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THE DANGERS OF OUR WILDS.

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The French traveller, lately returned from Algeria, was frankly joking when he told an enquirer that the most dangerous animal in North Africa was not the lion, as generally supposed, but the gazelle. "The lion," he said, "it never molests you. But the gazelle, when you are riding across the plain, suddenly springs up at your horse's nose; your horse shies, and throws you off and you break your neck." While this was admittedly a pleasantry on the part of the traveller, a consideration of the dangers of our native woods leads to a conclusion almost as surprising.

In the first place, the only real menace to human life comes, not from the animals of our forests, but from the plants. Our woods and fields harbour a far larger number of poisonous plants than is commonly suspected. Everyone knows of poison ivy and the painful and annoying skin eruption it causes; but its effects, however unpleasant while they last, very rarely result in any serious or permanent injury. Much more grave are the consequences of the internal poisonings by plants which attract by their succulent roots or bright-coloured berries. To mention only a very few of the commonest of these, the sweet roots of the hemlocks, *Conium maculatum* and *Circuta maculata*, are most deadly, and the rash partaker seldom recovers. Another plant with a bad record is Indian tobacco, *Lobelia inflata*, which grows plentifully in dry fields. Although it has a strong and disagreeable taste, children, misled by the common name, sometimes chew this weed with fatal results. The bright red pulp enclosing the seeds of the yew, *Taxus bacata*, found all through our woods, is probably harmless enough in itself, but the seeds are very poisonous. The vivid colour of the "berries" makes them attractive to children, and a good many young lives have been sacrificed to them.

But the fungi of the genus *Amanita* have more deaths against them than all the rest of our flora put together. Never a season passes without one or more records of persons fatally