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Fibble, D.D.



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Содержание

PART ONE

4

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

47

Irvin Shrewsbury Cobb Fibble, D.D

PART ONE

Being a Card to the Public from the Pen of the Rev.

Roscoe Titmarsh Fibble, D.D. The Young Nuts of America

IT is with a feeling of the utmost reluctance, amounting – if I may use so strong a word – to distress, that I take my pen in hand to indite the exceedingly painful account which follows; yet I feel I owe it not only to myself and the parishioners of St. Barnabas', but to the community at large, to explain in amplified detail why I have withdrawn suddenly, automatically as it were, from the organisation of youthful forest rangers of which I was, during its brief existence, the actuating spirit, and simultaneously have resigned my charge to seek a field of congenial endeavour elsewhere.

My first inclination was to remain silent; to treat with dignified silence the grossly exaggerated statements that lately obtained circulation, and, I fear me, credence, in some quarters, regarding

the circumstances which have inspired me in taking the above steps. Inasmuch, however, as there has crept into the public prints hereabout a so-called item or article purporting to describe divers of my recent lamentable experiences – an item which I am constrained to believe the author thereof regarded as being of a humorous character, but in which no right-minded person could possibly see ought to provoke mirth – I have abandoned my original resolution and shall now lay bare the true facts.

In part my motive for so doing is based on personal grounds, for I have indeed endured grievously both laceration of the tenderest sensibilities and anguish of the corporeal body; but I feel also that I have a public duty to perform. If this unhappy recital but serves to put others on their guard against a too-ready acceptance of certain specious literature dealing with the fancied delights – I say fancied advisedly and for greater emphasis repeat the whole phrase – against the fancied delights of life in the greenwood, then in such case my own poignant pangs shall not have entirely been in vain.

With these introductory remarks, I shall now proceed to a calm, temperate and dispassionate narration of the various occurrences leading up to a climax that left me for a measurable space prone on the bed of affliction, and from which I have but newly risen, though still much shaken.

When I came to St. Barnabas' as assistant to the Reverend Doctor Tubley my personal inclination, I own, was for parish work among our female members. I felt that, both by natural

leanings and by training, I was especially equipped to be of aid and comfort here. Instinctively, as it were, I have ever been drawn toward the other and gentler sex; but my superior felt that my best opportunities for service lay with the males of a tender and susceptible age.

He recommended that, for the time being at least, I devote my energies to the youthful masculine individuals within the parish fold; that I make myself as one with them if not one of them; that I take the lead in uniting them into helpful bands and associations. He felt that the youth of St. Barnabas' had been left rather too much to their own devices – which devices, though doubtlessly innocent enough in character, were hardly calculated to guide them into the higher pathways. I am endeavouring to repeat here the Reverend Doctor Tubley's words as exactly as may be.

Continuing, he said he felt that our boys had been in a measure neglected by him. He had heard no complaint on this score from the lads themselves. Indeed, I gathered from the tenor of his remarks they had rather resented his efforts to get on a footing of comradeship with them. This, he thought, might be due to the natural diffidence of the adolescent youth, or perhaps to the disparity in age, he being then in his seventy-third year and they ranging in ages from nine to fifteen.

Nevertheless, his conscience had at times reproached him. With these words, or words to this effect, he committed the boys to my especial care, adding the suggestion that I begin my services by putting myself actively in touch with them in their

various sports, pursuits and pastimes.

In this connection the Boy Scout movement at once occurred to me, but promptly I put it from me. From a cursory investigation I gleaned that no distinctions of social caste were drawn among the Boy Scouts; that almost any boy of a given age, regardless of the social status of his parents, might aspire to membership, or even to office, providing he but complied with certain tests – in short, that the Boy Scouts as at present constituted were, as the saying goes, mixed.

Very naturally I desired to restrict my activities to boys coming from homes of the utmost culture and refinement, where principles of undoubted gentility were implanted from the cradle up. Yet it would seem that the germ of the thought touching on the Boy Scouts lingered within that marvellous human organism, the brain, resulting finally in consequences of an actually direful character. Of that, however, more anon in its proper place.

Pondering over the problem after evensong in the privacy of my study, I repaired on the day following to Doctor Tubley with a plan for a course of Nature Study for boys, to be prosecuted indoors. I made a point of the advantages to be derived by carrying on our investigations beside the student lamp during the long evenings of early spring, which were then on us. What, I said, could be more inspiring, more uplifting, more stimulating in its effects on the impressionable mind of a boy than at the knee of some older person to wile away the happy hours learning of the budding of the leaflet, the blossoming of the flowerlet,

the upspringing of the shootlet, and, through the medium of informative volumes on the subject by qualified authorities, to make friends at first hand, so to speak, with the wild things – notably the birdling, the rabbit, the squirrel? Yes, even to make friends with the insects, particularly such insects as the bee and the ant – creatures the habits of industry of which have been frequently remarked – besides other insects too numerous to mention.

And, finally, what could better serve to round out an evening so replete with fruitful thought and gentle mental excitement than a reading by some member of the happy group of an appropriate selection culled from the works of one of our standard authors – Wordsworth, Longfellow or Tennyson, for example? What, indeed?

To my surprise this plan, even though set forth with all the unstudied eloquence at my command, did not appear deeply to appeal to Doctor Tubley. I surmised that he had attempted some such undertaking at a previous period and had met with but indifferent success. He said that for some mysterious reason the nature of the growing boy seemed to demand action. My own observation subsequently was such as to confirm this judgment.

In passing I may say that this attribute remains to me one of the most unfathomable aspects of the complex juvenile mentality as commonly encountered at present. Though still a comparatively young man – thirty-eight on Michaelmas Day last past – I cannot conceive that as a lad I was ever animated with

the restless, and I may even say mischievous, spirit that appears to dominate the waking hours of the youth of an oncoming generation.

For proof of this assertion I would point to the fact that a great-aunt of mine, living at an advanced age in the city of Hartford, Connecticut, continues even now to treasure a handsomely illustrated and fitly inscribed copy of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," complete in one volume, which was publicly bestowed on me in my twelfth year for having committed to memory and correctly repeated two thousand separate quotations from the Old Testament – an achievement that brought on an attack resembling brain fever. I do not record this achievement in a spirit of boastfulness or vanity of the flesh, but merely to show that from a very early stage of my mundane existence I was by nature studious and ever mindful of the admonitions of my elders. Indeed, I do not recall a time when I did not prefer the companionship of cherished and helpful gift books to the boisterous and oftentimes rough sports of my youthful acquaintances.

