THE OUTLAWS
—OR—
TUNSTALL FOREST.

A Stirring Serial of Romantic Adventure, by

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Author of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," "Treasure Island," "Kidnaped," Etc.

(Written for the Gazette. Copyrighted by the Author.)

JOHN AMEND-ALL.

On a certain afternoon, in the late spring-time, the bell upon Tunstall Moat house was heard ringing at an unaccustomed hour. Far and near, in the forest and in the fields along the river, people began to desert their labors and hurry towards the sound; and in Tunstall Hamlet a group of poor country folk stood wondering at the summons.

Presently there was a noise of a horse, and soon, out of the edge of the wood and over the echoing bridge, there rode up young Master Richard Shelton, Sir Daniel Brackley's ward, a young fellow not yet eighteen, sun-browned and gray-eyed, in a jacket of deer's leather, with a black velvet collar, a green hood upon his head, and a stiff cross-bow at his back.

Just then Bennet Hatch came galloping—a brown-faced, grizzled fellow, heavy of hand and grim of mien, armed with sword and spear, a steel salet on his head, a leather jack upon his body. He was a great man in those parts; Sir Daniel's right hand in peace and war, and at that time, by his master's interest, bailiff of the hundred.

The house to which these two were bound was the last in the village, standing alone among lilacs; and beyond it, on three sides, there was open meadow rising towards the borders of the wood.

Hatch dismounted, threw his rein over the fence, and walked down the field, Dick keeping close at his elbow, to where an old soldier was digging, knee-deep in his cabbages, and now and again, in a cracked voice, singing a snatch of a song.

"Nick Appleyard," said Hatch, "Sir Oliver commends him to you, and bids that ye shall come within this hour to the Moat house, there to take command."

The old fellow looked up.

"Save you, my masters!" he said, grinning. "And where goeth Master Hatch?"

"Master Hatch is off to Kettley, with every man that we can horse," returned Bennet. "There is a fight toward, it seems, and my lord stays a reinforcement."

"Ay, verily," said the old fellow, turning to look over his shoulder, and then he put up his hand over his eyes and stood staring.

"Why, what are you looking at?" asked Bennet.

The veteran continued looking up the hill in silence.

"What is it, Appleyard?" asked Dick.

"Why, the birds," said Appleyard.

And, sure enough, over the top of the forest a flight of birds was skimming to and fro in evident disorder.

"What of the birds?" said Bennet.

"Ay?" returned Appleyard, "y' are a wise man to go to war, Master Bennet. Birds are a good sentry; in forest places they be the first line of battle."

"Why, old shrew," said Hatch, "there be no men nearer us than Sir Daniel's at Kettley."

"Hear him!" grinned Appleyard. "How many a rogue would give his two crop ears to have a shoot at either of us? Saint Michael, man! they hate us like two polecats!"

"Well, sooth it is, they hate Sir Daniel," answered Hatch, a little sobered.

"Ay, they hate Sir Daniel, and they hate every man that serves with him," said Appleyard; "and in the first order of hating, they hate Bennet Hatch and old Nicholas, the bowman. See ye here; if there was a stout fellow yonder in the wood-edge, and you and I stood fair for him—as, by St. George, we stand!—which, think ye, would he choose?"

"You, for a good wager," answered Hatch.

"My surcoat to a leather belt, it would be you," cried the old archer. "Ye burned Grimstone, Bennet—they'll ne'er forgive you that, my master."

"Y' are the sorewishest old dolt in Tunstall Forest," retorted Hatch, visibly ruffled by these threats.

An arrow sang in the air like a huge hornet; it struck old Appleyard between the shoulder blades and pierced him through, and he fell forward on his face among the cabbages.

Bennet raised the old archer on his knee. He was not yet dead; his face worked, and his eyes opened and shut like machinery, and he had a most horrible, ugly look of one in pain.

"Can ye hear, old Nick?" asked Hatch.

"Pluck out the shaft, and let me pass, a' Mary's name," gasped Appleyard. "I be done with Old England. Pluck it out!"

Dick laid down his crossbow, and pulling hard upon the arrow drew it forth. A gush of blood followed; the old archer half scrambled upon his feet, called once upon the name of God, and then fell dead.

"Ay," said Hatch, "it'll be my turn next."

"Who hath done this, Bennet?" Richard asked, still holding the arrow in his hand.

"Nay, the saints know," said Hatch.

"This is a strange shaft," said the lad, looking at the arrow in his hand.

"Ay, by my faith!" cried Bennet. "Black, and black feathered. Here is an ill-favored shaft, by my sooth! for black, they say, bodes burial. And here be words written. Wipe the blood away. What read ye?"

"'Appulyaird fro Jon Amend-All,'" read Shelton. "What should this betoken?"

"Nay, I like it not," returned the retainer, shaking his head. "But why stand we here to make a mark. Take him by the knees, good Master Shelton, while I lift him by the shoulders, and let us lay him in his house."

