

Going Camping?

It was early morning on Lake Golden. The teapot sputtered over the coals, and bacon flavors filtered gratefully to the nostrils. The Old Veteran squatted himself comfortably on a granite boulder and nodded toward the fire. "Boys," he said, "there don't look to be anything dangerous in a little bunch of coals, does there?"

"Not this side of a powder factory," chipped in the Youngster.

The Old Veteran tapped his pipe bowl significantly: "Some day we're going to have an argument about which is the trickiest spot to trifle with fire—a powder factory or a forest, and I think the forest will come first. One advantage about the powder factory is that you know the worst right off. But in the forest you may walk away for days and have the fire of your own making overtake you."

"That doesn't sound reasonable," the Youngster broke in.

"And it won't," agreed the Veteran, "until some time you start a camp fire in a bog or on pine needles and after a week's absence come face to face with your own fire in the shape of a blackened township. There's lots of surprises in store for you, my lad. I have known camp fires to burrow into a boggy soil, although doused with many pails of water, and remain there for two weeks, travelling underground until they came in contact with the dry duff of a fine old pinery, then to dart upward and turn hundreds of acres into a roaring furnace. The only safe way is never to take chances with a camp fire, never build one except on rocks or gravel and never go away until it is *dead out*. I have followed that rule now for twenty years."

"You certainly make the camp fire responsible for a lot of damage."

"Can't exaggerate it, because I have seen the proofs with my own eyes. I have crossed Canada with parties of geologists and civil engineers and forest engineers and seen so many thousands of acres lying charred and useless, so many rivers and streams dried up from lack of a tree life, so many beautiful camping and fishing spots spoiled for all time, that I said to myself, 'Never you become responsible for this sort of crime.' And I believe I have lived up to it."

"But *smoking!*" said the Youngster "Suppose that I"——

"Suppose that you threw down a lighted cigarette or a burning match alongside the trail, or emptied hot pipe ashes, I should feel like giving you a very good licking. Lighted tobacco and matches are just campfires in concentrated form. They all have the possibilities of another 'Porcupine fire horror,' and for a man to carelessly toss away the beginnings of a conflagration is to brand himself an amateur woodsman and an enemy to society."

By this time we had made away with the bacon and were glorying in the nectar of campfire tea. The Youngster, of course, had finished first, and was lending a hand at striking camp.

Up from the shore came the guide, lugging two pails of water. He emptied them on the small bed of coals and returned for a further supply. Not until the fourth pail had immersed the blackened remnants of the fire did he look contented.

"I see you take no chances," remarked the Veteran.

"I too learned my lesson," answered the guide. "If the forests are not kept *green*, there's no hunting and fishing, and no tourists—and the guide's job disappears. This is only self-defence."—(Reprinted from "A Matter of Opinion," published by Canadian Forestry Association.)