But I digress; let us revert: Abandoning my scheme for a series of indoor Nature studies, since it did not meet with the approval of my superior, I set myself resolutely to the task of winning the undivided affection and admiration of the lads about me. On meeting one in the public highway or elsewhere I made a point of addressing him as "My fine fellow!" or "My bright lad!" or patting him on the head and gently ruffling his hair or twitching

the lobe of his ear in a friendly way, and asking him, first, what his age might be, and, second, how he was doing at his books.

These questions being satisfactorily answered in the order named, I would then say to him: "Ah, what a large sturdy lad we are becoming, to be sure!" or "Heigho, then, soon we shall be ready to don long trousers, shall we not?" And I would also be particular to enquire regarding the health and well-being of his parents, and so on, and to ascertain how many little brothers and little sisters he had, if any; usually coupling these passing pleasantries with some quotation aimed to inspire him to thoughtful reflections and worthy deeds. Yet to me it seemed that the lads actually sought to avoid these casual intercourses.

Attributing this to the excusable timidity of the young, I persisted, being determined to put myself on a footing of complete understanding with them. I sought them out in their hours of relaxation, there being a large vacant lot or enclosure adjacent to the parish house where they were wont to meet and mingle freely in their customary physical exercises and recreations. Here again, from time to time, I proffered certain timely hints and admonitions for their better guidance.

For example, I sought to discourage the habit so prevalent among them of indulging in shrill, indiscriminate outcry when moved by the excitement of the moment. Repeatedly I advised them to practise in concert three hearty cheers, these to be immediately followed, should the exuberance of the occasion warrant, by a ringing tiger. This I recall was the invariable habit

of the playfellows described in such works as "Sanford and Merton" and "Thomas Brown's Schooldays." I also urged on them the substitution of the fine old English game of cricket for baseball, to which I found them generally addicted. It is true I had never found either opportunity or inclination for perfecting myself in one or both of these games; but the pictured representations of cricket games, as depicted in books or prints, showing the participants dotted about over a smooth greensward, all attired in neat white flannels and all in graceful attitudes, convinced me it must be a much more orderly and consequently a more alluring pastime than the other.

To me, if I may venture to say so, baseball has ever seemed most untidy. Personally I can imagine few things more unseemly than the act of sliding through the dust in order the more expeditiously to attain a given base or station; and even more objectionable, because so exceedingly unhygienic, is the custom, common among these youthful devotees, of expectorating on the outer surface of the ball before delivering the same in the direction of the batsman.

I succeeded in inducing my young friends to allow me to drill them in the choral cheer. As I remarked repeatedly to them: "Why noise at all, young gentlemen? But if we must have noise let us have it in an orderly fashion and in accordance with the best traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race, from which all of us have or have not sprung as the case may be – to wit, as follows: Huzza! Huzza! Huzza! Tiger!" But, with the exception of one or

two lads of a docile demeanour, I made no noticeable headway in my project for substituting cricket for baseball.

Nor did my recommendation of the adoption of a uniform attire for all the lads attending the private school maintained by St. Barnabas' meet with any more favourable reception. Personally I was greatly attracted to the costume provided at Eton. It impressed me that the short, close-buttoned jacket, exposing the sturdy legs, and so forth, the neat linen collar and cuffs, and the becoming black tie, the whole being surmounted by the high hat, with its air of dignity, all combined to form ideal apparel for the growing lad. Some of the mothers to whom I broached the thought viewed it with considerable enthusiasm, but among the boys themselves an unaccountable opposition immediately developed.

The male parents likewise were practically united in their objections. One husband and father, whose name I shall purposely withhold, actually sent me word he would swear out an injunction against me should I undertake to dress his innocent offspring up as a monkey-on-a-stick – the objectionable phraseology being his, not mine. In all charity I was constrained to believe that this gentleman's nature was of a coarse fibre. Had he, I asked myself dispassionately, had he no veneration for the hallowed memories and customs of a great English institution of learning? I was impelled to answer in the negative.

Thus time wore on until the beginning of the mid-year vacation drew near apace. It was at this juncture that the idea of

an organisation similar in character to the Boy Scouts occurred to me. I decided to borrow the plan, with certain modifications, confining the membership exclusively to our best families.

Accordingly, on the first Saturday afternoon in the month of May I called a chosen group of lads together and explained to them my purpose, finding to my gratification that they welcomed it with the utmost enthusiasm. Possibly my manner of setting forth the project of an outing appealed to them even more than the project itself. I recall that, in part, I spoke as follows:

"With me as your leader, your guide, your mentor, we shall go forth into the open, to seek out the bosky dell; to pierce the wildwood tangle; to penetrate the trackless wilderness. Our tents shall be spread alongside the purling brook, hard by some larger body of water. There, in my mind's eye, I see us as we practise archery and the use of the singlestick, both noble sports and much favoured by the early Britons. There we cull the flowers of the field and the forest glade, weaving them into garlands, building them into nosegays. By kindness and patience we tame the wild creatures. We learn to know the calls of the wildwood warblers, which I am credibly informed are many and varied in character; and by imitating those calls we charm the feathered minstrels to leave their accustomed haunts on the sheltering bough and to come and perch on our outstretched hands.

"We lave our limbs in the pellucid waters of the lake or large body of water just referred to. We briskly project ourselves to and fro in a swing of Nature's own contriving, namely, the

tendrils of the wild grapevine. We glean the coy berry from its hiding place beneath the sheltering leafage. We entice from their native element the finny denizens of the brawling stream and the murmuring brook. We go quickly hither and yon. We throb with health and energy. We become bronzed and hardy; our muscles harden to iron; our lungs expand freely and also contract with the same freedom, thus fulfilling their natural function.

"We find the day all too short, too fleeting. And by night about the crackling camp fire our happy voices, all united, are uplifted in song and roundelay. So, at length, wearied but happy, we seek repose in refreshing slumber until the rising sun or orb of day summons us to fresh delights, new discoveries, added experiences!"

My imaginative picturing of the prospect had its desired results. Without loss of time all present, they being twelve in number, enrolled as members. From the minutes of this, our first meeting, as kept by me in a neatly lined book, which I had bethought me to provide for that purpose, I herewith enumerate the roster: Master Pope, Master Stickney, Master Worthington, Master MacMonnies, Master E. Smith and Master H. Smith – brothers, Master Odell, Master French, Master Horrigan, Master Ferguson, Master Dunworthy, and Master W. Smyth – nowise related to the foregoing Masters Smith, the name being spelled, as will be noted, with a y.