They had scarce carried the old archer into his house ere they were followed by a tall, portly, ruddy, black-eyed man of near fifty, in a surplice and black robe.

"Appleyard"—the new-comer was saying, as he entered; but he stopped dead. "Ave Maria!" he cried. "Saints be our shield! What cheer is this?"

"Cold cheer with Appleyard, sir parson," answered Hatch, with perfect cheerfulness.

"Ay, Bennet," said the priest, "and what may this be? What enemy hath done this?"

"Here, Sir Oliver, is the arrow. See, it is written upon with words," said Dick.

"Nay," cried the priest, "this is foul hearing! John Amend-All! A right Lollardy word. And black of hue, as for an omen! Sirs, this knave arrow likes me not."

And then the whole party proceeded, somewhat timorously, to sally from the house and get to horse.

"'Tis time we were on the road, Sir Oliver," said Hatch, as he held the priest's stirrup while he mounted.

So they rode forward down the road, and had passed three of the scattered houses that make up Tunstall Hamlet, when coming to a turn, they saw the church before them. At the lych-gate near a score of men were gathered, some in saddle, some standing by their horses' heads. One of these came up carrying a paper.

"The writing was pinned to the church door," he said, handing it to the parson. "I found naught else, sir parson."

"What have we here?" cried Sir Oliver. "But this runs hard on sacrilege! The light falls spice. Good Master Richard, y' have young eyes. Read me, I pray, this libel."

Dick Shelton took the paper in his hand and read it aloud. It contained some lines of very ragged doggerel, hardly even rhyming, written in a gross character, and most uncouthly spelt.

"I had four blak arrows under my belt,
Four for the griefs that I have felt,
Four for the somber of Illmenne
That have oppressed me now and then.

One is gone; one is wele sped;
Old Appleyard liyed.

One is for Maister Bennet Hatch,
That burned Grimstone, walls and thatch.

One is for Sir Oliver Oates,
That cut Sir Harry Shelton's throat.

Sir Daniel ye shall have the fourt;
We shall think it fair sport.

Ye shall each have your own part,
A blak arrow in each blak heart.
Get ye to your knees for to pray,
Ye are ded theeves, by yea and nay!

"JON AMEND ALL,
of the Green Wood,
And his jolly fellaweskip."

"Now, well-a-day for charity and the Christian graces!" Sir Oliver exclaimed. "I will swear upon the cross of Holywood I am as innocent of that good knight's hurt, whether in act or purpose, as the babe unchristened. Neither was his throat cut, for therein they are again in error, as there still live credible witnesses to show."

"It boots not, sir parson," said Bennett. "Here is unseasonable talk."

"Nay, Master Bennet, not so," answered the priest. "I take all men to witness that I am clear of this matter. I was not even in the Moat House. I was sent of an errand before nine upon the clock"——

"Sir Oliver," said Hatch, interrupting, "since it please you not to stop this sermon, I will take other means. Gaffer, sound to horse."

And, while the trucket was sounding, Bennet moved close to the bewildered parson, and whispered violently in his ear.

Dick Shelton saw the priest's eye turned upon him for an instant in a startled glance. He had some cause for thought; for this Sir Harry Shelton was not his own natural father. But he said never a word, and kept his countenance unmoved.

Book I—The Two Lads.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE SIGN OF THE SUN IN KETTLEY.

By 2 in the morning, Sir Daniel sat in the inn room in Kettley, close by the fireside, for it was cold at that hour among the fens of Kettley. He had taken off his visored headpiece, and sat with his bald head and thin, dark visage resting on one hand, wrapped warmly in a sanguine-colored cloak. At the lower end of the room about a dozen of his men stood sentry over the door or lay asleep on benches; and somewhat nearer hand, a young lad, apparently of twelve or thirteen, was stretched in a mantle on the floor.

"Hither," cried Sir Daniel to the boy; and as the other rose at his command and came slowly towards him, he leaned back and laughed outright. "By the rood!" he cried, "a sturdy boy!"

The lad flushed crimson with anger and darted a look of hate out of his dark eyes. Now that he was on his legs, it was more difficult to make certain of his age. His face looked somewhat older in expression but it was as smooth as a young child's; and in bone and body he was unusually slender, and somewhat awkward of gait.

"Ye have called me, Sir Daniel," he said. "Was it to laugh at my poor plight?"

"Nay, now, let laugh," said the knight. "An ye could see yourself, I warrant ye would laugh the first."

"Well," cried the lad, flushing, "ye shall answer this when ye answer for the other. Laugh while yet ye may!"

"Nay, now, good cousin," replied Sir Daniel, with some earnestness. "Think not that I mock at you, except in mirth, as between kinsfolk and singular friends. I took you, indeed, roughly, as the time demanded; but from henceforth I shall ungrudgingly maintain and cheerfully serve you. Ye shall be Mrs. Shelton—Lady Shelton, by my troth! for the lad promiseth bravely. 'Sit ye down, sweetheart, and eat."

"Nay," said Master John, "I will break no bread. Since ye force me to this sin, I will fast for my soul's interest."

