

*A Geographical Discourse*

Then I floundered. I caught at this and I caught at that, until at length I caught my breath and launched upon a geographical discourse. I traced the St. Lawrence to the foot of the Great Lakes, went up the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi, began to wander helplessly through Louisiana, wallowed hopelessly in Florida and ended somewhere, somehow, in the quagmires of the South.

Henry Perkins followed. He believed every claim his leader had made as to the situation in North America. One thing he was sure of was that if he hadn't given his squashes, for instance, a good deal of personal attention, if he had left them entirely in the hands of the Almighty, they wouldn't have taken first prize at the Fair.

The schoolteacher absolutely ignored North America. To hear her speak, you wouldn't know there ever had been such a place. She clung to flowers and birds and beautiful scenery, and ended with what everyone agreed was an eloquent appeal for reverence of the Giver of all Good.

The judges took down all the points with great pains and impartiality. And after much deliberation they announced that the debate was a tie, each side having scored two points. The spokesman said that if in going over the waterways I had thought to mention the artificial canals I would have made a point and won the debate. But it all went to show that, besides being temperate, we had some first-class latent talent. All that was needed was development. My own opinion always has been that the debate rang the death-knell of the lodge. If it was not the debate, then it was the unhappy situation that forced an isolated few to pay lodge dues for the doubtful distinction of being total abstainers. We heard much about teetotalism, moderate indulgence, freedom of conscience, taking it and leaving it alone, tipping and treating, but nothing could save the lodge from early desuetude and final collapse. It was after all a situation described by Ted Smale's hired man in words which we requote:

*A Temperance Axiom*

"Them as be temperance should remain temperance, and them as bain't shouldn't."

