when he had his own way), could fly like the wind, or trot gently with a two-year-old child upon his back. He was of some pedigree, too; had run several races, and, what is more to the purpose, had won them all. And he had been christened by wide-spread, universal consent, the *Pride of the Forest*.

The old man was gathering sticks, when I first saw him, to replenish his fire and keep the pot boiling—in a world unknown to him often a more difficult task than he found it to-day. He touched his cap as I stopped, bade me good morrow in a cheerful voice that yet had in it a ring of resignation corresponding with the look upon his



LYNDHURST.

face; remarked on the fineness of the day and admired the beauty of my little animal. We had some talk together; and the spirit almost moved me to ask him about his past life, and why he was alone now, quite alone, in his old age. Whether death had robbed him of his life companion, or whether he had been a solitary man all his days? That, I felt, was impossible; he did not look like it. He had had a history and an active life. His better-half no doubt had reached the summit of the mountain before him, and entered the bark steered by the pale boatman. His turn would come before long. But I thought I would first take home my restless little *Pride*, and return in the afternoon for a long, quiet chat, lead him gently into the past, and by attention and sympathy learn his history.

Alas! that afternoon saw no return, and the next morning the spot was deserted; the caravan and the old man were gone; nothing left

to mark what had been but a black round patch upon the moor, and a few charred embers. Across there the trees were waving and glinting in the bright sun, in all the rich tints of autumn; a wealth of gorgeous colouring indescribably lovely, before which words are as nothing, and the very brush of the artist trembles with something of despair. But the little picture in the foreground, which yesterday had given it so much life and animation, had been so quietly picturesque, and so vividly touched a responsive chord in one's nature, had dissolved and disappeared, and left nothing behind it but a recollection, an unsatisfied longing, an untold story.

Leaving Waterloo by a midday train, after a journey of about



RUFUS'S STONE.

eighty-five miles you reach Lyndhurst Station, whilst the afternoon is yet young. On the road you pass Winchester, about which we may have something to say by-and-by; and presently, winding round Southampton Water, that to-day develops long reaches of unsightly, uninteresting, depressing mud, the train stops at Southampton West. One or two more stations, and we are at *Lyndhurst Road*.

Here very few passengers alighted, and only two entered the shabby, ramshackle omnibus that represents the inn at Lyndhurst and has to traverse the two miles of road separating the village from the station. Shabby as it is, there is no doubt as to its strength, for the men pitch heavy boxes on to the roof as if they were having a game at shuttlecock, and they come crashing down with a sound that sends one flying out again before worse happens. Worse, however, does not happen, and we return to our seats expecting to see the roof cracked and split into sections like a geographical puzzle. It is quite entire.



The driver smiled, a mixture of benignity and pity. "You're a bit nervous, mayhap, sir," he said, "but there's no need. The gentlemen from London ain't accustomed to this kind of thing. I've often remarked they don't know a strong 'bus when they see one."

It was in vain to assure him that we knew an old one at least, and that the strength of youth never accompanied the infirmities of age. The argument did not tell.

"Bless you, sir!" he returned, "this omnibus is good for another twenty years or more. It's only for the look of the thing that our people have had a new one built, and it will be out this very day for the first time. I daresay we shall see it when we get to Lyndhurst. But I'd rather drive the old one, after all."

We admired his constancy, and in another minute were jogging over a well-made road. The springs, at any rate, had long since given way; so that in the matter of endurance it would seem that wood has the advantage over iron.

The only other occupant of the vehicle was a female who looked like a respectable housekeeper. Probably she was going to one of the great houses in the neighbourhood to take command of the domestic establishment and rule over the servants' hall. It was not difficult to see that with so gentle a creature they would have an easy time of it. Ever and anon she looked out on both sides of the road, thought it would be "main dull in the winter," and wondered how she should like it after a London life.

It was a glorious drive, that two miles between the station and the village. On either side lay the forest, the trees changing to rich autumn tints. Thick bracken grew in all directions, some of it six feet high. At the end of the two miles we reached Lyndhurst, a village consisting of a long, straggling street, picturesque, but with no special feature to attract attention. Winding up the hill between the village houses, the grand new omnibus referred to by the driver at the station suddenly shot from its shed and crossed our path like a comet, bringing out admiring eyes from many a doorway, and creating quite a hubbub of small excitement. Then we came to the inn, and the end of the second stage of my journey.

Opposite stood the church, comparatively new, remarkable for its elevated position—moderately speaking: as if the planners and builders had determined to make the way to church impossible to some, difficult for all. It is not distinguished for beauty, inside or out, but contains a fresco, by Leighton, of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, almost worth a visit to Lyndhurst in itself. Of this, Mrs. Short, of Lyndhurst, has made a large and excellent photograph reflecting great credit upon her skill. Her views of the New Forest are equally good.

The church happened to be open, and whilst waiting for a conveyance to continue the third part of my journey, I used the favourable conjunction of open doors and spare moments for making a circuit of the interior. A pretty and amiable young woman was rubbing brasses,

and otherwise adorning and cleaning the church. Itself modern, it stands on the site of an edifice not much more ancient than itself, it is said, and far less sightly, that was pulled down to make way for the requirements of an increasing population. The fresco stood out grandly from the very end of the aisle, but only when close to it was all its grace and beauty, softness and refinement, seen to perfection.

Going back to the inn, the conveyance to take me to Stoney Cross soon came round. The new omnibus was still flourishing up and down the village street, "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." My Jehu was enraptured.

"A rare fine one, sir," said he, gazing with pride at what must add so much to the reputation of his house. "Red velvet inside, comfortable seats on the top. Now, wouldn't you, sir, like to step down, and have a good look at her?" This was said in such a tone as one might use towards a schoolboy upon taking him to a pastrycook's and offering him sundry dainties. But by this time I was comfortably packed in the little waggonette, and resisted the offer.

"About time you had a new omnibus," I said. "First impressions go for much, and seeing this antediluvian vehicle at the station, makes one wonder whether everything else at Lyndhurst is after the same pattern."

The old man laughed. "I don't think I'm a great way better," said he. "I've been here more than forty year, and I've grown old with hard work, like the 'bus. But I've got some go in me yet, and so has she. We shall keep her for wet days, like a double set of harness."

