

* * The Story Page. * *

The Vicissitudes of Cape Life.

Twenty boys started one day last August for the east side of Sebasticook Lake, nearly thirty miles from Good Will Farm. There was one man in the party. The first team took tents and provisions and about a dozen boys. The other team took the remainder of the boys and the man. The first team started an hour in advance, and the driver was to ascertain the way, and whenever there were two roads he was to scatter fragments of paper on the road he had taken. This plan worked admirably until Palmyra was reached. At this place the first party took the road to Newport Village and scattered the usual papers in the road. The man who was with the boys, arriving twenty minutes later, refused to follow the lead, and went with the second party to North Newport. The town of Newport is like a basket—a large hole with a rim around it. Sebasticook Lake is the hole. What land there is in the town is the rim. So one party went half way round the lake, on the rim, going south; the other party went half way round going to the north and they met within an hour of each other at the desired destination. Five post-offices were passed on the way, and at each office a postal-card was mailed to the folks at home saying that "nothing had happened."

Now White was in one of the parties. This White is a naturalist and dotes on hornets. On the way to the lake he discovered a hornet's nest in a tall tree by the roadside and threw stones at it. The hornets were much disturbed, but in their anger did not even catch a glimpse of their boyish persecutor. He escaped. The next morning, near the camp, he discovered another hornet's nest. He threw some more stones. The hornets discovered him and one of them hit him between the eyes. It was a great victory for the hornet. White says it bumped right against him. The face of the vanquished began to swell. It kept on swelling. He was a "sight." Anyone who had a sense of the ludicrous would smile as often as he looked at White. If White saw anyone smiling at him, he would smile also. And when one saw White's dark and distorted features wreathed with a smile it didn't make any difference whether he had a sense of the ludicrous or not, he had to laugh because he couldn't help it. White has been stung five times this summer—four times by bees and once by a hornet. It is interesting to hear him give particulars. The most pathetic of the five cases, probably, was when Mr. Coffin was attending to a swarm of bees at Good Will Farm and wanted the queen caught. The queen bee doesn't sting and can be easily distinguished by her form. White saw the queen and intended to pick her up, but he took hold of the wrong bee. The one he caught was a working bee. He worked in his own interests and against White's comfort. But he says he doesn't mind getting stung much anyway.

The boys expected to live in tents and have the use of a small cottage for cooking. Sammie and Frank were the cooks. But the former occupants of the cottage were to stay two days longer. So Sammie cooked on an ancient stove in an opening under a big maple tree. There are some very unpopular things in the grove. They all belong to the same family. To scientists, individual members are known as Mephitis Mephitis. People void of scientific discernment call them skunks. Now any number of these things—Mephitis—are as sweet as kittens and entirely harmless unless disturbed. If attacked, or annoyed in any way, they resort at once to powerful methods of self defense. This is reasonable. The owner of the grove asked us not to disturb them. He said two fishermen were camping there a few days before, and one day when they came back from fishing, there was one of these things—a Mephitis—in the tent. They waited for him to look around a bit, and then he came out and went away. We promised we wouldn't disturb them if we saw them in the tent or anywhere. That very night Henry was lying awake in his tent when one of them came in and went around him twice and then went out. Henry lay still; didn't dare move a muscle, though it is understood that the hair on Henry's head moved—stood up straight. It's simply blood-curdling to have wild beasts prowling around you in the woods at night when you can't do a thing.