"Ye shall have a dispensation, go to!" cried the knight. "Content you, then, and eat."

But the lad was obstinate, drank a cup of water, and, once more wrapping himself closely in his mantle, sat in a far corner brooding.

Presently after, came the clatter of arms and horses; and Richard Shelton, splashed with mud, presented himself upon the threshold.

"Save you, Sir Daniel," he said.

"How! Dickie Shelton!" cried the knight; and at the mention of Dick's name the other lad looked curiously across. "What maketh Bennet Hatch?"

"Please you, sir knight, to take cognizance of this packet from Sir Oliver, wherein are all things fully stated," answered Richard, presenting the priest's letter.

"Friend Dick," said the knight, "fall to. Here is good ale and bacon. Eat, while that I read."

Sir Daniel opened the packet, and as he read his brow darkened. When he had done he sat a little, musing. Then he looked sharply at his ward.

"Dick," said he, "y' have seen this penny rhyme?"

The lad replied in the affirmative.

"It bears your father's name," continued the knight; "and our poor shrew of a parson is, by some mad soul, accused of slaying him."

"He did most eagerly deny it," answered Dick.

"He did?" cried the knight, very sharply. "Heed him not. He has a loose tongue; he babbles like a jack-sparrow. Some day, when I may find the leisure, Dick, I will myself more fully inform you of these matters. There was one Duckworth shrewdly blamed for it; but the times were troubled, and there was no justice to be got."

"It befell at the Moat House?" Dick ventured with a beating at his heart.

"It befell between the Moat House and Holywood," replied Sir Daniel, calmly; but he shot a covert glance black with suspicion at Dick's face. "And now," added the knight, "speed you with your meal; ye shall return to Tunstall with a line from me."

With that Sir Daniel, turning his back to Dick and quite at the farther end of the long table, began to write his letter with his mouth on one side, for this business of the Black Arrow stuck sorely in his throat.

Meanwhile, young Shelton was going on heartily enough with his breakfast, when he felt a touch upon his arm and a very soft voice whispering in his ear.

"Make not a sign, I do beseech you," said the voice, "but of your charity tell me the straight way to Holywood. Beseech you now, good boy, comfort a poor soul in peril and extreme distress, and set me so far forth upon the way to my repose."

"Take the path by the windmill," answered Dick, in the same tone; "it will bring you to Till Ferry; there inquire again."

And without turning his head he fell again to eating. But with the tail of his eye he caught a glimpse of the young lad called Master John stealthily creeping from the room.

"Why," thought Dick, "he is as young as I. 'Good boy' doth he call me? As I had known I should have seen the varlet hanged ere I had told him. Well, if he goes through the fen I may come up with him and pull his ears."

Half an hour later Sir Daniel gave Dick the letter and bade him speed to the Moat House. And again some half an hour after Dick's departure the trucket was sounding cheerily in the morning, and from all sides Sir Daniel's men poured into the main street and formed before the inn. The chief part were in Sir Daniel's livery, murrey and blue, which gave the greater show to their array; and the knight looked with pride along the line. "Why! how now!" he cried. "John! Joshua! Nay, by the sacred rood! where is she? Host, where is that girl?"

"Girl, Sir Daniel?" cried the landlord. "Nay, sir, I saw no girl."

"Boy, then, dotard!" cried the knight. "Could ye not see it was a wench? She in the murrey-colored mantle—she that broke her fast with water, rogue—where is she?"

"Nay, the saints bless us! Master John, ye called him," said the host. "Well, I thought none evil. He is gone. I saw him—her—I saw her in the stable a good hour agone; 'a was saddling a grey horse."

"Now, by the rood!" cried Sir Daniel, "the wench was worth £500 to me, and more. Solder, fail me out with six cross bowmen; hunt me her down. I care not what it cost; but, at my returning, let me find her at the Moat House. Be it upon your head."

CHAPTER II.

IN THE FEN.

It was near 6 in the May morning when Dick began to ride down into the fen upon his homeward way. The path lay almost straight through the morass. It was already very ancient; its foundation had been laid by Roman soldiery; in the lapses of ages much of it had sunk, and every here and there for a few hundred yards it lay submerged beneath the stagnant waters of the fen.

About a mile from Kettley, Dick came to one such break in the plain line of causeway, where the reeds and willows grew dispersely like little islands and confused the eye. The gap, besides, was more than usually long—it was a place where any stranger might come readily to mischief; and Dick bethought him, with something like a pang, of the lad whom he had so imperfectly directed.

Half-way across, and when he had already sighted the path rising high and dry upon the farther side, he was aware of a great splashing on his right, and saw a gray horse, sunk to its belly in the mud, and still spasmotically struggling. Instantly, as though it had divined the neighborhood of help, the poor beast began to neigh most piercingly. It rolled meanwhile, a bloodshot eye, insane with terror; and as it sprawled wallowing in the quag, clouds of stinging insects rose and buzzed about it in the air.

