

# **FOREST RUNES**

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Forest Runes by George W. Sears

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**GEORGE W. SEARS**

# **FOREST RUNES**





"NESSMUK."

ARTOTYPE, E. HERBARDY, N. Y.

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# FOREST RUNES.

BY

GEORGE W. SEARS,  
(NESSMUK).



NEW YORK:  
FOREST AND STREAM PUBLISHING CO.,  
1887.

Gift  
Mrs. G. F. Alving  
1-5-31

## DEDICATION.

TO MY BROTHER CHARLES.

NOT that the gift of poesy is mine,  
Nor that I claim the poet's meed of praise,  
But in remembrance of the golden days  
Of youth, have I inscribed these simple lays  
To thee, my brother, and to auld lang syne.

The rolling years have thinned our locks of brown  
To a scant fleccc of salt-and-pepper gray ;  
More rapidly the seasons pass away ;  
With steadier, slower beat our pulses play ;  
We like the country rather than the town,

And have a strong dislike to noise and riot.  
The fire of youth no longer warms our veins ;  
And, being subject to rheumatic pains,  
We grow prophetic as to winds and rains,  
And like to be well fed, well clothed, and quiet.

06-3-32 A.B.



That we are past our youth is all too plain ;  
And nearing rapidly the Dark Divide.  
Oh, passing weary is this middle tide  
Of life, which I would give, with aught beside,  
To live one year of boyhood o'er again !

It may not be. The wrinkles on each face  
Are past erasure : and not many years  
Can glide ere one of us with blinding tears  
Shall stand beside the marble which uprears  
Above a friend the world can not replace.

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## “NESSMUK.”

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It is a sad necessity that compels a man to speak often or much of himself. Most writers come to loathe the first person singular, and to look upon the capital *I* as a pronominal calamity. And yet, how can a man tell aught of himself without the “eternal ego?”

I am led to these remarks by a request of my publishers that I furnish some account of myself in issuing this little volume of verse. Readers who take an interest in the book will, as a rule, wish to know something of the Author's antecedents, they think. It might also be thought that the man who has spent a large share of the summer and autumn months in the deep forests, and mostly alone for fifty years, ought to have a large stock of anecdote and adventure to draw on.

It is not so certain, this view of it. The average person is slow to understand how utterly monotonous and lonely is a life in the depths of a primal forest, even to the most incorrigible hunter. Few city sportsmen will believe, without practical observation, that a man may hunt faithfully in an unbroken forest for an entire week without getting a single shot, and one wet week, especially if it be cold and stormy, is usually enough to disgust him who has traveled hundreds of miles for an outing at much outlay of time and money.

And yet, this is a common experience of the most ardent still hunter.

In the gloomy depths of an unbroken forest there is seldom a song bird to be heard. The absence of small game is remarkable; and the larger animals, deer, bears, and panthers, are scarce and shy. In such a forest I have myself hunted faith-

fully from Monday morning till Saturday night, from daylight until dark each day, and at the end of the last day brought the old double-barreled muzzle loader into camp with the same bullets in the gun that I drove home on the first morning. And I crept stealthily through the thickets in still-hunting mocasins on the evening of the last day with as much courage and enjoyment as on the first morning. For I knew that, sooner or later, the supreme moment would come, when the black, satiny coat of a bear, or the game-looking "short-blue" coat of a buck would, for an instant, offer fair for the deadly bead.

And once, in a dry, noisy, Indian summer time, I am ashamed to say, I still-hunted 17 days without getting one shot at a deer. It was the worst luck I ever had, but I enjoyed the weather and the solitary camp-life. At last there came a soft November rain, the rustling leaves became like a wet rug, and the nights were pitch dark. Then the deer came forth from swamps and laurel brakes, the walking was almost noiseless, and I could kill all I could take care of.

It is only the born woods crank who can enjoy going to the depths of a lonely forest with a heavy rifle and stinted rations, season after season, to camp alone for weeks at a stretch, in a region as dreary and desolate as—Broadway on a summer afternoon in May.

It is only the descendants of Ananias who are always meeting with hair-breadth escapes and startling adventures on their hunting trips. To the practical, skilled woodsman, their wonderful stories bear the plain imprint of lies. He knows that the deep forest is more safe than the most orderly town; and that there is more danger in meeting one "bridge gang" than there would be in meeting all the wild animals in New York or Pennsylvania.

These facts will explain why I have so little to relate in the way of adventure, though my aggregate of camp-life, most of it alone, will foot up at least 12 years.

I can scarcely recall a dozen adventures from as many years' outings, culled from the cream of fifty seasons. Incidents of