"And you—will you come out on fine days, like the new conveyance?"

"Ah! ah!" he cried, with a melancholy chuckle: "I'm only a postboy, not an omnibus. I must take the rough with the smooth, the fair with the foul. I've grown old at that kind of work, but not rusty. When I tumble to pieces, the spring will be well worn out."

He was still a hale, tough old fellow; and if we should both be living ten years hence, and I should visit Stoney Cross, likely enough he may be there to drive me.

We turned from the inn and very soon had left Lyndhurst behind us. Some time before visiting the New Forest, an old friend had said to me:

"You must get out at Lyndhurst Road, take the omnibus to Lyndhurst village, there hire a conveyance to take you to Stoney Cross, and make the Compton Arms, in the very heart of the Forest, your head-quarters. You will find yourself as happy as the day is long, and as comfortable as Mr. and Mrs. Coggin can make you."

There is hardly a nook or cranny in England that my friend does not know, scarcely a palatial mansion that he has not visited. He has oftentimes been the guest of royalty as well as of less exalted individuals, and was therefore supposed to know something about the matter.



For this reason I was bound for the Compton Arms, Stoney Cross. I hardly knew to what I was going, but pictured a small village, with the usual accompaniment of straggling geese and children—the latter much more noisy and disagreeable than the former. I expected to have to retire late to rest and rise up early to avoid the annoyance of broken sleep by the thousand-and-one village sounds that are fifty times more disturbing than the continuous roar of a great city, or the everlasting beat and plash of the surge upon the sea-shore. The latter, indeed, is soothing rather than otherwise. But the “cock’s shrill



RUSTIC BRIDGE IN THE NEW FOREST.

clarion,” the waking-up of animal life, the commencement of village domestic occupations—these are only to be borne with calmness by those who can sleep through a battle and be undisturbed by an earthquake.

Meanwhile I was on the road to my unknown quarters. It was sufficient happiness for the time being, guarantee sufficient for that which was to come. Nothing could be more glorious and beautiful than the drive, especially as, after passing, on the left, the Kennels of the New Forest Foxhounds, we made progress, and entered more into the solitude of the forest. We could not, of course, leave the high road and penetrate into the heart of the woods; but as we went we obtained long, lovely views of glades, forest aisles and arches, beautiful bracken fronds, all full of golden, ruddy autumn tints. Here and there squirrels ran quickly across our path, with their long bushy tails and twinkling eyes; looking far prettier and more graceful than they do when shut up in their little cages, performing almost the penance of Sisyphus without having his sins to answer for.



We turned to the left and ascended the hill towards Minstead, but looked in vain far down the glades for the red deer, once so plentiful in the Forest, subsequently so scarce, and now once more flourishing in numbers. It was the wrong time of the day for them; they seldom show themselves except at early morning or late evening.

Minstead has in itself no especial feature, except a small, quaint old church, and a primitive, very clean-looking inn. Its sign, "The Trusty Servant," hung high up, a copy of the figure to be found in the entry of the kitchen at St. Mary's College, Winchester: a curious compound of a man, a hog, a deer, and an ass.

We were now more than half-way on our road. Turning to the left, we ascended the hill, still with the grand trees about us, long stretches of views into the interior of the Forest. Birds were



THE COMITON ARMS.

chattering and squirrels were jumping from bough to bough; fern fronds and bracken obstructed one's path in loveliest but somewhat irritating confusion, causing a longing for a whole forest of deer to eat up a pathway at least, and make one's way through the thickets a little less difficult. Every now and then a stream, heard but unseen, sent forth its musical sound, a constant rippling and murmuring: forest voices that almost seemed to make more palpable the utter silence and solitude that surrounded us.

Reaching the top of the hill, we came upon a clear open space, a ridge commanding one of the most magnificent views in the New Forest. In the far distance might be seen the calm, sparkling Southampton Water, twelve miles off; the Isle of Wight beyond. On the right was spread out a rich carpet of trees, wave upon wave of billowy verdure, gradually sloping into a valley, more lovely than ever to-day, with every varying tone of autumn: a wealth of gorgeous colouring, every imaginable tint of brown, yellow, and



golden. A long, straight, open road now lay before us, and at a little distance stood a solitary house with a sign before it swinging in the wind.

"Is that the Compton Arms?" I asked the talkative old driver, who had entertained me as we came along with the history of everything and everybody connected with the New Forest for the last hundred years.

"Ay, sir; that's the Compton Arms, sure enough. And mighty comfortable you'll be there."

It was so different from what I had pictured it (things always are different from our picturings) that I could hardly take in the information. Instead of a small, rural village, in place of an inn under the very shadow of the great forest trees, behold a solitary road-side house; no other place near it, separated by a certain amount of heathery moorland from all trees; in the very heart of the forest certainly; trees everywhere to be seen, yet none to speak of very near to us. It was much better so. A situation more healthy and bracing than if it had been down in the valley, buried in gloom.

The first thing we saw was a herd of black pigs and geese mingling together in friendly understanding, grazing and taking their walks abroad—for they were soon out of sight. I wondered whether they would come back with their proper number, or whether a straggler would take it into his head to go forth and see the world—to return a sadder and a wiser pig. But the pigs and the geese stray far and wide, and are never lost; and one herd will mix with another, and sometimes have a pitched battle, and separate again without getting confused as to their own identity; each goes his own way, and each knows to what party he belongs.

By the time I was fairly settled at the Compton Arms, the shades of evening were beginning to fall. There was very little more to be done that day except stroll out in front and watch the sunset gild the forest and flush the sky with the clear bright tones one sees only in autumn. Days when a certain healthy sharpness in the air tells you very distinctly that, in spite of possible and occasional warm intervals, summer is gone, and pale winter and cold winds and naked, shivering trees are at hand.

No shivering trees to-night, but warm-tinted, well-clothed branches, glowing red in the sun, that presently sank below the horizon: and night quickly and very effectually shut in the world.