"Alack!" thought Dick, "can the poor lad have perished? There is his horse, for certain—a brave grey! Nay, comrade, if thou crest to me so piteously, I will do all man can to help thee. Shalt not lie there to drown by inches!"

And he made ready his crossbow and put a quarrel through the creature's head.

Dick rode on, after this act of rugged mercy, somewhat sobered in spirit, and looking closely about him for any signs of his less happy predecessor in the way.

"I would I had dared to tell him further," he thought; "for I fear he has miscarried in the slough."

And just as he was so thinking a voice cried upon his name from the causeway side, and, looking over his shoulder, he saw the lad's face peering from a clump of reeds.

"Are ye there?" he said, reining in. "Ye lay so close among the reeds that I had passed you by. I saw your horse bemired and put him from his agony; which, by my sooth! and ye had been a merciful rider ye had done yourself."

"Nay, good boy, I have no arms, nor skill to use them if I had," replied the other, stepping forth upon the pathway.

"Why call me boy?" cried Dick. "Ye are not, I trow, the elder of us twain."

"Good Master Shelton," said the other, "prithee forgive me. I have none the least intention to offend. Rather I would in every way beseech your gentleness and favor, for I am now worse beset than ever, having lost my way, my cloak and my poor horse. To have a riding-rod and spurs and never a horse to sit upon! And before all," he added, looking ruefully upon his clothes—"before all, to be sorrily besmirched!"

"Tut!" cried Dick. "Would ye mind a ducking? Blood of wound or dust of travel!—that's a man's adornment."

"Nay, then, I like him better plain," observed the lad. "But, prithee, how shall I do? Prithee, good Master Richard, help me with your good counsel. If I come not safe to Holywood I am undone."

"Nay," said Dick, dismounting, "I will give more than counsel. Take my horse and I will run awhile, and when I am weary we shall change again, that so, riding and running, both may go to the speedier."

So the change was made and they went forward as briskly as they durst on the uneven causeway, Dick with his hand upon the other's knee.

"How call ye your name?" asked Dick.

"Call me John Matcham," replied the lad.

"And what make ye to Holywood?" Dick continued.

"I seek sanctuary from a man that would oppress me," was the answer.

"And how came ye with Sir Daniel, Master Matcham?" pursued Dick.

"Nay," cried the other, "by the abuse of force! He hath taken me by violence from my own place; dressed me in these weeds; ridden with me till my heart was sick; gibed me till I could'a' wept; and when certain of my friends pursued, thinking to have me back, claps me in the rear to stand their shot! I was even grazed in the right foot, and walk but ismely. Nay, there shall come a day between us; he shall smart for all!"

"Would ye shoot at the moon with a hand gun?" said Dick. "'Tis a valiant knight, and hath a hand of iron. An he guessed I had made or meddled with your flight, it would go sore with me."

"Ay, poor boy," returned the other, "y' are his ward, I know it. By the same token, so am I, or so he saith: or else he hath bought my marriage—I wot not rightly which; but it is some handle to oppress me by."

"Boy, again!" said Dick.

"Nay, then, shall I call you girl, good Richard?" asked Matcham.

"Never a girl for me," returned Dick. "I do abjure the crew of them."

"Ye speak boyishly," said the other. "Ye think more of them than ye pretend."

"Not I," said Dick, stoutly. "They come not in my mind. I never heard of a maid yet that was for any service, save one only; and she, poor shrew, was buried for a witch and the wearing of men's clothes in spite of nature."

Master Matcham crossed himself with fervor, and appeared to pray.

"What make ye?" Dick inquired.

"I pray for her spirit," answered the other, with a somewhat troubled voice.

"For a witch's spirit?" Dick cried. "But pray for her, an ye list; she was the best wench in Europe, was this Joan of Arc."

"Well, but, good Master Richard," resumed Matcham, "an ye like maids so little, y' are no true natural man; for God made them twain by intention, and brought true love into the world, to be man's hope and woman's comfort."

"Faugh!" said Dick. "You are a milk-sopping baby, so to harp on women. An ye think I be no true man, get down upon the path, and whether at fists, backsword, or bow and arrow, I will prove my manhood on your body."

"Nay, I am no fighter," said Matcham, eagerly. "And if I talk of women, it is because I heard ye were to marry."

"I to marry!" Dick exclaimed. "Well, it is the first I hear of it. And with whom was I to marry?"

"One Joan Sedley," replied Matcham, coloring. "It was Sir Daniel's doing; he hath money to gain upon both sides; and, indeed, I have heard the poor wench bemoaning herself pitifully of the match."

"Well, marriage is like death, it comes to all," said Dick, with resignation. "And she bemoaned herself! I pray ye now, see there how shuttle-witted are these girls; to bemoan herself before that she had seen me! Do I bemoan myself? Not I. An I be to marry, I will marry dry-eyed! But if you know her, prithee, of what favor is she? fair or foul? And is she sarewish or pleasant?"