I was particularly pleased that Master Percival Pope should be included in our little band, for he was one to whom instinctively

I had been attracted by reason of the gentle and almost seraphic expression of his mild blue eyes, his soft voice and his great politeness of manner.

Next in order there arose for consideration two very important matters – the selection of a title or cognomen and the choice of a suitable costume. Charging myself with the working out of an appropriate costume design, I invited suggestions for a club name, at the same time proffering several ideas of my own. Among those that were tendered I recall the following: the Young Gentlemen Forest Rangers, the Chevalier Bayard Wildwood League, the Rollo Boys, the Juvenile Ivanhoes, the Buffalo Bill Kiddos, the Young Buffaloes of the Wild West, the Junior Scalp Hunters, the Desperate Dozen, and the Johnnies-on-the-Spot.

I deem it well-nigh unnecessary to state that the first four suggestions emanated from my pen: the remaining five being fruitage of the inventive fancies of my young friends.

We spent some time canvassing over the proposed cognomens, rejecting this one for one reason, that one for another reason. None seemed to give general satisfaction. Those which especially pleased me – such, for instance, as the Rollo Boys – met with small approbation from my young compatriots, and vice versa.

At length, in the interests of harmony, I proposed that each member should confer with his parents, his guardian or his kind teacher, with a view to striking on a suitable choice, always

bearing in mind that the proposed name should carry with it a thought of the woody glade, the craggy slope, the pebbly beach – in short, should remind one of Nature's choicest offerings. As I said: "Not infrequently two heads are better than one; how much more desirable then to enlist the aid of a large number of heads?" So saying, I gave the signal for adjournment until the following Monday evening at the hour of eight-thirty of the clock.

Pursuant to adjournment we met at the appointed hour and speedily arrived at a solution of our problem. One of our group – which one I shall not state, since he was the son of that same gentleman who had used such unwarranted and inconsiderate language regarding my Eton suit plan – presented a slip of paper bearing a line in the handwriting of his father. I opened and read it.

In brief the writer's idea was that we should call our organisation the Young Nuts of America, and that the leader, master or commander should be known as Chief Nut or Principal Nut. Coming from a gentleman who had expressed himself so adversely regarding a former project that had been close to my heart this manifestation of interest on his part touched me profoundly. Moreover, his suggestion appeared to my conceptions to be both timely and effective, carrying with it, as it did, a thought of the opening of the burs, of the descent of autumn on the vernal forest, of the rich meatiness of the kernel; a thought of the delectable filbert, the luscious pecan and the succulent walnut – the latter, however, having a tendency to

produce cramping sensations when partaken of to excess.

These sentiments my youthful adherents appeared to share with me, for on my reading the paper aloud there followed an outburst of cheering, not unmixed with happy laughter. Checking them with a mild reminder that this was not a laughing matter, I put the proposition to a vote, and it was decided unanimously that we should be known as the Young Nuts of America and that my official title should be Chief Nut.

Master Pope then moved, seconded by Master Horrigan, that for the time being we should keep the name of our club a secret among ourselves. To me there seemed no valid reason for this and I so stated; but appreciating their boyish fancy for creating an air of pleasant and innocent mystery about whatever undertaking in which they might be engaged, I soon waived my objection and it was so ordered by acclamation.

In this connection I desire to make a statement which may come as a surprise to many, and that is this: I have but lately – within the past few days, in fact – been informed that among persons addicted to the vice of slang the term nut is occasionally applied to other persons whom they suspect of being mentally incapable or, in short, deranged.

Personally I see no possible connection between a nut, either of some wild species or of a domesticated variety, and one who, alas, is bereft of reason. I trust, furthermore, that I am not of a suspicious nature, and assuredly I am loath to impugn sinister motives to any fellow creature; but, in view of this, to

me, astonishing disclosure, I am impelled to believe either that the gentleman in question was himself ignorant of the double meaning of the word or that he deliberately conspired within himself to cast ridicule not only on me but on the band of which his own son was a devoted adherent.

Be that as it may, our next meeting was set for that evening one week thence, at which time I promised my youthful followers I would appear before them with colour plates of the costume selected by me for wear on our outings; and also that I would bring all requisite information regarding the proper methods of marching, camping, and so on.

Herein I practised some small measure of deceit, for the costume itself was already fully designed and a copy of it, intended for my own use, was nearing completion in competent hands; but I purposely withheld that information, intending to come before them properly accoutred as a happy surprise, as it were.

In my hours of leisure I had given no little thought to this matter, and finally enlisted the assistance of Miss Dorothea Peebles, who is well known as a member of our parish, and also does plain sewing and dressmaking. I called on Miss Peebles and explained to her the situation; and after an hour spent in conference we devised a garb that seemed to both of us eminently suited to the needs to which it would be put.

At the outset of our interview certain small differences of opinion asserted themselves. Miss Peebles' original suggestion

of a modification of what she called the Little Lord Fauntleroy suit, to be constructed of black velvet with a flowing sash and lace cuffs, hardly seemed adapted to our purpose. I was also impelled gently to veto her next notion, which was for a replica of the apparel commonly attributed to the personage known as Robin Hood and his deluded adherents. As I was at some pains to elucidate for her understanding, I could never countenance any recognition, however remote, of an individual of the type of Robin Hood, who, however noble and generous he may have been in certain aspects, was beyond peradventure a person of uncertain moral character.

Furthermore, the colour favoured by her – hunter's green – though of a harmonious tint as regards the prevalent tone of the forest glades wherein we counted on roaming in a care-free manner, was by reason of its very name inappropriate, since in a carnal sense we should not be hunters at all, meaning to woo the wild creatures by acts of kindness rather than to slay them with lethal weapons.

The costume finally agreed on combined a number of distinctive touches. The head-dress was a red Scotch cap – tam-o'-shanter I believe is its common appellation – to be ornamented with a feather or tuft of simple field flowers. There was to be a loose white blouse with a soft rolling collar such as sailors wear, marked on the sleeve with any desirable insignia, and joined or attached to the nether garments by means of a broad leather belt, set with a buckle. It was my own conception that the nether

garments should be in hue blue, and should end just above the knees; also, that the stockings should be rolled down on the limbs, thus leaving the knees bare, after the custom followed by the hardy Tyrolese and the natives of the Highlands. We agreed that the matter of outer coats or woven jackets – I dislike the word sweater – for further protection in inclement atmospheric conditions, should be left to the dictates of the individual. I deplored this, however, as tending to mar the general effect.

