

CHAPTER I.

THOSE reading what follows will already have read the introductory words of my friend, the learned Professor Muttonhead, so that I am the less concerned about pointing out in advance the shortcomings which are to be found in what I am about to write.

I have been charged with the proud but responsible duty of chronicling in fit phrase the exploits of a certain band of merry men, who in August, 1890, penetrated into the wilds and fastnesses near by a portion of the Murray River; but, whilst the sense of pride inflates me, as a balloon is filled with gas, or as the fabled frog was blown with vanity, the pin of consciousness of inability reduces me to flatness and flaccidity. Let me avoid the pin, and try my best. I would, however, claim for myself the right to set everything down in such order, or such want of order, as shall commend itself to me, without regard to any considerations as to whether or not in the experience of mankind the like has been known outside of the realms where the night-mare kicks her heels. And I make this claim with greater freedom when I contemplate the variety of scene and incident which it is my lot to describe, a variety which itself demands a treatment not confined within the borders of convention.

On Wednesday evening, the 6th day of August, 1890, Mr. W. H. Blake, of the City of Toronto, Barrister-at-Law, accosted me (and here, let me say, that in these pages I call myself "I," "the writer," "the Historian," or how else best suits my whim) with the historic—when this masterpiece shall have been read, the doubly historic—words, "there was a sound of revelry by night." The place where was the verandah of "Maisonrouge," the summer residence of the Hon. Edward Blake, and the forceps of the remark (I think my love for this figure is not incurable) had for prongs the two facts now to be detailed.

[Note by the Professor. I refrain from knocking off this literary "grotesque," in order that the reader may faintly picture, from it, what the structure generally was like, before I attacked it. As to the author's meaning (if any) I think he has "drawing out" in his mind.]