"Nay, what matters it?" said Matcham. "An y' are to marry, ye can but marry. What matters foul or fair? These be but toys. Y'are no milksop, Master Richard. Ye will wed with dry eyes, anyhow."

"It is well said," replied Shelton. "Little I reck."

"Your lady wife is like to have a pleasant lord," said Matcham.

"She shall have the lord heaven made her for," returned Dick. "I trow there be worse as well as better."

"Ah, the poor wench," cried the other.

"And why so poor?" asked Dick.

"To wed a man of wood," replied his companion. "Oh, me, for a wooden husband!"

"I think I be a man of wood, indeed," said Dick, "to trudge afoot the while you ride my horse; but it is good wood, I trow."

"Good Dick, forgive me," cried the other. "Nay, y'are the best heart in England; I but laughed. Forgive me now, sweet Dick."

"Nay, no fool words," returned Dick, a little embarrassed by his companion's warmth. "No harm is done. I am not touchy, praise the saints."

And at that moment the wind, which was blowing straight behind them as they went, brought them the rough flourish of Sir Daniel's trumpeter.

"Hark!" said Dick, "the tucket sounded-eth."

"Ay," said Matcham, "They've found my flight, and now I am unhorsed!" and he became pale as death.

"Why, now, what aileth thee?" said Dick. "See ye here, John Matcham—sith John Matcham is your name—I, Richard Shelton, tide what betide, come what may, will see you safe in Holywood. The saints so do to me again if I default you. Come, pick me up a good heart, Sir White-face. The way betters here; spur me the horse. Go faster! faster! Nay, mind not for me; I can run like a deer."

So, with the horse trotting very hard, and Dick running easily alongside, they crossed the remainder of the fen, and came out upon the banks of the river by the ferryman's hut.

CHAPTER III.

THE FEN FERRY.

Dick went to the door and opened it. Within, upon a foul old russet cloak, the ferryman lay.

"Hey, Master Shelton," he said, "be ye for the ferry? Ill times! ill times! Look to yourself. There is a fellowship abroad. Ye were better turn round on your two heels and try the bridge."

"Nay; time's in the saddle," answered Dick. "Time will ride, Hugh Ferryman. I and my kinsman, Master Matcham, we are hot in haste."

Hugh Ferryman grumblingly undid his boat and shoved it a little forth into the deep water. Then Dick led in the horse and Matcham hastily followed.

"Ye be mortal small made, master," said Hugh with a wide grin; "something o' the wrong model, belike. Nay, Master Shelton, I am for you," he added, getting to his oars. "A cat may look at a king. I did but take a shot of the eye at Master Matcham."

"Sirrah, no more words," said Dick. "Bend me your back."

They were by this time at the mouth of the creek and the view opened up and down the river.

"My Master," said the ferryman, keeping the boat steady with one ore, "I have a shrew guess that John a-Fenne is on the island. He bears me a black grudge to all Sir Daniel's. How if I turned me up stream and landed you an arrow flight above the path? Ye were best not meddle with John Fennie."

"Be it so, Hugh," answered Dick.

They pulled a long way up the river, turned the tail of an island, and came softly down a narrow channel next the opposite bank. Then Hugh held water in mid-stream.

"I must land you here among the willows," he said.

"Here is no path but willow swamps and quagmires," answered Dick.

"Master Shelton," replied Hugh, "I dare not take ye nearer down, for your sake now."

Hugh was still speaking, lying on his oars, when there came a great shout from among the willows on the island, and sounds followed as of a strong man breasting roughly through the wood.

"A murrain!" cried Hugh. "He was on the upper island all the while." He pulled straight for shore.

The boat ran into a tough thicket of willows with a crash. Matcham, pale, but steady and alert, at a sign from Dick, ran along the thwarts and leaped ashore; Dick, taking the horse by the bridle, sought to follow, but what with the animal's bulk, and what with the closeness of the thicket, both stuck fast.

"It may not be Hugh; here is no landing," cried Dick; but he still struggled valiantly with the obstinate thicket and the startled animal.

A tall man appeared upon the shore of the island, a long bow in his hand. Dick saw him in an instant, with the corner of his eye, bending the bow with a great effort, his face crimson with hurry.

"Stand, Dick Shelton!" bawled he. "He shall have no hurt, upon the rood! Stand! Back out, Hugh Ferryman."

Dick cried a taunting answer.

"Nay, then, ye shall go afoot," returned the man, and he let drive an arrow.

The horse, struck by the shaft, lashed out in agony and terror; the boat capsized, and the next moment all were struggling in the eddies of the river.

When Dick came up he was within a yard of the bank, and before his eyes were clear his hand had closed on something firm and strong that instantly began to drag him forward. It was the riding rod that Matcham, crawling forth upon an overhanging willow, and opportunely thrust into his grasp.

"By the mass!" cried Dick, as he was helped ashore, "that makes a life I owe you. Come, Jack, run for it!"

