

The Heptaderm

went on at the end of the thoughtful pause. "Being modern and reasonably sophisticated, we can smile at the signs and omens of the ages that had to get along without laboratories and testing plants. Just the same, every man has his little atavistic streak, if you can hit upon it. For example, you may throw flip-flaps and call it rank superstition if you like, but I have never been able to get rid of the notion that birthdays are like the equinoxes—turning-points in the small, self-centred system which we call life."

"Poodle-dogs!" snorted the one whose attitude was both jocose and analytical, stuffing more of the spruce branches under his head to keep the pipe ashes from falling into his eyes.

"I know; being my peculiar weakness instead of your own, it's tommy-rot to you." Brouillard rejoined good-naturedly. "As I said a few minutes ago, I am only burbling to hear the sound of my own voice. But the bottoming fact remains. You give a screw twist to a child's mind, and if the mind of the man doesn't exhibit the same helical curve——"

"Suppose you climb down out of the high-browed altitudes and give it a plain, every-day name?" grumbled the staff authority on watersheds.