

We started off about noon; a goodly band of some eight or nine striplings, with two or three hammers, and a few pence amongst us, and no need to be home before dusk. An October sun shone merrily out upon us; the fields, bared of their sheaves, had begun to be again laid under the plough, and long lines of rich brown loam alternated with bands of yellow stubble, up and down which toiled many a team of steaming horses. The neighbouring woods, gorgeous in their tints of green, gold, and russet, sent forth clouds of rooks, whose noisy jangle, borne onward by the breeze, and mingling with the drone of the bee and the carol of the lark, grew mellow in the distance, as the cadence of a far-off hymn. We were too young to analyse the landscape, but not too young to find in every feature of it the intensest enjoyment. Moreover, our path lay through a district rich in historic associations. Watch-peels, castles, and towers looked out upon us as we walked, each with its traditional tales, the recital of which formed one of our chief delights. Or if a castle lacked its story, our invention easily supplied the defect. And thus every part of the way came to be memorable in our eyes for some thrilling event real or imaginary—battles, stern and bloody, fierce encounters in single combat, strange weird doings of antique wizards, and marvellous achievements of steel-clad knights, who rambled restlessly through the world to deliver imprisoned maidens.

Thus beguiled, the four miles seemed to shrink into one, and we arrived at length at the quarries. They had been opened, I found, along the slope of a gentle declivity. At the north end stood the kilns where the lime was burnt, the white smoke from which we used to see some miles away. About a quarter of a mile to the south lay the workings where my comrades had seen the subterranean