And, adding example to his words, he began to run, dodging among the willows, and in marshy places leaping from tussock to tussock. Presently the ground began to rise, which showed him he was still in the right way, and soon after they came forth upon a slope of solid turf, where elms began to mingle with the willows. But here Matcham, who had been dragging far into the rear, threw himself fairly down.

"Leave me, Dick!" he cried, pantingly; "I can no more."

Dick turned and came back to where his companion lay.

"Nay, Jack, leave thee!" he cried. "That were a knave's trick, to be sure, when ye risked a shot and ducking, ay, and a drowning, too, to save my life. Drowning, in sooth, for why I did not pull you in along with me the saints alone can tell!"

"Nay," said Matcham, "I would 'twaved us both, good Dick, for I can swim."

"Can ye so?" cried Dick, with open eyes. It was the one manly accomplishment of which he was himself incapable. In the order of the things that he admired next to having killed a man in single fight came swimming. "Well," he said, "here is a lesson to despise no man. But, prithee fetch back you breath, and let us be on. Here is no place for chatter."

"My foot hurts shrewdly," said Matcham.

"Nay, I had forgotten your foot," returned Dick. "Well, we must go the gentler. Come, Dick, lean ye on my shoulder, ye poor shrew. Nay, y'are not tall enough. What age are ye, for a wager? Twelve?"

"Nay, I am sixteen," said Matcham.

"Y'are poorly grown to height, then," answered Dick. "But take my hand."

They began to go forward up the slope.

"We must hit the road, early or late," continued Dick, "and then for a fresh start. By the mass! but y' 'ave a rickety hand, Jack, I tell you," he went on, with a sudden chuckle, "I swear by the mass I believe Hugh Ferryman took you for a maid!"

"Nay, never," cried the other, coloring high.

"A' did, though, for a wager!" Dick exclaimed. "Small blame to him. You look liker maid than man; and I tell you more—y'are a strange looking rogue for a boy; but for a hussy, Jack, ye would be right fair—ye would. Ye would be well favored for a wench."

"Well," said Matcham, "ye know right well that I am none."

"Nay, I know that; I do but jest," said Dick. "Ye'll be a man before your mother, Jack."

"Prithee, Dick, stop till I drink," said the other, pausing where a little clear spring welled out of the slope into a gravelled basin no bigger than a pocket. "And O, Dick, if I might come by anything to eat! my very heart aches with hunger."

"Why, fool, did ye not eat at Kettley?" asked Dick.

"I had made a vow—it was a sin I had been led into," stammered Matcham; but now, if it were but dry bread, I would eat it greedily."

"Sit ye, then, and eat," said Dick, "while that I scout a little forward for the road." And he took a wallet from his girdle wherein were bread and pieces of dried bacon.

CHAPTER IV.

A GREENWOOD COMPANY.

When Matcham was well rested and revived, the two lads began to mount into the high ground of Tunstall Forest.

Ten minutes later they struck into a beaten path.

"Here is a piece of forest that I know not," Dick remarked. "Where goeth me this track?"

"Let us even try," said Matcham.

A few yards further the path came to the top of a ridge, and began to go down abruptly into a cup shaped hollow. At the foot, out of a thick wood of flowering hawthorn, two or three roofless gables, blackened as if by fire, and a single tall chimney marked the ruins of a house.

"What may this be?" whispered Matcham.

"Nay, by the mass, I know not," answered Dick. "I am all at sea. Let us go warily."

It had been a pleasant mansion and a strong. A dry ditch was dug deep about it; but it was now choked with fallen masonry, and bridged by a great rafter. The two farther walls still stood; the sun shining through their empty windows; but the remainder of the building had collapsed, and now lay in a great cairn of ruin, grimed with fire."

"Now I bethink me," whispered Dick, this must be Grimstone. It was a hold of one Simon Maimesbury; Sir Daniel was his bane. 'Twas Bennet Hatch that burned it, now five years agone."

Down in the hollow, where no wind blew, it was both warm and still; and Matcham, laying one hand upon Dick's arm, held up a warning finger.

"Hist?" he said.

Then came a strange sound breaking on the quiet. It was twice repeated ere they recognized its nature. It was the sound of a big man clearing his throat; and just then a hoarse untuneful voice broke into singing.

The two lads stood looking at each other. Whoever he might be, their invisible neighbor was just beyond the ruin. And suddenly the color came into Matcham's face, and next moment he had crossed the fallen rafter and was climbing cautiously on the huge piles of lumber that filled the interior of the roofless house.

Dick would have withheld him, had he been in time; as it was, he was fain to follow.

Right in the corner of the ruin two rafters had fallen crosswise, and protected a clear space no larger than a pew in church. Into this the lads silently lowered themselves. There they were perfectly concealed, and through an arrow loophole, commanded a view upon the further side.

Peering through this, they were struck stiff with terror at their predicament. Upon the very margin of the ditch, not forty feet from where they crouched, a great iron caldron bubbled and steamed above a glowing fire; and close by, in an attitude of listening, as though he had caught some sound of their clambering among the ruins, a tall, red-faced, battered-looking man stood poised, an iron spoon in his right hand, a horn and a formidable dagger at his belt.