All this having been arranged, Miss Peebles volunteered to construct a costume for me according to measurements that, for the sake of the proprieties, I made myself and sent to her by mail. With my mind relieved of this duty, I set diligently about the task of acquainting myself fully with the duties of my position. I procured a number of helpful works, including among others: "Who's Who Among the Plants, Flowers, Herbs and Shoots"; "How to Know the Poison Ivy – a Brochure"; "Archery in All Its Branches"; "The Complete Boy Camper," by a Mr. E. Hough; and an authoritative work on swimming and diving. To the last-named volume I applied myself with all intensity. I felt that a thorough knowledge of swimming was essential to my position as guide and instructor to these young minds.

In my youth I never learned to swim; in fact, I went swimming but once. On that occasion the water was unpleasantly chilly; and on my venturing out waist-deep there was a sensation – a delusion if you will – that all the important vital organs had become detached from their customary alignments and were crowding up

into the throat, impeding utterance and distracting the thoughts from the work in hand.

Also, on emerging from the pool I found my young companions in a spirit of mistaken pleasantry had tied my garments into quite hard knots. This inconsiderate and thoughtless act so disturbed me that I did not repeat the experiment. Besides, on my returning home and repeating the entire incident in the family circle my mother admonished me that the downfall of countless youths properly dated from the day when they first went swimming with idle comrades without having previously procured the consent of their parents – a thing which from that hour forth I never thought of doing.

In order to acquire proficiency at swimming it was imperative on me, therefore, to start at the beginning. Fortunately the book on this subject was very explicit in text and contained many charts and diagrams showing the correct evolutions. With this book open before me at the proper place I lay prone on the floor, striking out with my arms and legs according to the printed instructions, and breathing deeply through the nostrils. It was while I was so engaged that my housekeeper, Mrs. Matilda Dorcas, came into my room without knocking; for a moment the situation became mutually embarrassing.

Thereafter when prosecuting my studies I took the precaution to lock my bedroom door, thus insuring privacy. The result was, within four days I could compliment myself with the reflection that I had completely mastered the art of swimming, being

entirely familiar with the various strokes, including the breast stroke, the trudgeon stroke, the Australian crawl stroke, and others of an even quainter nomenclature.

To the best of my present recollection, it was on a Friday evening – Friday, the twenty-first ultimo – that Miss Peebles sent to me by messenger my completed uniform, done up in a paper parcel. Having by telephone notified the twelve charter members to attend a special called meeting that evening at the parish house, I repaired to my rooms immediately after tea and proceeded to attire myself in the costume, standing meantime before my mirror to study the effect. In the main, Miss Peebles had adhered to the original design, except that the nether garments or knickerbockers were of rather a light and conspicuous shade of blue – I believe this colour tone is known vernacularly as robin blue – and she had seen fit to garnish their outer seams and the cuffs of the blouse with rows of white buttons of a pearl-like material and rather augmented size, which added a decorative but perhaps unnecessary touch of adornment.

Also, if I may so express myself, there was a feeling of undue publicity about the throat, this being due to the open collar, and in the vicinity of the knees. I am somewhat slender of form, though not too slender, I take it, for my height, standing, as I do, five feet six inches in my half hose, and I trust I am free from the sin of personal vanity; but I confess that at the moment, contemplating my likeness in the mirror, I could have wished my knees had not been quite so prominently conspicuous, and that the projection of

the thyroid cartilage of the larynx, called vulgarly Adam's apple, had been perhaps a trifle less obtrusive.

To my slenderness I also attribute a feeling as though all was not well in the vicinity of the waistline, even though I tightened and retightened my belt so snugly as to cause some difficulty in respiring properly. From the time when I ceased to wear short trousers, which buttoned on, I have ever had recourse to braces or suspenders; and the lack of these useful but perhaps not beautiful adjuncts to a wardrobe gave a sensation of insecurity which, for the nonce, proved disconcerting in the extreme.

Emotions that at this moment I find it hard to interpret in words actuated me to leave the house in a quiet and unostentatious fashion – by the back door, in fact – and to proceed on my way to the parish house, two blocks distant, along a rather obscure side street. I was perhaps halfway there when through the falling dusk I discerned, approaching from the opposite direction, three of my parishioners – a Mr. G. W. Pottinger, whom from our first acquaintance I suspected of possessing an undue sense of humour, and his daughters, the Misses Mildred and Mabel Pottinger.

For the moment I was possessed by a mental condition I may define as being akin to embarrassment. Involuntarily I turned into the nearest doorway. My object was to avoid a meeting; I tell you this frankly. Immediately, however, I noted that the door I was about to enter was the door of a tobacco dealer's shop. As though frozen into marble, I halted with my hand on the latch.

I have never had recourse to that noxious weed, tobacco, in any form whatsoever, except on one occasion when, in the absence of camphor, I employed it in a crumbled state for the purpose of protecting certain woolen undergarments from the ravages of the common moth.

Indeed, my attitude in regard to tobacco is as firm as that of the youth, Robert Reed, whose noble and inspiring words on this subject, embodied in verse form, I have frequently quoted to the growing youth about me. I realised instantly that to be seen in the apparent act of leaving or entering the establishment of a tobacconist would, in a sense, be compromising; so I retreated to the sidewalk just as Mr. Pottinger and the Misses Pottinger arrived at that precise point.

In the gloaming I fain would have passed them with dignified yet hurried movement; but they put themselves directly in my path, and as recognition was now inevitable, I halted, removing my cap with my right hand while with my left I continued, as I had been doing ever since leaving my lodgings, to retain a firm grasp on my waistline.

"Good evening!" I said. "Is it not a pleasant evening since the cool of evening set in? Good evening! Good-bye!" And so I would have continued on my way.

Mr. Pottinger somehow barred the way. I heard Miss Mildred Pottinger give voice to a species of gasp, while Miss Mabel, the younger sister, a young girl and much addicted, I fear, to levity, began uttering a gurgling, choking sound that somewhat

to my subconscious annoyance continued unabated during the interview which followed.

"Good evening!" said Mr. Pottinger, clearing his throat. "I beg your pardon, Doctor Fibble, but may I ask – Mabel, please be quiet! – may I ask whether you are going to a fancy-dress party somewhere?"

"By no means," I replied. "I am en route, sir, to attend a special or called meeting of our newly formed boys' outing club. These are the habiliments designed for club use."