Strolling out on the heath later on, the darkness and solitude and silence were almost appalling. One could only stand perfectly still and enjoy the effect in all its intensity and perfection. A black mass of foliage was spread in front, and not a sound came from the depths of the forest. Its living creatures were safe in their nests and lairs, fast asleep—the sleep of animal life which always seems to have one eye open, and in a moment rouses and falls back again into unconsciousness—a faculty we may well envy but cannot attain to,



Straight from the whirl and unrest of London, this solitude fell upon the spirit with a soothing sense inexpressibly grateful, more healing to exhausted nerves than all the draughts and potions in the whole pharmacopœia. The stars above glittered a thousand-fold and alone seemed to respond to one's sense of companionship; whilst the Great Bear pursuing his course and directing one's gaze instinctively to the North Star, carried one's thoughts seawards. There, possibly, at this very moment, a brave vessel might be straining every timber to ride safely through mountainous waters, and many a brave heart, perhaps, would have given its dearest possessions to be standing safe and sound in the midst of this dark solitude.

"Those that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters; these men see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep."

We were surrounded by wonders here, too, but of a more peaceful, less awful kind: the wonders of earth and sky. Not far off, it is true—twelve miles away—the sea began its reign; a reign of peace or terror according to its moods: but how furiously the billows might lash, how high the waves might roll, how despairing might be the cry of a sinking crew, none of it all could ever penetrate to and destroy this silence.

I had strolled to the very edge of the woods, and in the little distance the lights of the inn gleamed out in a bright, friendly manner, suggesting that this chilly night, the warm, fire-lit, candle-lit room, with closed shutters and drawn curtains, a comfortable easy chair and a favourite book, was perhaps a more sensible manner of passing the time, than wandering about these ancient dominions, risking pitfalls, or coming full tilt against the trees, like honest Sancho Panza warring with the windmills.

I was not long in finding out that all the praises sung in favour of the Compton Arms were even short of its merits, and that our host and hostess made the comfort of a guest their first consideration. It was strange to meet with anything so well ordered and organised in this out-of-the-way, secluded spot. If it were more widely known, it would soon have to expand its walls and raise its roof; and even then rooms would have to be made sure of in advance—as is not infrequently the case now. The cooking of the establishment would satisfy an epicure, and the dairy supplies were in keeping with the artistic resources of the kitchen department. Unlimited cream of the richest kind, butter of exquisite flavour—all made on the premises, and therefore beyond the unpleasant suspicion that so often lurks about London supplies.

I rather dwell upon the merits of the Compton Arms, Stoney Cross, near Lyndhurst (to be precise in the address), because it is a rarity in its way. Rare to discover in a spot where one would expect nothing but the resources of a bare road-side inn, all the civility, attention, and in every reasonable sense of the word, the



comfort of a metropolitan hotel. Not gilded staircases, of course, or marble corridors; not painted ceilings or silken hangings; but large, comfortable bed-rooms and excellent beds, one capital sitting-room upstairs, and one or two smaller ones below—and no man in his travels should ask for more—and few will get as much as they will find at the Compton Arms.

But the charm of the place is in its isolation, and because it is in the very heart of the Forest. You may go out and in five minutes find yourself in the depths of the silent woods, surrounded by lovely glades and avenues and long vistas of trees, the bracken crackling and crisping under your feet, the falling leaves rustling (if it is autumn) as you stir amongst them, with a sound so exhilarating, which you enjoy just as much as the very children themselves—yourself the greatest child.

And, I have said, all this silence, solitude and beauty are so refreshing, so restoring, after the exhausting life and labour of the world: whether it be the labour of work or of pleasure—the midnight oil of study or the midnight blaze of dissipation. To run down from London and take a week of this life, or even a few days, makes a new man of you. The gloomy thoughts and dark forebodings, the restless longing for something different—we hardly knew what in our unrest—all disappear. The mind resumes its tone, nerves and body are re-braced; you wonder what could have been amiss a week ago.

If you are a good pedestrian, you may take long walks ad libitum; a fresh walk every day; or if inclined for a gallop across country, you may join the meet and come in at the tail of the hunt if not at the death. And winning this tail will do you just as much suit and service, from a healthful point of view, as if you had won the other. This one, too, you may keep; no one seeks to deprive you of the honour; but the other you would probably feel bound to offer to those bright eyes, those loosened locks and glowing cheeks, “flushed with the hue of health,” in all the attraction of “maiden meditation, fancy free,” that came in only a few seconds behind you—perhaps to be fancy free no longer. Oh! beware! beware!

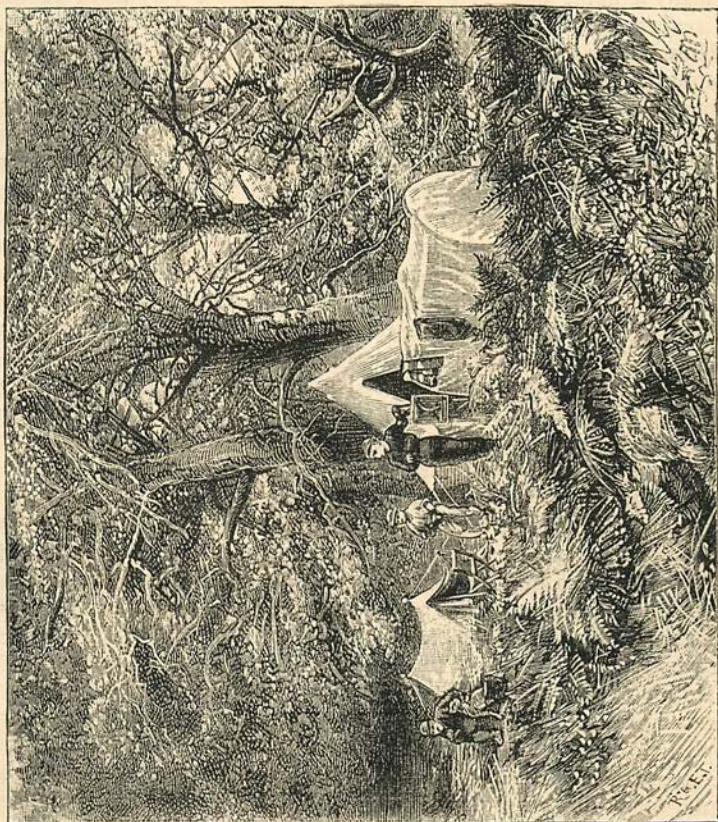
The next morning, how different and glorious was the view from the windows of the inn. Once more I thought how far better was its situation than if we had been down in a hollow, in a relaxing air, surrounded by overshadowing trees and falling leaves—influences so depressing—and all the village sounds of life and boisterous merriment and daily labour, that in rustic settlements stand out with such startling emphasis.

