

probably, ever set eyes on that rude brush habitation. His curiosity was now doubled, and on his return the next day he again paid the hut a visit, accompanied by one of the regular residents of Betsyville, who was also desirous of learning the identity of the new settler. He was again disappointed, for the cabin was still deserted, although there were a few observable traces of the presence of some person in the hut since the day before, not the least of which was the fact that a fire was still burning so freely as to indicate that it had been replenished within the past half hour.

When this intelligence was carried back to camp, it created considerable discussion among the frequenters of Johnson's establishment. There was nothing remarkable in the fact of some stranger having built a hut, for prospectors were continually locating and housing themselves in temporary shanties of brush. What made this case the subject of curiosity, and even suspicion, were the two facts that the hut had evidently not been constructed by a person possessing a miner's, or camper's outfit, and that the owner had apparently gone into hiding to avoid meeting his visitors. When Saturday night came, and with it the usual influx of miners from the more distant claims, the subject of the mysterious person who had built a brush hut with his jack-knife received more serious attention and a free discussion. Sluices had been robbed in times past, and it was the general sense of the crowd that a man who would build a hut must be either a genuine miner or a man who expected to gain a living in some illegitimate way. The result of it all was that the following day, Sunday, an informal committee of half a dozen miners paid the new comer a visit.

As before, the occupant of the strange

cabin was not at home, and the unbidden guests were compelled to act as their own entertainers. They could find nothing but the bare walls of the hut, the remains of a fire, evidently several hours extinct, and a few crude utensils, such as could be fashioned with a pocket knife, from the branches of neighboring trees. Nothing whatever could be found to indicate the method by which the mysterious builder of the shanty gained a livelihood, except that the slender skeletons of a few mountain trout, and the cleanly-picked bones of birds, bore evidence to the fact that game constituted a portion, at least, of his daily food. There was but meagre satisfaction to be gained from a contemplation of these remains, and a general feeling of irritation at having their curiosity baffled deepened their already unfavorable opinion of the stranger.

"This here is onreasonable," said Bud Jackson, a tall Missourian, who had preferred rabbit hunting to grammar, in his youthful days, "no man hain't got no right to live this a'way. I'm the last man in the world to interfere with a man's nateral rights, but this here is a'goin too fur, an' I move we make him stop it."

"What ye goin' to do 'bout it?" queried Joe Coombs, a delegate from Indiana, whose incessant praises of the muddy Wabash had won for him the title of "Wabash Joe," which name was the only one known to belong to him by any one in the camp, except himself and Johnson, in his official capacity as postmaster.

"What 'ud I do? I'd pull his dern'd shanty down and stick up a notice to clarten these here diggins."

"Don't you think that would be a rather summary proceeding?" quietly asked a young doctor from New York, who had spent two years in the mines in an unsuccessful effort to acquire rich-