The next day a party came into the grove to stay one night and two days. The party consisted of several men and women and a very small boy. They were to occupy a tent which stood a few feet from Sammie's cook stove. They drove right along side the opening in the woods, unharnessed the horses and hitched them beside the carriage, only a few feet from the stove and dining table. So Sammie and Frank had two carriages and a pair of horses in the kitchen. We didn't like it much, but as it was only for one day we decided not to say much. The man who was with the boys wanted to shave. He said

we had a right to our own kitchen; so he made one of the carriages a dressing-room, spread his shaving utensils on the cushion of the other, hung a mirror on a tree and shaved himself, while one of the horses meekly looked over his shoulder. It was the first time he ever saw himself in a looking glass. And when night came the very small boy said: "Mamma, where are we going to sleep?" and the mother said: "In the tent," and the very small boy looked at the cook stove, our table, the two carriages, the horses, our wood-pile, and the tent, all huddled together in that opening, when there was room—lots of room—elsewhere, and he said: "Mamma, I don't want to sleep in a barn-yard." We all felt like saying something but we held our peace.

We were going to have a chowder for supper that night. The fish was dressed. A man had promised to bring us a barrel of crackers and a peck of onions. Chowder was to be served at five o'clock. In the afternoon a very dark cloud appeared in the west. It promised a heavy shower. At half past three the cloud seemed to burst. The rain came down in torrents. The canvas tents were so dry that they were like sieves. The water came through in little showers. The boys gathered their blankets together in piles and sat on them to keep them dry, but the straw got very wet. Hail fell, until around the tent the ground was very white. It stopped raining at five o'clock, which was supper time. There was not a dry stick of wood or piece of paper in the camp. The stove did not look as though it had ever been dry. The ash box, filled with ashes and rain water, looked like a tank of gray kalsomine, mixed, and ready for use. We sent a boy up to the man who was to get the barrel of crackers, the peck of onions, and the Boston Daily. Sammie and Frank tried to start a fire in the wet stove. The man who was with the boys helped. They got the fire started and it went out. They tried again. Two boys peeled the potatoes. The fire got under way. The pork was fried in the bottom of the kettle. It looked very bright for a chowder by 6.30. Then the boy came back. He brought the Boston Daily and said that when the man got to the village he didn't know what kind of crackers we wanted and so he didn't get any, and for some reason he concluded not to get the onions either. This was worse than the shower, but we said "never mind" we would have the chowder anyway, for we were cold and wet and we must have a hot supper. So the fish and potatoes were put into the kettle and hot water was added. Thirteen boys came from the tents to watch. Now there is an adage that "a watched kettle never boils," but when a boy is cold, wet, and hungry, and the crackers and onions haven't come, and supper is already two hours late, he doesn't take any stock in adages. To him proverbs are without meaning. They watched, but the kettle didn't boil. Then two boys shouted that one of those things—Mephitis—was up in the woods by the fence cleaning his fur, and the thirteen boys rushed up to see it. Then they came back with the other two and the fifteen gathered around the kettle to see it boil. And the water in the kettle was only milk warm. Then Frank and Sammie put in more wet wood, and two more boys joined the group, so there were nineteen boys and a man watching the kettle. Night had come on; it was bedtime; the temperature of the water was near boiling, but it dawdled on the watchers that there was no chowder for them that night. It was decided to have supper of cold hasty pudding and molasses. There was not a cross word or a grumble heard. Supper was eaten and the boys retired. Sammie and Frank were to start early in the morning, the chowder was to be completed and was to be served smoking hot. There was a dog in the grove with the party who had hitched their horses in our kitchen, and we did not dare think what would happen if he should meddle with that chowder in the night. So the big kettle was placed on one end of the long, rickety table, carefully covered and left till morning. On the table was a collection of tin cups, plates, spoons, etc. Everybody slept. The man who was with the boys dreamed a dream. He was at a church fair, and he was very hungry. He had ordered a dish of frozen pudding, as appetizing to look at as anything that ever graced a table at a church fair. He was just raising the first spoonful of the tempting food to his lips when he awoke and for a moment wondered why. Then he heard boys in one of the other tents talking, and Fred, the boy who was nearest him in his own tent, said:

"Did you hear that noise?"

"No," said the man, "what noise was it?"

"An awful noise—a thud and a rattling of tin dishes. That old table where we've been eating has broken down. There must have been something heavy on it or else a dog jumped up on it or something."