In place of the dark pall stretching last night over the valley and rising beyond, this morning there was a magnificent sea of leaves, “surging in mighty billows,” glinting in sunshine and in all the tints of autumn that are so indescribably beautiful. From the back of the inn the view was very different in character, more pastoral and cultivated. We looked upon rich, far-off fields and well-kept



hedges, smooth lawns, slopes gently wooded; whilst in the distance beyond, to the right, Southampton water lay cold and sleeping in the sunshine.

My first pilgrimage was to Rufus's Stone, which marks the spot where King William II. was shot by Walter Tyrrell all those centuries ago. As the spot then looked, so it looks now, save that the tree



CAMPING OUT.

against which the arrow glanced has disappeared. Indeed, many parts of the forest are unchanged since the days when it was first founded.

Crossing the heath, passing some gravel pits, where a labourer was hard at work, with whom one stopped to exchange civilities, and descending a somewhat steep road, bounded on one side by the heath, on the other by the forest, we looked over the tops of many of the trees in a way that seemed to give us power and command over nature, a strange, delightful sense of soaring. In about five minutes the stone stood out in a tolerably clear space upon the green-sward, each of the three sides bearing an inscription.



The original stone had been so defaced by people carving their names upon it, that it was encased by this iron structure, which to a certain extent defies the power of the knife, and the efforts of those who are too eager to leave behind them wherever they go such records of their folly. The very trees of the forest are not sacred to these destroyers, and names and initials were deeply carved upon the bark of many a noble oak, many a fine beech, in the very teeth of the notices warning against the practice.

How vividly passed before one that scene that took place nearly a thousand years ago, when a king lost his life at the hands of a subject. If purposely done, what remorse must have been his: if an accident, what sorrow and regret! We can imagine the sad procession: the monarch carried to a neighbouring hut; thence, in the evening, taken on a rough cart, through the gloomy forest and the long dark roads, to Winchester; a mournful, melancholy transport; though in those days probably they thought less of death and changes—"Le roi est mort, vive le roi!"—than we do in this later and more civilized age. Still, a king was a king, whatever might have been his life; and great must have been the cry and stir that vibrated throughout the country, spread by the slow-reaching channels of report.

From the stone the road stretched upwards over the heath, but the slope of the hill hid the inn from view. To the right the wood grew thick and dense, and in its recesses one might easily stray and be lost. Following the road downwards, I soon came to the small village of Brook, with its inevitable inn and swinging sign. Here a magpie hopping mischievously about, came up and boldly inspected me, chattering in a tame and very impudent manner. Finally it went off in triumph with a bright steel chain thrown to it by the landlord of the inn, which it stowed away cunningly behind a wagon in the yard. Passing on over a rustic, picturesque bridge, I turned to the right into the wood and followed the course of the stream for some distance.

Nothing could be more lovely than the scene. The banks of the stream were lined with a wealth of fern and bracken, and the water rippled along with the most musical of sounds. The trees arched and met overhead; the sun threw long shadows into the wood. Bright scarlet fungi grew in profusion, and the tender fronds of the younger bracken were of the most transparent green and gold, as they held up their delicate structures to the light.

In the hot summer months, to come and picnic here with a favourite book would be high bliss. Still better to go further into the depths, out of sound and reach of the high road, and pitch one's tent—which may easily be done—and pass the days sketching or reading, or lounging and doing nothing but enjoying the bare fact of existence, free and happy as primeval man. Burdened perhaps with a load of sin, sorrow and suffering as yet unknown to him; but possessing a thousand-and-one advantages, sources of happiness, civilization and refinement, to which he was equally a stranger.

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BY CHARLES W. WOOD, AUTHOR OF "ROUND ABOUT NORWAY."



RINGWOOD.

"SO you are in the New Forest," wrote a Norwegian friend to me. "I know it well. It is an old acquaintance of mine, and reminds me much of my own country."

And no doubt, for this reason, my friend not only knows the New Forest, but loves it also. Who does not love anything—a song, a name, a scent, a flower—that reminds us of our Fatherland, when from that land we have been absent long years? How we cling to the smallest trifle that brings back to us the scenes of youth, when the whole world was full of a careless joy born

partly of irresponsibility. How even the things and people then disliked and shunned become, through the sad pleasures of memory and the lapse of time, almost loved and revered!

Nevertheless—to return to my friend's letter—as far as my experience of Norway extends, you will have to travel long in that pleasant land before meeting with anything so beautiful and luxuriant as the trees and the glorious foliage of the New Forest. Yet, in replying, I spared him the observation. When prejudice kindly represents to us things as they are not, why disturb her sway? If the eyes are made happy by seeing with a somewhat distorted vision, why, with wanton cruelty, hold up the glasses that dissolve an innocent though it may be fictitious enjoyment? Many of our pleasures and delights in this world arise from little self-delusions that are harmless as they are merciful: just as many of our troubles, self-created, are born of the imagination and have no other existence. If we are made happier by dwelling in a fool's paradise, let us have it by all means. Yea,



more, let us love and cherish it. The strength to bear will come with the awaking.

Whether or not William the Conqueror was cruel and despotic in founding the New Forest, it is certain that he conferred a benefit upon posterity: not to the third and fourth generation only, but to one still existing and flourishing 800 years after the great man had passed away. Taking the brighter and better view of things, we will suppose that small cruelty and harm was done to anyone, and we will be grateful for the boon we reap to-day. How far in the future it will exist we need not enquire; our successors will fight their own battles, see to their own rights. Already half the forest has been enclosed and become private property—why not by-and-by the remainder? It is true, the gates of most of the places are thrown open at the summons of the stranger, by a little handmaiden who curtsies as she pockets the shilling that finds its way to a modest hand; and passing up the avenues the eye is gladdened and surprised by long, endless hedges of rhododendrons, that in their season put forth such an amazing wealth and beauty of blossom. Nevertheless, that boundless sense of freedom imparted by the forest has for the moment departed; a feeling of intrusion far less pleasant lurks there instead, and you are half inclined to resent this encroachment upon rights that were established 800 years ago.

