

## CHAPTER II

### LIFE IN THE NEW FOREST

A great diversity of character is observable in the Forest, which in large towns it would be impossible to recognise. The habits and pursuits of many, nay hundreds, who may properly be termed "Foresters", are so very distinct from the generality of what may be called Citizens, as to form a most striking and singular contrast.

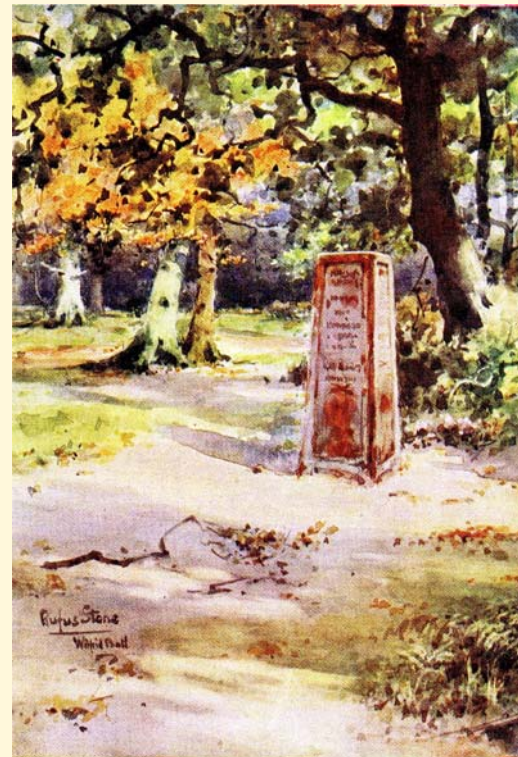
The life of men engaged in a distinct line of business, such as merchants, tradesmen, mechanics, artisans and labourers, is one of routine relieved only by the occasional holiday or by temporary depression of business. These we may see in most large towns, especially in the manufacturing districts and the difference between them cannot be so distinctly perceived. The regular process and unvaried habits of the factory fill up a most monotonous existence. The smoky atmosphere of the foundry, the glowing furnace, the noisy accompaniments of the steam engine, the incessant whirl of machinery at once convince the beholder that powerful must be such influences upon the moral and physical character of those who are thus employed. Certainly *custom* is a great familiariser. These men and boys - the whole of them - have been accustomed to such influences, as were their parents before them. Their education, if they have had any, has not exceeded the requirements for their expected spheres of labour. Thus they live on day after day, in a round of noise and bustle, contented as long as they can secure the means of sustaining themselves and their families.

The toil of the week is relieved by the hope of enjoyment on Saturday evening and the rest of Sunday. With some, where education has been effectual, the sober, quiet and industrious, enjoy the comfort of domestic peace and the solace of divine worship while with others it is to be lamented, dissipation and misery abound from a variety of causes.

Contrast, however, the life of "the lean and smutch'd artisan" with the life of the forester, and what a change is visible! From the rising of the sun to its going down, his hours for the most part, pass under "the open firmament of heaven" or the leafy canopy of the forest woods. But here, as with the mechanic, the effects of education are clearly perceptible.

Here may be found the daring deer-stealer, fleet of foot, cunning in strategy who, from the contiguity of the coast, was wont to couple with the poacher's craft the hazard of a smuggler's life. Here likewise may be found the frugal and domestic cottager.

Then, what a variety is there in the forester's avocations! At the prompting of the season or the sky, he is "everything by turns and nothing long", excepting, indeed, when certain years of humbler industry have rewarded him with the dignity of a pig proprietor. Through turf-cutting, bark-peeling, carting (in all its branches,) potato growing and sundry other employments, the thrifty forester attains his '*ne plus ultra*' in a herd of swine, which he is privileged to turn into the forest at certain times of the year.



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Where as in his case, a quiet, sober and industrious exercise of the manual powers procures a livelihood for a numerous family, his mode of life, though active, if it assumes a sameness of character, differs essentially from the sombre uniformity of the mechanic.

The cultivation of the earth by judicious hands is an important feature in the great allotment of labour for mankind but in the noble forest, where nature dwells in her greatest and grandest power, the efforts of labour are of a toilsome but much more simple character. Here as she throws off the fruits of the seasons from the early birth of spring, each succeeding change produces some variety beneficial and congenial to man and it is in his occupation of watching the revolving time, the attitude of his uplifting hand receiving from the passing season its peculiar gifts, that the character of the forester becomes interesting in its native simplicity and patient depending upon Providence.

Here, if he has implanted in him any sympathy with that feeling which ought to pervade every breast, he finds ample space for admiration, abundant incitements for gratitude to the Great Power who so wonderfully worketh all things to promote his creatures' happiness.

Surely an ingenious heart, thus moved, may compassionate without pride his fellow man, doomed to the suffocating confines of the factory, whose toil bears with it no refreshing evidence, as does the forester's so constantly, that Heaven is man's generous helper whenever he will stretch forth his arm, and labour worthily.



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