Presently the fellow relaxed from his attitude of attention, raised the spoon to his mouth, tasted its contents, nodded, and then fell again to stirring and singing.

"O, they must need to walk in wood
that may not walk in town," he croaked, taking up his song where he had left it:

"O, sir, we walk to do.
But if we meet to shoot a shy

Still as he sang he made time another stroke upon it, and tasted it again, apparently, he just for, taking the spoon, blew three mo

One after another began to stroll out of the wood; he came produced a knife and a horn cup, helped himself from the caldron, and sat down upon the grass to eat.

There were, perhaps, a score of them already gathered, when a sound of suppressed cheering arose close by among the hawthorns, and immediately after five or six woodmen carrying a stretcher debouched upon the lawn. A tall, lusty fellow somewhat grizzled, and as brown as a smoked ham, walked before them with an air of some authority, his bow at his back, a bright boar-spear in his hand.

"Lads!" he cried, "see what I bring you, even that good creature, ale!"

There was a murmur of applause as the bearers set down the stretchers and displayed a goodly cask.

"And now I taste you," the man continued. "There is work toward. A handful of archers are but now come to the ferry; murrey and blue is their wear; they are our butts—they shall all taste arrows—no more than of them shall struggle through this wood."

"Lawless, the cook, was by this time already at his second horn of ale. He raised it, as if to pledge the speaker.

"Master Ellis Duckworth," he said, "y' are for very vengeance—well is becometh you!—but your poor brother o' the greenwood, that never lands to loose our friends to think upon, locketh rather, for his poor part, to the profit of the thing. He had liever have a gold noble and a pottle of canary wine than all the vengeance in purgatory."

"Lawless," replied the other, "to reach the Moat House, Sir Daniel must pass the forest. We shall make that passage dearer, pardy, than any battle. Then, when he hath got to earth with such ragged handful as escapeth us—all his great friends fallen and fled away, and none to give him aid—we shall belesguer that old fox about, and great shall be the fall of him. 'Tis a fat buck; he will make a dinner for us all."

The speaker stood leaning on his boar-spear and looked round upon the rest. They, in various attitudes, took greedily of the venison pottage, and liberally washed it down with ale. The first comers had by this time even dispatched their dinner. Some lay down upon the grass and fell instantly asleep, like boa constrictors; others talked together, or overhauled their weapons; and one, whose humor was particularly gay, holding forth an ale-horn, began to sing.

All this while the two lads had listened and lain close; only Richard had unslung his crossbow and held ready in one hand his windac, or grappling iron, that he used to bend it. But now there came a strange interruption. The tall chimney which overtopped the remainder of the ruins rose right above their hiding-place. There came a whistle in the air, and then a sounding smack, and then the fragments of a broken arrow fell about their ears. Some one from the upper quarters of the wood, had shot an arrow at the chimney-top.

Matcham could not restrain a little cry, which he instantly stifled, and even Dick started with surprise and dropped the windac from his fingers. But to the fellows on the lawn this shaft was an expected signal. They were all afoot together, tightening their belts, testing their bowstrings, loosening sword and dagger in the sheaths. Ellis held up his hand; his face had suddenly assumed a look of savage energy, the white of his eyes shone in his sun-brown face.

"Lads," he said, "ye know your places. Let not one man's soul escape you. Appleyard was a whet before a meal; but now we go to table. I have three men whom I will bitterly avenge—Harry Shelton, Simon Maimesbury and—" striking his bosom—"and Ellis Duckworth, by the mass."

In the space of a minute some running, some walking sharply, according as their stations were nearer or farther away, the men of the Black Arrow had all disappeared from the neighborhood of the ruined house.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

An English paper states that the captain of an ocean steamer one day found on his vessel a pigeon that had fallen from the air and seemed utterly exhausted. He cared for it, and it soon recovered, becoming a favorite on the steamer. On landing the captain left the ship, and found, to his great surprise, that the pigeon flew beside him wherever he went, and even entered a coffee house beside its friend. Nor did its gratitude cool down, for it is still the constant companion of the captain.

Ben Snavely of Eustis, Fla., set a fine Plymouth Rock hen on thirteen eggs, and the other day she came off with thirteen handsome little chickens. The second day they were out, and while they were feeding, the mother hen seemed much surprised, and was heard making a strange, frightened noise. She seemed to count the chicks over and over, and then deliberately pecked one of them to death. She then smoothed her ruffled feathers and once more became the picture of complacency.

A Philadelphia servant has distinguished herself by an original sort of private theatricals. While her mistress was away she attired herself in the best dress of the lady of the house, made calls upon strange ladies and invited them to return her courtesy. When they called she entertained them appropriately, showed them over the house and felt provoked because her girl had gone out. The farce continued for some time.

A man intoxicated and poorly dressed was taken to a New York station house the other day. On searching him the officers found bank books in his ragged coat which showed that he had upward of $10,000 to his credit.