However, half a loaf is better than no bread; there is still left enough and to spare of forest, enough of beauty wild and sylvan, as it is. We will take what we find, and be thankful.

He who is a good walker may find a great deal, and will have much the best chance of becoming acquainted with all the rare beauties of the New Forest. He may roam from dawn till dewy eve, and penetrate into dense solitudes, the gloom and semi-darkness of a thickly wooded copse, where the branches of the trees twine and intertwine, and the leaves mingle together, forming as thick a carpet overhead as he will find spread underfoot. And, roaming at will, hour after hour, he may never meet with fellow mortal; until at last this withdrawal from the world suddenly seizes upon him with nervous fear and fancy, and he hails with a sense of relief a small settlement, or a forest hut, or a retired village, where the swinging sign invites him to enter the inn of which it is the beacon, and break the long silence by a gossip with a chatty landlord.

These walks are full of a wild, unfamiliar loveliness. Here and there you come upon a charcoal burners' hut; a thing roughly picturesque, beautifully romantic as ever delighted the eye of an artist. And if you are lucky, the charcoal burners themselves will be at work, around their burning pile, the dancing, leaping flames throwing weird lights and lurid glares upon their rough countenances, until you might almost fancy them demons performing unholy rites.

The smoke ascends like incense, curling upwards with blue fantastic shapes. More grateful than the smell of incense is the scent of the

burning wood, the sound of the crackling faggot, recalling to mind those lines of poor Goldsmith :

" The cricket chirrups on the hearth,  
The crackling faggot flies."

But there is no hearth here, no cricket. The lines suggest a picture the very opposite to anything found in the present scene. It possesses nothing domestic ; but suggests a roving, rambling, Bohemian life : not even the hand-to-mouth existence we often hear of, but the not knowing in the morning whether the midday meal will be earned before nightfall. Uncertainty has its charms, though the charms of such uncertainties as these must be very doubtful, very mythical.

And, since we are roving, and since we have mentioned Goldsmith, we may as well pause to record a slight circumstance which happened to us in connection with him some years ago. It will take us from the woods and glades and rippling streams of Hampshire to the busy haunts of men, but only for a moment. Thought, like electricity, can traverse space in a moment of time, and penetrate even to the very realms of eternity.

Wandering with a few friends one Sunday morning before church time, about the precincts of the Temple, we did what we had done many a time before : came to an anchor and fell a-musing in front of the low, long stone recording the short epitaph, so full of mournful suggestiveness that he who reposed beneath had, in spite of his genius, missed his grasp of life, and, like the wise man, found the world all vanity and vexation of spirit : the short and simple epitaph :

" HERE LIES POOR GOLDSMITH."

Something of the melancholy of the words no doubt influenced those who looked on, and we gazed in silent contemplation for some moments. Going backward in thought to the days of—to quote the favourite expression at Minerva House—"the great lexicographer:" the nightly meetings of that small circle of friends, not so many yards from where we were now standing : conspicuous amongst them that quaint figure of whom it might almost be recorded, "He never wrote a foolish thing, and never said a wise one." Scenes in the renowned "Vicar of Wakefield" passed before our imagination as we stood there : the happiness of the beautiful Sophia with her dear Burchell ; the sad fate of the fair but frail Olivia ; the dignified figure of the simple vicar as he preached to the wretches in prison, whose chains shook in "transport and rude harmony," though moved thereto by good cheer, not by his eloquence.

Suddenly our reveries were interrupted by the appearance of a venerable gentlewoman, who slowly approached up the narrow pavement. Seeing us wrapt in contemplation before this stone, she too paused and looked down. After a few moments' silence she summoned up courage, and turning to one of our number, said, in the



semi-whisper to which the voice unconsciously falls when speaking of sacred things :

“ Pray, sir, can you tell me who lies buried here ? ”

My friend answered in a manner for which I can make no excuse, and dared not at the time offer any apology. It proved again that there is but one step between the sublime and the ridiculous : that extremes meet. With a face of the most uncompromising gravity, that would have made the fortune of an actor upon the stage, he replied :

“ Oliver Cromwell, ma'am.”

The effect upon the venerable lady was startling. Her jaw relaxed, her face took a paler hue, her eyes a far-off, troubled look, in which you could almost read the fate of a murdered king, the terror of a blood-stained country. Almost as if fearing that the very bones of the Protector (Protector, forsooth ! ) would rise up to more mischief, she turned from the spot with an exclamation of dismay, and with slow and stately movement withdrew, a sadder, if not a wiser woman.

As for ourselves, sentiment and musing and the dreams of a past age were all put to flight. So rapid and ludicrous had been the change, that, but for respect for the day, these quiet precincts, like the Vicar of Wakefield's prison, might have shook with transports and rude harmony. But I had half a suspicion that the joke (if joke it could be called) had been unpremeditated on the part of my friend ; that the word had slipped out inadvertently ; and that, seeing its startling effect upon the old lady, he had neither the heart nor the conscience to set her right in the matter.

We have wandered far from the charcoal burners' watch hut, which you may chance upon here and there as you ramble about the New Forest. And if you are lucky, I have said you may chance upon the burners themselves. They are a race entitled to respect, for they have a lengthened pedigree. It was a charcoal burner, it is recorded, who first found the body of William Rufus, and some of his descendants may still be burning charcoal now, as he did then. In the course of a long chat they will repeat many words to you that no dictionary will interpret, so that occasionally the thread of their discourse is lost through this remnant of the back ages.

But it is not all “ Chinese,” as the Germans say (though they apply the word in a different sense), and you may get many an anecdote and quaint bit of experience, that will make any amount of time spent in their company as well a profit as a pleasure. They are, some of them, almost a wandering, gipsy tribe. Like causes produce like effects. Their roving life, in which they inhabit no houses, pay no taxes, are subject to no laws but the main laws of their country (the Peace Preservation Act still exists in England, at any rate), makes them an independent, sometimes too bold and free a race. But their merits must exceed their privileges, and their kindly actions probably often outstrip their opportunities. Are we able to say as much of ourselves ?



