

He had no desire for mounting and riding away in the presence of that critical assemblage.

"All right," said young Bartlett. "I guess I'll be down at the meeting, too; then I can show you the way home."

"Thanks," said Yates; "I'll be on the look-out for you."

Young Bartlett galloped away, and was soon lost to sight in a cloud of dust. The others had also departed with their shod horses; but there were several new arrivals, and the company was augmented rather than diminished. They sat around on the fence, or on the logs dumped down by the wayside.

Few smoked, but many chewed tobacco. It was a convenient way of using the weed, and required no matches, besides being safer for men who had to frequent inflammable barns.

A circular fire burned in front of the shop, oak bark being the main fuel used. Iron wagon tires lay hidden in this burning circle. Macdonald and Sandy bustled about making preparations, their faces, more hideous in the bright sunlight than in the comparative obscurity of the shop, giving them the appearance of two evil spirits about to attend some incantation scene of which the circular fire was the visible indication. Crosstrees, of four pieces of squared timber, lay near the fire, with a tireless wheel placed flat upon them, the hub in the square hole at the center. Shiftless farmers always resisted having tires set until they would no longer stay on the wheel. The inevitable day was postponed, time and again, by a soaking of the wheels overnight in some convenient puddle of water; but as the warmer and dryer weather approached this device, supplemented by wooden wedges, no longer sufficed, and the tires had to be set for summer work. Frequently the tire rolled off on the