

HOW A PARTY OF BOYS AND GIRLS CAN BUILD A CABIN

By ARTHUR H. DUTTON

Did you ever build a cabin or hut in the woods for a cosy retreat on a hot summer's day? If not, you have missed a lot of fun. It is easily done.

Every healthy boy or girl loves the woods, and now, with vacation time at hand, come the opportunities for roaming afar, among the tall trees, the gentle streams and rushing brooks, with birds singing and wild animals near by.

The wilder the spot for a day's outing the better the average boy likes it. It seems closer to nature. For genuine fun a small party of boys and girls can do nothing better than get up early on one of these bright summer mornings, take the ferry across the bay to some of the wild spots back of Berkeley, or in Marin or Contra Costa county, and there make camp for the day. Here is where a knowledge of hut building becomes useful.

Most young people have no settled idea of where to go, what to take along or what to do. Here is what was done not long ago by a party of three girls and four boys, between the ages of 14 and 18, and the mother of one of the girls, who took charge of the party.

They had heard, in a vague sort of way, of a thickly wooded canyon, northeast of Berkeley, where there was a beautiful stream, tumbling over boulders, and all the characteristics of a wilderness. Two of the party went in search of it one Saturday, and came back with such glowing reports that the whole party was off bright and early the next morning, equipped for a long hike. Food was carried in army knapsacks of canvas, which also carried a couple of frying pans, coffee pot and other simple utensils. An axe, a hatchet and a small bag of nails completed the outfit, save for a small 22 caliber rifle, which one of the boys took along to shoot ground squirrels, and some fishing tackle.

The glen they reached was better than they expected. They could easily imagine themselves pioneers in the wilderness, blazing the path of civilization. There was not a habitation, fence or other sign of man in sight. They depended upon themselves for everything.

The first thing suggested was a cabin, and the suggestion was greeted with glee. Of course, as it was, as they thought, for only a day's use they made it very simple. Four saplings were cut, of about the same size, and planted in holes dug with sticks, rocks being then piled around the bottoms, as the holes were not deep enough to make the poles secure. Across the tops of the upright poles four other poles were laid horizontally, three resting in forks left in the uprights, the other being nailed, and thus was the frame of the hut made.

Boughs of trees were laid across the horizontal poles on top, and in this way the hut was roofed in. Boughs were then hung on three of the four sides, closing the hut in. It was not a roof to keep out rain, but it was a shelter from sun and wind, and very cozy. It is surprising to find how comfortable such a bough hut may be made.

The boys did the chopping, but the girls were not idle by any means. Of course, boys always expect girls to do the cooking, and the girls in the party cheerfully performed the household duties, although the boys washed the dishes afterward. But the girls helped in the hut building. They chopped off boughs, and one of them was as good as any of the boys in nailing the place up. The whole hut was built in less than four hours, and there it stands today, members of the little party returning to it and taking others. A rustic table has been built, also benches, and an oven made of rocks, so that the



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place is now a regular camp.

So successful was this impromptu camp that the same little party, with other friends, contemplate the building of a more substantial cabin, in which many days or a whole summer may be spent. To do this they actually require no material whatsoever except nails. The tools needed are an ax, a hatchet, a hammer, a large crosscut saw, a hand saw and a frow. A level is needed, but a piece of string with a small stone or a nail at the end will answer for the plumbing.

A site for a permanent hut for a lengthy stay should be close to running water, and preferably on slightly raised ground. The thicker the woods the more picturesque it will be and the handier will be the materials for building. If fir trees are about the operation is much simplified, for they are generally straight and symmetrical.

Let us assume that the cabin is to be 12 feet square. Select four straight trees, of an average thickness of 8 inches, for the floor timbers. Four others, of about 6 inches diameter, will be needed for the uprights at each corner. Small uprights should be placed between these, and also at the doorway. The beams and rafters must then be cut, these being about 3 inches in diameter.

All the trees must be peeled, for if the bark is left on it will dry up in time, crack and fall off, besides being a haven for all manner of insects. Removing the bark is a good occupation for the girls of the party.

While these timbers for the framework are being cut, peeled and trimmed by a couple of the party, a couple more should find a large tree from which to make shakes for the walls and roof. This requires care, for all trees do not split easily or regularly. Several trees may have to be tested, by cutting off large slabs from them, before the right one is found.

When the right kind is selected it is cut down and then sawed, with a big two handled crosscut saw, into sections of the length wanted for the shakes, which should be about 30 inches long. These sections are then split into shakes with the frow.

Great care must be exercised in getting the floors and beams level and the uprights perpendicular. The frame must be square and plumb. Here, again, the girls can help the boys a great deal with the level and the plumbline.

After the floor timbers are in place, the uprights at each corner are put in position, and long timbers put across them from one to the other. Next come the intermediate uprights and beams, and after them the rafters. If a better floor than the bare earth is desired it can be made by putting a series of small timbers across from the sides and nailing large shakes across. While this will be a rough and uneven floor, it will be dry.

After the frame is all up, the shakes are nailed on and a good summer house is made. Although daylight may show between the rough shakes, by properly placing them over one another the roof may be made quite watertight, so that an early rain will do no harm. Shakes will also do for the door.

No stove is needed for such a summer cabin. The cooking can be done out doors, over a campfire, or in an oven built of rocks. For beds canvas hammocks are good, and a pile of fir boughs with a blanket or some gunny sacks over them make a comfortable couch for healthy, vigorous young people.

The only really difficult part of building such a cabin is cutting down the big tree for the shakes. This takes time and is hard work, but swinging an axe and handling a big crosscut saw are fine exercises which develop the muscles admirably. A few days of such work, followed by the life in the open, with all its accompaniments, will do more to develop health, strength, resourceful-

ness and ingenuity than almost any other form of vacation.