Passing along the high road, now rising to the top of the hill, and obtaining a distant view of Southampton Water ; now sinking into the valley and skirting the woods on either side ; after a drive of about ten miles from the Compton Arms you reach the quaint little town of Ringwood. Even here, all down the public road, that day, we had it to ourselves, never meeting with anyone ; until, getting into Ringwood, we came upon a huge waggon, driven by a huge waggoner, who was apparently of many minds, for he seemed to be going all ways at once.

Some hours after, in returning, we overtook this unfortunate being, crawling along in a very unhinged condition, waggon, horses, and all.



CHARCOAL BURNERS' HUT.

He asked the way to a town from which he was every moment receding, and when put right, turned in a dazed, hopelessly intoxicated condition. The chances were that six o'clock the next morning saw him still wandering about the earth, without a local habitation or a name : unless time had restored to him the right use of what senses he possessed. Time does for the most part lay bare to us our faults, and with relentless finger holds up to the light of our conscience our mistakes in life.

Ringwood is a quiet, somewhat primitive little town. Entering, as we did, from the solitudes of the New Forest—from nowhere, as it were—it appeared very far out of the world, and one almost wondered at the reason of its existence. It seemed so very useless and unnecessary. This, of course, was the mere effect of fancy. It not only exists, but was apparently an enterprising little place, consisting



to all appearances, chiefly of one long, and of course straggling, street : boasting a town-hall, a reading-room, a concert-room, and various institutions which proved the community an enlightened one. There was nothing remarkable in the exterior of the church, and our energy that afternoon was not sufficient to seek out the key-holder and explore the interior. But if report spoke correctly, it is not more remarkable than the outside.

Passing beyond the church, you soon come, in the neighbourhood of quaint, rustic cottages, to the old bridge spanning the Avon, a river "flowing to the sea" by way of Christchurch Meadows ; almost washing the foundations of that grand pile that should be the pride of



ST. PETER'S OAK.

Bournemouth, and is only another proof of the vigorous enterprise and resources of an age dead and gone.

To-day long reaches of mud and water developed themselves ; the country was much flooded ; and in all this mud and water cows were wading about up to their middle, apparently in as much bliss as if they had been pigs wallowing in the mire : until one speculated how, at nightfall, they would be fished out of this Slough of Despond. They were cropping the longer grass and the tall reeds ; but altogether it was rather a depressing spectacle. Up here, on the high and dry road, a certain sharpness in the air made one feel the value of a great coat and a warm rug : down there it must have been petrifying. But it may be that cows are insensible to such influences ; milk does not easily freeze in our larders ; and following out the idea, cows in their nature may be the reverse of Salamanders.



The sun had set long before we got back to our quarters, and a moon was riding proudly in the sky, bright and glittering in the frosty air. In the gathering gloom the trees of the forest looked dark and weird. Over long stretches of gorse and moorland we searched for deer and found them not. They had taken themselves to other haunts. We met and saw nothing on the road but our old friend, the charioteer, who, though he asked his way, evidently had not the slightest idea as to his destination. I never saw a man, off the water, so completely at sea.

A steep, fearful bit of hill, that every coachman shirks who can; the bane of mine host's life, and a serious detriment to him; which the surveyor of roads should report, and, if possible, see improved; but which our strong little horse took valiantly—and soon after we were at our journey's end. Closed shutters and drawn curtains, a warm, comfortable room, and a roaring fire changed the aspect of affairs and one's views of life.

The following Sunday morning I started with the intention of going to Minstead Church; but, missing the road, never saw Minstead Church that day. Turning presently a little to the left instead of to the right, I entered a long road skirted on either side by the forest. Nothing could be more beautiful. On either hand you obtained long views of the forest trees, their forms rising in all the beauty of shape and foliage, the latter bearing the rich tints of autumn. Glades and avenues opened up, ending in far-off depths that tempted one to forsake church, and roam about these wilds and solitudes. Yet I kept to the straight road which I now began to feel was the wrong one. But there was no turning back. Far down at the end might be seen something that looked like the commencement of a village: surely a church was not far off.

All the bracken in the wood had turned to gold and brown. The wild flowers of spring and summer had long disappeared; but small ferns and bright fungi, white and yellow and scarlet, and the red gladiolus grew under the shadow of the fronds. Birds, chirping and chattering, were flying from bough to bough, though few in number. The stillness was rather remarkable: a "Sabbath stillness" that seemed to fill the air, and almost made itself felt; until, going onwards, the distant sounding of a bell smote upon the ear, announcing that somewhere at least, and sometime, I should come upon a church.

Once a squirrel ran across the road, all grace, and beauty, and lightness; its bushy tail curled round, its little black, sharp eyes taking in the intruder as it ran up a friendly tree. And once I thought I heard the note of an owl hoot through the "long-drawn aisles" of the wood; but at this time of the day it was probably fancy. None of the youths and maidens one might have expected to see wandering from neighbouring villages were visible along the road. There was not a creature, and certainly not a sign-post (the forest is very deficient of the latter) to direct my going. But the distant vista at the end of



the lane had become less and less visionary; until at length I came out upon an open space, a few cottages, an inn or two, a pond and a small green. But the last stroke of eleven had ceased to vibrate on the air, no church bell could now be heard, and, what was more, no church was visible.

Knocking at the nearest inn door—being Sunday and church time it was barred and bolted—it was opened by a pleasant-looking woman, who stared in some amazement at the enquiry as to whether this could possibly be the village of Minstead. I felt quite certain upon the point, but being more than ordinarily stupid in the matter of localities, it was safe and satisfactory to make assurance doubly sure.

“Minstead, sir!” cried the woman. “And you come from Stoneycross! Law bless me! Why, you’ve come miles out of your way. You ought to have turned to the right instead of coming down the hill. Well, you have had a walk. Though it’s an uncommon fine day, to be sure. And I always do say that if you must lose your way, better do it on a fine day than a wet one.”

