

Touching off the powder with the match was only incidental.

Well, it came my turn to do the shooting. So far we hadn't killed any game with it. I saw a bird in the barn lot. Poking the gun barrel through the rails of the fence, I took good aim at that bird and told my brother to apply the match. He struck a match and applied it to the spot, but something was wrong. It did not fire. He struck another but with the same result. He applied the third match but it refused to fire. We were puzzled. It had fired right off the first three or four times. Now it refused to shoot. We had not up to this time learned that gunpowder would not ignite from a flame of fire. It had to be a spark or a coal of fire. It had so happened that the first few times we fired it with such success the match had burned to a coal or cinder before it was applied. Anyway, we were somewhat dismayed that the gun wouldn't fire after applying several matches. The bird had done flown away but we were determined to make the gun shoot. My brother continued to apply matches. At last and alas! the gun did fire but with direful consequences. My brother happened to have his face real close to the tiny hole to which he was applying the match. The match burned to a coal and "Whoow!" My brother jumped back as though he had been shot. One side of his face was burned black. Oh, My! Oh, My! What had happened? Well, he had his face too close to the little opening and some of the pent up powder, when it exploded spewed right back on the side of his face. He was not badly burned, but it looked mighty bad because the gunpowder had blackened his face.

All our fond hopes were blasted. If mother found out we had such a piece of "artillery" she would surely take it away from us and we would never be allowed to play with it again. And we knew if she ever saw that burned and blackened face she would find out what caused it.

We held a somewhat lengthy discussion as to further procedure and at last fell on the following "strategy." Brother would wrap an old rag around that side of his face that was burned, and the balance of his face except enough to enable him to see with one eye. Then he would have the appearance of a "booger." I would become frightened at this horrible looking creature and

would run to mother terrified and plead with her to shield me from him. Our theory was that she would think we were just playing "booger," as she had often seen us play and would think nothing of the old rag about his face.

The scheme worked fine—for awhile. I ran screaming to mother with Van right at my heels. She was working in the kitchen and when we ran in with so much noise accompanying, she was annoyed and said, "You boys get out of here with your noise." She never suspected a thing wrong.

But finally it was dinner time, and as some of us had to wait (some of us usually had to wait), Van and I most cheerfully agreed to wait. We thought if we would wait and eat by ourselves he could keep his booger costume on and would not have to disclose that burned face. All went well until mother came in. Then with a look of disgust she said, "Van, take that old rag off your head!" Oh, Horrors! There was no arguing this thing. Mother nor Dad allowed their children to argue with them. So, off it came. When mother saw the burned and blackened face she was horrified. "Son, what on earth is the matter with your face," she asked.

We boys were not too good to falsify. We had perhaps as much of "Old Adam" in us as any other boys, likely, but we were too wise to lie to mother and dad unless we were absolutely sure it would not be found out on us later. In mother and dad's sight, lying was a terrible offense, wholly inexcusable. It meant a real flogging for us to get caught in a lie.

Well, my poor brother didn't have long to debate in his mind how to answer as she impatiently repeated her demand. So, with no more time to deliberate, he decided to just out with the truth.

As soon as mother learned the cause of this near tragedy, and after she had satisfied herself that his face was not critically burned, she commanded in a stern voice, "Bring that thing to me." Reluctantly my brother brought in the thing that we had so fondly hoped would be to us "a joy forever," and handed it over to mother. "Now, don't ever let me catch you with this thing again," she commanded as she put it up out of our reach.

Alas! The end of a very unhappy episode in a boy's life.