"Oh!" he said. "Oh, I see! Mabel, child, kindly restrain yourself. Don't you see Doctor Fibble and I are talking? Ahem! And is any one besides yourself going to wear this – er – er – regalia in public?"

Having no sons of his own, Mr. Pottinger naturally would be unacquainted with the aims and objects of my present activities. Therefore I could well understand his ignorance.

"Oh, yes, indeed," was my answer; "all of our members are to wear it."

"What will you bet?" Such was his astonishing rejoinder – I say astonishing, because nothing had been said regarding a wager and certainly nothing had been farther from my own thoughts.

"What will I bet?" I echoed, for the instant nonplussed. Then consciousness of what I had just said came to me with a shock. Releasing my waistband I clasped both my hands before me in an attitude to which I am much given when desirous of signifying unwonted intensity of feeling. "Mr. Pottinger," I said gravely, "I

never bet. I regard it as a reprehensible practice. I am bitterly opposed under all circumstances to the hazard of chance."

"All right! Excuse me," he said; "only it seems to me you're taking one now. Well, good evening, doctor, and good luck to you! Er – you don't mind my complimenting you on your gameness, do you?"

And so he departed, continuing as long as he remained in my hearing to reprehend his younger daughter concerning her unseemly and ill-timed outbursts.

This episode, trifling though it was, served rather to increase than to diminish my nervousness; but upon my entering the assembly hall, where my young friends were gathered together awaiting my coming, all sense of trepidation vanished, so spontaneous and uproarious was their greeting. The chorus of lusty young voices raised in instantaneous cheering was to me sufficient reward for all the pains to which I had been put. One and all, they manifested the deepest interest in the new uniform.

At the request of Master Pope – he to whom I have already referred in terms of high praise – I, standing on the small raised platform, turned round and round slowly, in order that he and his fellows might better study the effect, the enthusiasm increasing all the time until the sound was really quite deafening in volume. It was, indeed, a refreshing experience, following so closely on the Pottinger incident; and I veritably believe that, had I not grown slightly dizzy, those brave boys would have kept me revolving there for an hour.

"Now, then, my fine fellows," I said, when the noise had died down, "I shall distribute among you twelve water-colour drawings, done by your leader's own hand, showing the general plan and colour scheme to be followed in executing this costume. Master Pope, will you kindly pass out these copies to your mates?"

This done and the members being warned to have their uniforms speedily ready, I announced that on the following Thursday we should embark on our first invasion of the forest primeval, going for a camping expedition of three days to the shores of Hatcher's Lake, a body of water situate, as I had previously ascertained, a distance of forty miles by rail from the city and four miles more from the station at Hatchersville, a small village.

"We shall proceed to this obscure hamlet on the steam cars," I explained, "and thence to our appointed place afoot, bearing our camp baggage and other accoutrements with us."

With an uplifted hand I checked the outburst that was about to follow this announcement.

"Remember, please, the proprieties!" I said. "Now then, all together, after me: Huzza! Huzza! Huzza! – Tiger!"

As the echoes died away Master Horrigan spoke:

"How about tents?" he said.

"How about a cook?" This came from Master E. Smith, the stouter of the two Smiths with an i.

"How about cots?" This last speaker, as I recall, was Master

MacMonnies.

Other questions of a similar tenor volleyed on me from all quarters.

For a space of time measurable by minutes I was quite taken aback. So engrossed had I been with the costume, with acquiring skill at swimming, and with ordering from Boston a genuine English yew bow and a sheaf of arrows, that until this moment these lesser details had entirely escaped my attention; but at once my mind was at work on the situation.

I recalled that in the work by Mr. Hough, entitled, "The Complete Boy Camper," of which, as I have remarked before, I already had a copy by me, there was a chapter describing how a balmy couch, far superior to any ordinary bed, might be constructed of the boughs of the spruce, the hemlock, the cedar, or other evergreen growths indigenous to our latitude; and also a chapter describing methods of cooking without pots or pans over a wood fire. The author went so far as to say that bacon was never so delicious as when broiled on a pointed stick above the glowing coals in the open air, thus preserving the racy tang of the woods; while it was stated that the ideal manner of preparing any small game or fish for human consumption was to roll it in a ball of wet clay and then roast it in the glowing ashes.

It was set forth that the person in charge of the cooking should never pluck or skin the game, or even open its interior for the purpose for which I believe such interiors are opened in similar cases; but that when the fire had died down and the ball had

assumed a bricklike consistency, one had but to rake the latter forth, whereupon it would split apart; that the skin, feathers or scales, as the case might be, adhering to the inner surfaces of the dried clay, would be removed, so to speak, automatically; and that the innermost contents of the animal, bird or fish – I hesitate to use the word employed in the book – that the contents, as I shall call them, would then be found drawn up into a small, hard knot, leaving the meat ready to be eaten.

The author of the book went on to say that when in the woods he rarely prepared his food after any other fashion, and that so cooked, with the addition of a little salt, it was invariably deliciously flavoured – in short, a dish fit for a king.

Recalling these things, I told the lads they need not concern themselves with such matters as cots and culinary utensils – that I would take those matters in hand. I realise now, in the light of subsequent events, that I spoke o'erhastily; but, inspired with confidence by my readings, I felt no doubt whatever regarding my ability to master such emergencies as might arise.

As for tents, I said that with the aid of a small axe I could within a few minutes, by following certain directions given in "The Complete Boy Camper," construct commodious and comfortable lean-forwards. The work in question had spoken of these edifices as lean-tos, but I preferred the word lean-forwards as being more grammatical and more euphonious as well.

With a few parting admonitions from me concerning the costume, personal toilet appendages, the hour of leaving, and

so on, the meeting then broke up, the boys scattering into the darkness with ringing halloos of unalloyed happiness, all very refreshing to hear, while I wended my homeward way filled with not unpleasing reflections of the prospect before me.

However, these thoughts were soon dissipated, for the intervening days were so filled with labour that I preserve but an indistinct and blurred recollection of them. Just when I was sure that every imaginable contingency had been provided for, some other item, unforeseen until then, would crop up. I was kept busy revising and enlarging my list of needful articles and scurrying about here and there among tradespeople, finally staggering home at twilight laden with parcels and quite on the verge of exhaustion. Really it was very annoying.