Here the good woman paused for breath, and making the most of the opportunity to get in a word edgeways, I inquired for a church.

“*Church!*” returned the dame. “Oh, we’ve a church, sure enough. But you’ll be awful late, sir. Anyhow, they’ll let you in: and if you miss the prayers, why you’ll be in time for the preaching. You might say the prayers to yourself, like, as you go along the road.”

Another pause, and I looked about for the said church, but looked in vain. The woman saw my perplexity, and again came to the rescue.

“Oh, if you’re peering for the church, sir, you’ll peer long enough before you find it, leastways unless you’re blessed with a crooked vision that can see round the corner. You bear to the left, here, and keep straight along the road; and by-and-by you’ll come to the church at the top of the hill. It’s a good mile from here.”

“Your churches about the New Forest are for the most part at the top of a hill,” I observed.

“Yes, sir,” she answered, laughing; “I have heard the remark before, and I believe it’s true. Well, it’s uphill getting along in life, and I suppose they thought they’d give us a little of it in getting to heaven.”

Thanking my comely, philosophical, but chattering guide, I went on my way rejoicing. Rejoicing in all the surrounding beauties of nature: the blue sky, the sunshine, the birds, the lights and shadows seen through the forest, forming, for the time being, an ideal existence: one of those walks, and mornings, and Sundays the remembrance of which comes across one in the after years with a certain sad pleasure lurking in all things long passed.

It certainly was “a good mile” to the church. I walked on and on, and still did not come to it; passed through the small village or

hamlet, with its usual number of idlers lounging about, hands thrust far down in pockets and gait slouching; men—and some of them very young ones, too—whose happiness begins when the public-house doors are open, and whose lives are often wrecked in those turbid waters.

Then, in the distance, at the top of the hill, as the good woman had said, I saw the church: at length reached it. There was no difficulty about getting in, as she had observed: the difficulty rather, once in, was to remain there. The doors were open, the windows wide; a keen wind swept down through the church with a searching and very disagreeable amount of resolution. Nevertheless, people, old and young, bore it with equanimity, as if ventilation came next to



IN THE NEW FOREST.

religion. For my own part, it came first that morning, and absorbed much of my thoughts. We were in a perfect whirlwind, which blew about the "tangled locks" of the assemblage with a mild attempt at the humorous and the grotesque. To anyone heated with quick walking (it was turned half-past eleven, and I had started at the Compton Arms at ten) there was some risk in gradually cooling down from fever heat to freezing point in the midst of this "patently" ventilated building.

I was surrounded by village rustics who bore it all with stolid fortitude. The church was small, quaint and primitive, and very uncomfortable—most uncomfortable; but the preacher was earnest and his sermon was good, and he took for his text: "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of Man." If everyone took it to heart that day, everyone must have been the better for it. Not by



eloquence is the heart of man reached, but by the power of earnestness.

The service over, there was a walk back to go through. But not twice in one day do we cull the same freshness of feeling from one and the same cause. If nothing else is different, the sky will be less bright, clouds will have gathered. And in many things we *never* again renew our first glowing impressions. The first press of the grape is the sweetest, the first draught of nectar the most satisfying. So the glow of early youth bears a charm and a romance no after happiness in life—not the full fruition of all our hopes and aspira-



A FOREST GLADE.

tions: they indeed, like the ashes of the Dead Sea fruit, too often turn to bitterness in the mouth—can ever possess.

The romantic stage survives but a short season, and then departs for ever. Let those who have it make the most of it; let them take their fill and dream their dreams. It can never return again, any more than we can live our life a second time. Happy those who have gone through the period with some satisfaction to themselves; however bitter the awakening, the after-life will ever be somewhat the brighter for it, for, no matter how distant the time, there will still be that halo of the past cast over it a rose-coloured glamour; and there will be a self-administered reward in the ability to say: I have had my day.

The most crabbed and disappointed old age is frequently that which



has had least pleasure and happiness in life : as if, seeing existence slipping away and drawing to a close, its victims resented the withholding of their share of the phantoms so eagerly pursued : an *ignis fatuus* we call pleasure, which, alas ! too often proves but the empty bubbles of imagination.

This, dear reader, really looks like moralising. But if it be so you must pardon it, and put it down to the influence of the solitudes of the New Forest, through which we are rambling together : solitudes that are very real, and seem very persistent. For though I came out of the quaint church—refreshed in spirit, I hoped, unpleasantly refreshed in body, I did not doubt—with the small flock that composed the congregation : and though I saw them all before me, straggling down the road in groups and couples, as country people most love to walk—the wife just half a yard behind her liege—yet in a very short time every one of them had disappeared, and like Job's messengers, I found myself left alone to tell the tale. Perhaps because I had not Job's misfortunes to endure, Job's comforters did not appear.

Be this as it may, I gradually repassed all the little points on the road ; the splendid trees, the wealth of bracken, the glades and long vistas, where for great stretches you might see tree after tree raising itself in "pillared beauty ;" until, gaining the summit of the hill, stretching far down and away, was all the glorious mass, roll upon roll, wave on wave, of autumnal colouring. Down to the right stood Rufus's Stone, and beyond it the little village of Brook, where no doubt the impudent magpie was still hopping about and having it all its own way. And straight ahead—most welcome sight of all, perhaps—was the swinging sign of the Compton Arms, proclaiming to the world those comfortable quarters. Specially welcome just now, in that a frugal repast, ordered early in honour of the day, and out of consideration to the household, was overdue, and each moment might add to a great ruin.

But the little handmaiden was the culprit, and I had it out with her very seriously for inefficiently directing me in the morning. Upon which she could only reply that she thought I knew the road. Observing that people who knew the road did not as a rule ask—like Miss Rosa Dartle—for information, she seemed quite unable to grasp the logic of the reasoning, and the argument had to be abandoned.