If it is decided to build a log cabin, the work of cutting down a huge tree for shakes is avoided, and the building is simplified in some respects. The logs are placed one above the other, the ends being grooved on two sides to receive the superposed logs, thus making a tight wall. After the logs are all on they must be tightly calked with moss or mud, the thick, sticky, blue mud being the best for this purpose.

But the number of trees needed for a log cabin is astonishing. To get enough a good sized grove must be cut down, and it is a long job. Still, a log cabin is durable and may be made much stronger than one of shakes, besides having tight sides that make it comfortable in any weather. A chimney and fireplace may be built of rocks, using sticky blue mud or red clay for mortar. Such a chimney is picturesque and strong if properly made. For the door some boards will have to be supplied. Windows will also have to be purchased and there must be hinges, bolts and locks. The floor should be made of boards. A log cabin may be more or less expensive, while a cabin built of shakes need cost nothing but the price of the nails.

It requires considerable practice to become expert with the ax, but a good axman is strong. Gladstone, the statesman, maintained his strength and vigor to an advanced age by regular and extensive wood chopping on his estates. Theodore Roosevelt includes wood chopping among his favorite exercises and nearly every woodsman is athletic and healthy. Not only the exercise but the open air life in the woods conduces to health and longevity.

In a cabin in the woods a party of young people may have an endless variety of amusements of the most beneficial kind during a summer's vacation, whether it be for a day or for several weeks.

QUEER CUSTOMS AMONG THE PAPUANS

Captain Ernest G. Rason of the British navy, late resident commissioner in the New Hebrides, who passed through New York recently on his way to England, had an interesting story to tell of the quaint ways and customs of the cannibal natives of those distant South sea islands, which have but recently come under the joint dominion of France and Great Britain.

For those who have no school atlas ready at hand it may be well to recall that the New Hebrides are a group of about a dozen large volcanic islands in the South sea lying some 1,200 miles from Australia, due northeast from Sydney. They were discovered in 1606 by the Spanish explorer Gueros, but they were never formally claimed as one of the colonies of Spain.

The New Hebrides are thickly inhabited by various tribes of Papuans, brown cannibals commonly called Negritos. These tribes differ very much from each other—in physical characteristics, in speech, customs and dress. In the northern islands the men sometimes attain a height of six feet and more, whereas in the southern islands the average height is about five feet. On the Solomon islands all the natives go stark naked; but on the New Hebrides proper most of the men wear a poor excuse for a breech cloth, a kind

of geestring, while the women wear a thin gown of one piece that comes down to their knees. All the children up to the age of 10 or thereabouts run naked.

A boy is considered a man as soon as he can throw a heavy spear. Girls are married from the age of 12 upward. The men do up their hair in braids or tassels, often very grotesque. This headdress, like their garments, varies according to the tribes. There are some 40 tribes with no less than 30 languages.

The only traits these tribes have in common are their fondness for eating human flesh, their custom of piercing the nose and a peculiar trading lingo for intercourse with European traders, known as beche de mer. This queer speech, made up of hodge podge or native words, Spanish, French and pidgin English, bears resemblance to a similarly made up lingo of the West Indies, the papal mento of Trinidad and Curacoa.

The Papuans have 10 degrees of caste or rank, graduated strictly according to a man's ownership of pigs. Wives, too, are rated according to the number of pigs it took to purchase them. The Papuan who has but one or two razor-backs is a plebeian, while he who can boast of a whole drove of pigs is rated as a magnate, and will thus rank in heaven. In addition to this there is a

system of promotion by which men who enter heaven rich will become richer, while those poor souls who had the misfortune to die pigless stay poor forever.

Pigs, by the way, as well as chickens and a species of mongrel terriers, are indigenous to the New Hebrides, at least Captain Cook the explorer reported that he found these animals domesticated there when he first touched among these islands. Our other domestic animals, such as cats, sheep, goats, horses and cattle, have been introduced into the New Hebrides only during the last century by the missionaries. In the native tongue horses have no distinctive name as yet, but are called "big pigs," while cattle are called "horned pigs."

"The least lovely trait of the Papuans is their cowardice," said Captain Rason. "They never fight in the open. A native Papuan never kills his enemy openly, but always from behind, from hidden ambush. When enemies meet they dissemble and pretend to be friendly."

"Next they go stalking one another, or lure them into ambush with the help of apparently friendly confederates. In this kind of hidden warfare they are rather redoubtable, thanks to the steep, mountainous character of most of the island, and thanks also to the fact that they have acquired good firearms, Sn-

ders and Enfields, from the Australian traders. In later years I was able to put a stop to much of this ugly business by disarming the natives at times of large gatherings or dances, when I caught them off guard.

"Now all the firearms they have left are fowling pieces. Even with bird-shot they are very poor marksmen. Mostly they close their eyes as they pull the trigger. All shooting is done at very close range because of the thick jungle and dense forests. It is in former times when they used bows and poisoned arrows they were very good marksmen."

"An old Papuan standing beside me one time when I was shooting at a target with a revolver at a distance of 50 yards put his five arrows into the inner ring of the target in less time than it took me to put my six bullets. Now they have entirely lost the art of archery and likewise the craft of making bows and arrows. It is just as well, perhaps, for in the old days murders were frequent, and the murderers, always escaped."

POLITICALLY SPEAKING

Behold the little busy bee,
And yet—pray ponder on it—
He's not so busy when he's free
As when he's in a bonnet.
—Sam S. Stinson, in the Woman's Home Companion.