There is still in force in Rhode Island a law forbidding the smoking of a cigar on the main streets of any city in the state, and in Vermont the smoking of a cigar on the street on Sunday is made a misdemeanor.

A pair of gold enameled scissors and a pen knife, together with a certificate setting forth that they were once owned by Marie Antoinette, were sold at public sale in New York on Monday for $130.

A ranchman at Sayara, Colo., has a pig that has a perfect dog's head, with dog's hair covering the head and neck. Excepting this and a short and bushy tail the rest of the animal is like a pig.

Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson of Boston has an income of $50,000 a year, which she draws quarterly and spends in charity. She is often penniless before the end of the quarter.

On the great irrigation farm of A. N. Cole in Wellsville, N. Y., strawberries are grown said to be a foot in circumference.

The Flying Dove of Peace

A lovely frosted quivering, fluttering Dove. A Dream of Life screen calendar. An imported deal head. An imported frosted snow scene and a full set of magnificent floral cards. Sixteen artistic pieces. Sent to any one who will buy from a druggist a box of the genuine Dr. C. McLANE'S CELEBRATED LIVER PILLS (price 25 cts.) and mail us the outside wrapper from the box with 4 cents in stamps. Write your address plainly. FLEMING BROS., PITTSBURGH, PA.

Dr. C. Mc Lane's Liver Pills are a sure cure for Sick Headache, Biliousness and Dyspepsia. They are peculiarly adapted for ladies and are absolutely safe. Prepared from the purest materials.

A CYCLONE.

Portions of Tennessee and Georgia Visited By A Terrific Wind storm.

CHATTANOOGA, TENN., March 22.—The hurricane which did such damage at Calhoun, Ga., Tuesday night was much more serious and widespread in its destruction than at first reported. It seems to have formed in the vicinity of Calhoun, and proceeded in a northeasterly direction through North Georgia and into and beyond East Tennessee, bounding across to the Chilhowee mountains, and was next heard from near Loudon, Tenn., on the East Tennessee road eighty miles northeast of Chattanooga, traveling from Calhoun, Ga., to Loudon, Tenn., a distance of 100 miles in about thirty minutes. The path of the tornado from Calhoun to Loudon was through a section remote from the railroads and telegraph lines, and the damage it may have done will not be known for some days, but must have been fearful. The tornado in places cleared the ground completely of grass, and forest timber was mown as with a great scythe. A heavy bureau was found a mile from the house that had contained it. The list of seriously wounded men, women and children in Loudon county is very large.

Andy Worldy, his wife and eight children were every one injured, and some of them will die. The station at Calhoun was unroofed and a colored porter received injuries which may prove fatal. Several houses were carried a distance of half a mile. Telegraph wires were prostrated and a number of cars were thrown from the track. The loss in Calhoun alone will reach $10,000.

AT LUMBER CITY.

SAVANNAH, GA., March 22.—A cyclone struck Lumber City, Ga., Wednesday morning. B. Holland, of the firm of Holland, Strickland & Co., and W. B. Widdon, of Widdon & Holland, both prominent men, were killed.

MORE DISASTROUS THAN REPORTED.

SAVANNAH, GA., March 22.—A special from Lumber City, Telfair county, to the Morning News shows the cyclone to have been more disastrous than reported. Besides those already named the following were killed: Joseph Nelbles, superintendent at Wilcox of the coal and lumber merchants; John Turner, an employe of that firm. The injured are C. S. Smith, William Wilson, Henry Ryals, B. B. Rawl, Eugene Rawl, Mrs. Rawl, Mrs. Miller and eight colored men whose names could not be ascertained.

GORDON BY GASLIGHT.

Natural Gas in Gordon, Palo Pinto County.

Gordon Courier, March 23.

Recently a gaspipe has been inserted in the artesian well at Gordon by means of which a considerable quantity of the gas emitting therefrom can be controlled. With this temporary arrangement a sufficient quantity could be utilized, if properly distributed, to illumine the streets of the entire business portion of the town. As the arrangement now is, only one jet can be burned, but if the entire flow of gas were turned on, it would run several feet high. The fact is there is no way of determining the extent of the flow of this subtle and most valuable fluid from this one orifice. Arrangements are to be made soon to utilize it for lighting the business houses.

This gas is found at a depth of about 880 feet, just under a deposit of coal several feet thick, which is believed to be of valuable quality. Another well was sunk some months ago by the Gordon Coal Mining and Oil Company, in which about the same flow of water and gas was obtained at about the same depth.

It is hoped that in the "near future" Gordon will be able to supply Fort Worth—and all Texas for that matter—with the very cheapest, and at the same time the very best fuel.

Making Celluloid.

Des Moines News.

The process for the manufacture of celluloid is little known, yet very simple. Paper is sprayed with acids until thoroughly saturated, then compressed and washed with water and reduced to a pulp. It is next bleached, mixed with camphor, colored, ground and spread in thin layers on slabs. Fin