After all, no harm had happened ; perhaps some good ; certainly the walk had been splendid this perfect autumn morning, with all the forest sights and sounds instinct with life ; a quietude and solitude refreshing and invigorating. But only a few out of the many will enter into the meaning of the last remark, and they not the happiest, perhaps, of earth's mortals, though the most hard-wrought. And if the meaning does not reach their comprehension, it cannot touch their sympathies. The divine gift of sympathy is first born within us : evidently it is not given to all : then it is brought into fruition in the furnace of affliction. I doubt if anyone ever possessed sympathy in



its full and perfect degree, who had not first suffered in almost equal proportion. Even then it is progressive. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

One night, darkness fell upon a green world ; as green, at least, as autumn tints permitted. The next morning, although the month was October, everyone was amazed to find the world white. Through the night the silent and unseasonable visitor had fallen thick and fast, and was falling still. Winter had come upon us with as much vengeance as rapidity. The change was startling, but it was almost difficult to decide which was the more beautiful of the two aspects ; the long waves of green and brown of yesterday, or the broad white carpet of to-day. Far as the eye could reach—an immense extent from this elevated ridge—stretched a dazzling white world, pure but cold as snow.

It seemed no time for prolonging one's sojourn in the New Forest. I felt inclined to pack up and depart. The old postman—that most popular of all public characters—when he arrived with the letters, said the snow was so thick upon the trees that branches were breaking in all directions with the report of small guns. But presently the snow ceased, the leaden sky rolled away, the sun came out with all the brightness it wears on such occasions. Improving the opportunity, I started for a long ride in company with my good host, without whose guidance I should quickly have gone astray in the mazes and thickets we proposed to explore. I was again mounted upon the little *Pride* of the Forest, and as he tossed his head, and snapped at the stirrups, and reared in the exuberance of his youthful spirits, it was evident that he meant to have his own share of fun and enjoyment out of the afternoon. The whiteness of the snow was exciting, and there was no subduing him.

We were bound for Mark Ash, almost the finest part of the New Forest : though where all is so beautiful comparison seems invidious.

It would be difficult to describe the wild grandeur of the wood after we entered within the bounds of Boldrewood and Mark Ash. Groups of trees, certainly larger and finer than any I had yet seen, surprised one by their wonderful and often grotesque forms. High above our heads, meeting like the Gothic arches of a cathedral, wide branches spread and blended together. Often we stood enclosed as by walls, in these natural temples, the trees standing out from each other in long and lovely aisles for a great distance, the sky but not the daylight completely shut out. Every branch was lined with snow ; everything was white and dazzling ; the barer branches ran in white veins, and clung and clasped each other like things of life. A white fretwork was above and around us. Branches, some of them large as small trees, lay prone upon the earth, borne down by the weight of the snow, and obstructing our path. Even as we stood, wondering silently at all this strange beauty, branches cracked and fell to the earth—as the old postman had said—with the report of small guns.

As for the path itself, well for us we were on horseback. Even the horses had some difficulty in getting through the oceans of mud and slush, that the melting snow was fast reducing to an impassable point. We came upon the charcoal burners' track and the watchman's hut, now half buried in snow; and admired their tact and taste and cunning in choosing the loveliest parts of the forest for their operations. Like the monks of old, who pitched their habitations in the densest but loveliest of solitudes, but where the eternal silence was sure to be disturbed by the flowing gurgle of a well-stocked trout stream, as a means to an innocent pastime and the plenishing of their larders: a crafty way of killing two birds—and such birds!—with one stone.

Some of the principal trees of the forest are known by their names: such as the Knyghtwood Oak, the King Oak, the Queen Oak, the Queen Bower Oak, the Twelve Apostles, and St. Peter's Oak. Of the Twelve Apostles, seven have departed this life; five only remain. The Knyghtwood Oak was a grand and gigantic fellow, lording it like a king far over his fellows. We had left the beaten track to get to it, and the snow and the bracken and the fallen branches crackled under the horses' feet with a crisp, sharp sound that in itself was a keen enjoyment. Falling back into the pathway we entered a long plantation of young firs. Here, indeed, for the first time, I was reminded of Norway, and went back in imagination to its pine-scented forests and torrent-swept valleys, its fjelds and its fjords, scenes very different from those through which we were now passing.

Soon after this we emerged from the wood, crossed a bridge spanning a stream, and came to the village of Emery Down. Huge logs of timber, trees that once had flourished in the forest and contributed their part to its beauty, were lying stripped of their bark and waiting to be transported. It was a picturesque, secluded spot. And here, because there were houses and inns at which one might ask to be directed, a sign-post lived and flourished with bold effrontery. In many other spots, where one's doubt and difficulties could not be satisfied, the sign-post was conspicuous by its absence.

And so, now keeping to the high road and rewarding the patience of our animals in wading through the wood, by good hard gallops, we gradually, at the end of about three hours, worked our way round again to our starting-point, the Compton Arms. It had been a glorious ride, full of the liveliest pleasure, and there are many such in the New Forest. I have but slightly touched upon its beauties, altogether passed over many a spot and many a place of note I was unable to visit on the occasion of that sojourn. But I think I have said enough to direct the reader's attention to this comparatively unvisited but most beautiful part of England.

As in all cases, fair weather, blue skies, and sunshine are necessary for the enjoyment and appreciation of the New Forest; but especially so here; for nothing is more depressing than the influence of trees



on wet or gloomy days. The very owls themselves will not then come out, but, seated in pairs on their perches, will, if molested, simply blink their eyes without stirring, and in their own weird but unmistakable language bid you begone from their realm. Then, as you politely move away in answer to their wish, they, half relenting, will throw after you, with long-drawn sigh and hissing breath, a grim but not unfriendly



"GOOD NIGHT!"



#### A VALENTINE.

WAKE, O my Love! the early dawn is creeping  
Across the distant hills, with golden gleams.  
How sweet must be the tenour of thy dreams,  
Since thou, this happy morn, canst still be sleeping.  
Beneath thy casement, where the ivy weeping,  
With night-dews heavy, leans her head and sighs,  
Stirred by the airs that kiss thy curtained eyes,  
One faithful heart his lonely watch is keeping.  
Since he impatient waits, O why delay?  
I would be first this morn my Love to greet.  
The white-robed snowdrops to the opening day  
Proclaim with joy: "We hear her coming feet."  
Like music to mine ears thy footfall light:  
The sun has risen, and all the world is bright.

E. L.