It is not probable that there is any single word in our language that could have done satisfactory duty as an expletive for the occasion. If there is, that man had never heard it. For a full minute he did not speak.

Then he said, speaking with solemnity: "Fred, it's that chowder—our breakfast. I put it up on the table myself to save it. It was too heavy wasn't it? I think I can see it now. The potatoes and fish are scattered all over the ground, and the kettle's bottom side up; and it hadn't even boiled." For a minute or two there was absolute silence—the silence of the woods at midnight. Fred and the man were in deep thought. Then the ludicrous situation seemed to dawn upon both at the same time. They lay side by side on their bed of damp straw, and made no attempt to restrain a fit of boisterous laughter. After awhile the man decided what he would do. At an early hour he would dispatch a boy to the nearest farm-house for eggs, and these should be the basis of a breakfast, in place of the chowder. Then he slept again. When he awoke it was light. A gentle breeze moved in the thick maple foliage above the tent. The sunlight was struggling between the branches and falling in bright, moveable spots on the canvas roof of the damp tent. Boys' voices could be heard down by the stove.

"Sammie," he shouted, "Sammie!"

Sammie's smiling face appeared at the entrance of the tent.

"How about the breakfast?" said the man.

"It's all right," said Sammie. "That noise in the night wasn't the table at all. It was a dead tree that fell over near the tent. The chowder's safe and it's all cooked. The man who didn't get the crackers yesterday, started at four o'clock this morning and the barrel of crackers and the onions are here, and I've put some of the onions in the chowder."

Now, my reader, such a chowder as that was! You never ate one just like it. You probably never will. To make such a chowder you must have a thunder shower and a hail storm; you must order a barrel of crackers and a peck of onions, and after waiting several hours for them, you must be told you can't have them, and be offered a Boston Daily paper instead; you must have a wet stove and a lot of wet wood; you must have twenty boys watch it an hour and twenty minutes while the darkness of an August night grows in the woods; you must then eat cold hasty pudding and molasses for supper and leave the chowder to be completed in the morning; you must wake up in the middle of the night and be convinced that the chowder is spilled upon the ground and the kettle bottom side up; you must give up the chowder entirely and be resigned to your fate; then the chowder must be returned to you in the morning with crackers and onions added; and you must eat it under the spreading maple trees where you can hear the weird cry of the loon upon the lake and the harmonies of the song thrush in the adjacent thicket; and you must have nineteen hungry boys to eat with you; and you must sit down to the table out of doors and eat with dishes of tin and after the blessing has been asked you must see Sammie standing at the head of the table with the kettle of steaming food before him and a ladle in his hand; and you must say as you pass him your tin plate: "Some of the chowder, please, Sammie," and you must watch him fill your plate and hand it back to you hot and savory. It's the only way you can ever get a chowder that will taste just like that; and as for the man who was with the boys, he never expects to taste the like again.—Good Will Record.

A Young African Hero.

Some of you have hard words to bear at times because you love the Lord Jesus. But in some parts of the world people who say they believe in him are beaten cruelly, and even put to death.

In Central Africa, a few years ago, some boys were burned to death by order of the king, because they were Christians. Yet, in spite of this, a boy of about sixteen was brave enough to wish to become a Christian. He came to the missionary, and said, in his own language: "My friend, I wish to be baptized."

"Do you know what you are asking?" said the missionary in surprise.

"I know, my friend."

"But if you say that you are a Christian, they will kill you."

"I know, my friend."

"But if they ask you if you are a Christian, will you tell a lie, and say, No?"

Bravely and firmly came the boy's answer, "I shall confess, my friend."

A little talk followed, in which he showed clearly that he understood what it was to be a Christian, so the missionary baptized him by the name of Samuel, which is the same as our Samuel.

The king found him so useful that he employed him to collect the taxes, which are paid in cowries—little shells which are used instead of money. One day, when he was away on this business, the king

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