Even with the coming of night there was no surcease, for such was my sense of my own responsibilities that my sleep was much broken. I would wake with a start from troubled slumber to remember something of importance that I had until that moment entirely forgotten. I developed a severe headache and became so distraught that to the simplest questions I made strangely incongruous answers. Once, at eventide, on Mrs. Dorcas' coming into my study to enquire what I would have for breakfast the ensuing morning, I mechanically answered, to the no small astonishment of that worthy person: "Spruce boughs!"

Nevertheless, the day of departure found me quite prepared. At least I fancied I was amply prepared for all situations; but who can forestall the emergencies that may confront one when

one, leaving one's accustomed mode of life, plunges one's self headlong into another sphere, of an entirely dissimilar aspect? Who, I repeat, can foretell these?

I had meant to proceed afoot to the station, carrying my impedimenta, as an example of hardihood and endurance for the benefit of my young adherents; but such was the number of parcels and their awkwardness of shape and bulk that at the final moment, after I had painfully strained my arms in an effort to raise the largest pack to my back, and after I had been repeatedly tripped by the handle of my woodsman's axe, which I wore in my belt, I suffered Mrs. Dorcas to summon a hired hack or conveyance. Seated on the rear seat of this vehicle, carrying some of my equipage in my lap and having the rest piled about me, I was conveyed to the station.

Seemingly tidings of our excursion had spread, for an unusually large crowd was gathered on the platform as I drove up. Again, if I must own it, the old feeling of conspicuousness in regard to my throat and knees assailed me. Possibly this emotion was accentuated by a trifling circumstance that eventuated as I sought to alight from the hack. Hampered by my belongings, I stumbled on the handle of my axe, which persistently trailed between my limbs, and was thrown headlong between the wheels, while many of my dislodged parcels descended on me, retarding my efforts to regain my equilibrium.

Having been assisted to my feet by several bystanders, I lost no time in entering the waiting room, where, noting that I was

apparently the object of some quite unnecessary curiosity on the part of those present, I remained in a corner surrounded by my bundles and with my handkerchief fanning my face, which felt quite warm, until the moment for departure drew near. Several times during this interval I caught myself regretting that I had arrived so early; half an hour or more elapsed before my young followers began to appear, straggling in one by one.

To my great surprise and no less disappointment I discovered that of all our number I alone was properly clad and accoutred for this, our very first outing. In the main the members who appeared were attired merely in their customary garments. Each in turn explained that for various reasons he had been unable to secure his completed costume in proper time. Four of the lads, as I learned at secondhand, through the diligence of their mothers, had acquired the prescribed apparel; but all four, strange to say, had been taken ill that very morning and now sent their excuses, expressing deep regret at being unable to join us. Really, when I recall what was to occur in my own instance it would almost seem to one superstitiously inclined that a sort of fatality attached to the wearing of the garb.

At the last moment Master Dunworthy, our youngest member, arrived in charge of his mother; and he, I was rejoiced to behold, was properly apparelled in the regulation red cap, white blouse and light blue nether garments. A diffidence, with which I could in a measure sympathise, induced Master Dunworthy to walk closely behind his mother; in fact it might almost be said he came

forward unwillingly, impelled by the firm grip of the maternal hand on his collar. He was also sobbing audibly, presumably from homesickness.

With a view to assuaging his distress I made him colour bearer on the spot and conferred on him the compliment of bearing our flag – white, with a red border and a design of a large blue filbert in the centre – a banner of my own designing and worked out by Miss Peebles. I could have wished the filbert had looked more like a filbert and less like a melon; but the general effect, I flattered myself, was excellent. Yet the bestowal of this honour failed to revive the despondent spirits of Master Dunworthy.

Up to the moment of leaving, I cherished the hope that some of the absentees would appear, but that was not to be. When with infinite difficulty I had marshalled my charges aboard the train, amid the friendly laughter and cheering of the crowd, I found that we were, all told, but seven in number; and but a moment after we were reduced to six, since Master Dunworthy unaccountably vanished, leaving the flag behind him.

So engaged was I in the task of bestowing our seemingly innumerable trappings properly that the train was actually in motion before I became cognisant of his disappearance. Convinced that he had been left behind by accident, I entreated the conductor to return for our colour bearer; but this the conductor refused to do, saying it was enough to be running a circus train without having to back up every time one of the animals got lost, strayed or stolen. This I took to be a veiled thrust

at our little band and as such I treated it with dignified silence.

We were presently rolling away through the peaceful, sunlit countryside at an exhilarating speed, and I, little dreaming of what was in store for me and believing all our troubles were now behind us, felt tempted to indulge myself in the luxury of drawing several deep breaths of relief. However, fresh distractions occurred. I was much annoyed to discern among the remaining lads a romping and disorderly spirit, which I was at pains to discourage, at first by shakes of the head and frowns, and ultimately by expressions of open reproof, such as "Tut! Tut!" and "Pray be done, young gentlemen! I beseech you to be done."

To me it appeared that certain of the adult passengers, by covert signs and sounds of approval, were actually abetting and encouraging the urchins in their misbehaviour. Master Pope, alone of all his fellows, maintained a suitable deportment. As he sat demurely behind me I observed him in the act of imitating my gestures of reproof to his less decorous comrades – a manifestation of the emulative spirit which gratified me no little.

I own that I was much rejoiced to hear the verbal announcement of the conductor's assistant – known, I believe, as the brakeman – that Hatchersville would be the next stopping place. True enough, the train, as though to confirm his words, stopped almost immediately. As we left the car, myself bringing up the rear and bearing the flag in addition to my other belongings, some slight delay was occasioned by the flagstaff getting crosswise in the door opening. As, with the brakeman's

good offices, I succeeded in dislodging it from its horizontal position, a voice behind me called out, "Good-bye, little Tut-tut!" which offensive remark was at once caught up by others.

I framed a fitting and, I think, a crushing retort, but before I had entirely completed it in my own mind the cars had moved on and I found myself standing with my diminished troop on the platform, surrounded by a staring ring of rustics of all ages and conditions.

For some reason these persons appeared to labour under the impression that we constituted some sort of travelling amusement enterprise. One of them, a person of elderly aspect, asked me what kind of medicine I was selling, and a number of small boys requested me to shoot with my bow and arrows for their delectation. Disregarding these impertinences, I enquired of the elderly man how one might best reach Hatcher's Lake.

"Straight down the main pike," he replied, pointing to a gravel-coated road winding away toward the top of an adjacent hill; "but it's better'n three miles, and if you're aimin' to give a free show and sell Injun Bitters or somethin' you'd a heap better stop right here, because you'd git a bigger crowd than you would up at the lake."

Rendered pettish, possibly irritable, by the display of an ignorance so dense and incomprehensible, I waved him aside without deigning to answer.

"Fall in!" I bade my followers in a military manner; and then, when they had gathered up their belongings: "Forward – march!"

In his crude vernacular, which I have endeavoured to reproduce faithfully, the aged rustic had said Hatcher's Lake was better than three miles distant. I am convinced what he meant was not better but worse.

As we marched away over the brow of the hill the sun shone down with excessive and caloric fervour and the dust rose in thick clouds, coating our lineaments, which already were bedewed with perspiration. Momentarily the articles that filled my arms and hung on my shoulders and back grew more cumbersome and burdensome, and speedily I developed a blistered and feverish condition of the feet or pedal extremities.

I think it must have been at about this time I dropped my shaving outfit, a wash-rag and my toothbrush out of the breast pocket of my blouse, and lost, presumably from under my arm, the small parcel containing my bedroom slippers and a garment intended for nightwear exclusively. A vial of cold cream, all my spare pocket handkerchiefs, and the brochure on the peculiarities of the poison ivy also disappeared during the journey – but at exactly what point I know not and could not, with propriety, undertake to say. Throughout the march, however, though well-nigh spent and exhausted, I clung to the other burdens, holding in my hands and under my arms, among other things, the bow and arrows, the flag, the axe, a blanket, a cake of soap, and a small sofa pillow of pale pink which Mrs. Dorcas had insisted on my bringing with me.

I have not at my command words proper to describe my

profound relief when, after travelling what seemed a great distance, mainly uphill, we reached a point where, advised by a signpost, we turned off the main highway into a wooded bypath traversing aisles of majestic forest monarchs, which seemed to extend for vast distances in every direction, and came at length to our destination.

How cool seemed the placid mirror of the lake, with its surface unruffled, or practically so! How inviting the mossy greensward! How grateful the dense shade! How cooling to parched lips the cool fluid bubbling from its spring or fountain! To complete enjoyment of this last named there was but one drawback. We had forgotten to bring any drinking cups.

Master Horrigan contrived to fashion his hat into some manner of drinking receptacle, and after some passing reluctance I was induced to slake my thirst with the aid of this; but I am sure I should never care to drink regularly from a boy's hat.

Our thirst being sated, the lads manifested an inclination to remove their garments and dash headlong into the waters of the lake; but I said them nay.

"All things in order," quoth I, "and one thing at a time, if you please, my young comrades. First, we must, as the cant word goes, pitch our camp and prepare our temporary habitations; then shall we partake of suitable midday refreshment. After which, following a period devoted by me to helpful discourse and the exercise of the digestive processes on the part of all present, we may safely consider the advisability of disporting ourselves in yon

convenient sheet or pool of water; but, in view of our arduous march just completed, I feel that we should be amply justified in reclining on the greensward for a brief passage of time."

So saying, I set the example by throwing myself in a prone attitude on the turf; but not for long did I remain thus. Considering its mossy appearance, the earth seemed unduly hard and strangely unsuited to serve as a cushion for the recumbent human form. In addition, there was an amazing prevalence of insect life, all of it characterised by a restless and constant activity.

Ofttimes have I read verses by our most inspired poets telling of the delights of lying prostrate within the leafy fastnesses of the forest deep, but I am forced to believe these poets were elsewhere when engaged in inditing their immortal lines. On suitable occasions I have myself indulged in poesy; but I am quite certain I could not court the muse while ants were crawling on my limbs and even invading my garments, as in the present instance. Earwigs were also remarked.

So, rising, I cautioned my followers to withdraw themselves to a safe distance; and then, with the aid of the woodsman's axe – borrowed from our worthy hardware merchant, Mr. J. T. Harkness, to whom credit is due for his abundant kindness – I proceeded to fell or cause to fall the trees of which I proposed constructing our lean-forwards, two or more in number.

My initial object of attack was a large tree; but, finding its fibres to be of a singularly hard and resistant nature, and the

axe manifesting an unaccountable tendency to twist in my hands, causing the sides of the axe rather than its edged portion to strike against the tree, resulting in painful shocks to my arms and shoulders, I was soon induced to abandon it for a smaller tree.

In circumference of trunk this second tree was hardly more than a sapling, yet it required upward of half an hour of the most arduous and persistent labour, and several large water blisters appeared on the palms of my hands before it tottered, bent, cracked and finally fell quivering on the earth. In descending it perversely took the wrong direction, narrowly escaping striking me in its fall; indeed, one of its lower limbs severely scratched my left cheek.

Nor did the severed trunk possess the neat and symmetrical appearance I have noted in the case of trees felled by professional woodsmen. Rather did it present the aspect of having been gnawed down by slow degrees, resembling, if I may use the simile, a very hard lead pencil, the point of which has been renewed with a very dull knife.

A hasty mental calculation now convinced me that at this rate of progress many hours or possibly days would elapse before I felled a sufficient number of trees to construct one or more lean-forwards of the dimensions I had in mind. Desiring opportunity to ponder over this, I suggested to the lads, who were seated in a row following my movements with every indication of lively interest, that we desist for the time from building operations and enjoy luncheon, which announcement was greeted with audible

approval by all.

"Let us build a true woodsmen's camp fire," I said; "and over it I shall broil for your delectation succulent slices of crisp bacon."

Almost immediately a cheery fire was burning on the shore of the lake. From the stock of supplies I brought forth a strip of bacon, finding it much greasier than I had anticipated; I may say I had never before handled this product in its raw state. I set about removing a suitable number of slices. Here an unanticipated contingency developed – in the press of other matters I had failed to provide a knife or other edged tool with which to slice it. One of the lads produced from his pocket a small knife; but, suspecting from the appearance of the blade the presence of lurking bacteria, I used the axe. This gave the slices a somewhat uneven and ragged appearance.

Affixing a suitable fragment of the meat on a forked stick, I fell to broiling it. The smoke from the fire proved most annoying. No matter in what position one placed oneself, or where one stood, this smoke invaded one's nostrils and eyes, causing choking and smarting sensations. Then, too, in the early stages of my cooking operations a caterpillar fell from a bough overhead down the back of my neck.

I was taken quite unaware, I do assure you. I have ever entertained a distaste, amounting to aversion, for caterpillars, both in an active living state and when they have been crushed beneath the careless foot. With me this attained to a deep-rooted antipathy. Even at the sight of one progressing on a limb or leaf,

by wrinkling up its back, I can with difficulty repress a visible shudder. How much greater the shock, then, to feel it descending one's spinal column?

I uttered a short, involuntary outcry and, stepping backward, I encountered some slippery object and was instantly precipitated with jarring force to the earth. It appeared that I had set my foot on the strip of bacon, which inadvertently I had left lying on the ground directly in my rear. An unsightly smear of grease on the reverse breadth of my blue knickerbockers was the consequence. I endeavoured, though, to pass off the incident with a pleasant smile, saying merely:

"Accidents will happen in the best-regulated families, will they not? Oh, yes, indeed!"

The first strip of bacon having fallen in the fire and been utterly destroyed, I prepared another; and, as Master Pope volunteered to stand vigilantly on guard behind me and prevent other caterpillars from descending on me, I resumed my task. Nevertheless, Master Pope's ministrations proved of small avail. During the course of the next few minutes no less than six separate and distinct caterpillars, besides a small black beetle or cockchafer of a most repellent aspect, fell down my back.

Once, turning my head suddenly, I found Master Pope holding a caterpillar extended between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand almost directly above the nape of my neck. He explained that he had plucked it out of midair as it was in the act of dropping from the leafage above. I admired his presence

of mind greatly, but his courage yet more. I confess that except to save human life I should never have the fortitude to grasp a caterpillar with an ungloved hand.

Doubtlessly because of the nervousness occasioned by the prevalence of caterpillars, the bacon as broiled was not the unqualified success I had been led to expect from reading Mr. Hough's work. Personally, I could not grow rapturous over the wildwood tang of which so much has been said in a complimentary way by other and more experienced campers than myself. I am inclined to think the wildwood tang must be an acquired taste.

Altogether, I fear our noontide repast might have proved rather a failure had it not been that Master Horrigan's mother at the hour of his departure had bestowed on him a quantity of ham sandwiches and a large lemon-jelly cake of the layer variety. Eliminating broiled bacon from our menu we lunched, therefore, on sandwiches and a part of the cake, the latter in particular being quite agreeable to the palate though in a somewhat shaken and disturbed state from being transported beneath Master Horrigan's arm.

The immediate pangs of hunger being assuaged, I craved tea. Tea is the one stimulant in which I indulge. A cup of moderately strong Oolong, slightly weakened by the addition of a modicum of cream or hot milk, with three lumps of sugar in it, is to me a most refreshing drink and one to which I am strongly drawn. So I set about brewing myself a portion of tea.

Again backsets developed. I enumerate them: First, I knew nothing, except by the merest hearsay, of the art of brewing tea. Second, I had failed to provide myself with a teapot or similar vessel. Third, in the natural confusion of the moment I had left the tea on board the train. Fourth, there was no milk, neither was there cream or sugar. A sense of lassitude, with a slight headache, was the result of my having perforce to forego my customary cup.

I had meant to devote the hour following the meal to an enlivening discourse on the joys of outdoor life and communion with Nature in her devious moods, as the poet hath said, to be couched in language suitable for the understanding of my hearers. Accordingly, stretching myself prone on my blanket, with my pink sofa pillow beneath my head, I began an opening sentence.

Shortly thereafter I must have drifted off; for, on being wakened by the efforts of an ant to penetrate my inner ear, I discovered, somewhat to my disapproval since there had been no order to this effect, that the five youngsters had divested themselves of their outer garbings and were disporting themselves in the lake – some wading near shore, some diving headlong from a fallen log that protruded from the bank. A superficial scrutiny of their movements showed me that, though all were capable of sustaining themselves in the unstable element, scarce one of them made any pretence of following out the evolutions as laid down for guidance in the work entitled "Swimming in Twenty Easy Lessons."

Without loss of time I repaired to the shelter of a near-by thicket, where I removed my costume and folded it neatly, as is my wont, and swiftly attired myself in a new bathing suit. In another moment I had mounted the fallen log and was advancing toward the spot where they were splashing about.

"Hold, young gentlemen – hold!" I called out, at the same time halting them with a wave of my hand. "Kindly desist and give to me your undivided attention. The method employed by you in keeping your persons afloat is, as I note, faulty in the extreme. By actual demonstration I shall now instruct you in the rudiments of this graceful art."

With these words, I advanced another step and yet another. At this instant my foot slipped on the rounded surface of the recumbent tree, and before I could extend my limbs forth and arrange them in the proper attitude for making the first stroke, in fact before I had an opportunity for taking any precautionary measures whatsoever, I was propelled outward and downward upon the bosom of the lake, striking with considerable violence on my lower diaphragm.

To my astonishment, I might even say to my most complete astonishment, I went under practically instantaneously. This immediately induced a sense of uneasiness, which increased to actual apprehension when I found it impossible to straighten myself on the water in the posture illustrated in Diagram A in the first lesson.

Instinctively I felt all was not well with me!

With a view, therefore, to securing temporary assistance until I could collect myself and regain my customary calmness, I opened my mouth to utter certain words; but, instead of speech issuing forth, a considerable volume of water poured down my throat, producing a muffled, gurgling sound. From this point on my apprehension grew perceptibly until I grasped the helping hands that were extended to me and, after a few struggles, was, by the aid of those chivalrous youths, drawn in a weak and temporarily voiceless condition to safety on the bank.

There for some time I was content to remain, permitting the water I had inadvertently swallowed to pour forth from my interior, the lads continuing to frolic about in the treacherous lake until I had entirely recovered. Thus some time passed. Finally, summoning them to me I stated that the first swimming lesson was herewith suspended until a more suitable moment, and gave the command for catching a number of finny beauties for our evening meal. This, however, was rendered impossible by reason of our having no fish-hooks or other suitable appurtenances for catching them. Really, it would seem that for the simplest outing an almost incalculable number and variety of accessories are needful!

In view of this situation I promptly devised an altered plan of campaign. Inwardly I had already gained my own consent to abandon the project of building any lean-forwards for our use on this particular occasion. I now split our strength into parties of equal number and, detailing Masters Ferguson and Horrigan to

aid me in constructing woodmen's couches, I assigned to Masters Pope, E. Smith and H. Smith the task of faring forth into the wilderness that encompassed us to seek the wild fruit and to kill, as painlessly as possible, sufficient wild game for our next repast.

At the same time I warned them, above all things, to avoid destroying the feathered songsters. Under other circumstances I would have decried slaughtering any living creatures whatsoever; but in the existing emergency a certain amount of carnage appeared inevitable, for, as I said to them: "Must we not eat? Shall we not obey Nature's first law?"

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