



Boat-Building and Boating

Daniel Carter Beard

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There is a widespread notion that all wood will float on water, and this idea often leads to laughable errors. I know a lot of young backwoods farmers who launched a raft of green oak logs, and were as much astonished to see their craft settle quietly to the bottom of the lake as they would have been to see the leaden sinkers of their fish-lines dance lightly on the surface of the waves. The young fellows used a day's time to discover what they might have learned in a few moments by watching the chips sink when they struck the water as they flew from the skilful blows of their axes. The stream which cuts your trail is not always provided with bridges of fallen trees. It may be a river too deep to ford and too wide to be bridged by a chance log. Of course it is a simple matter to swim, but the weather may be cold and the water still colder; besides this, you will probably be encumbered with a lot of camp equipage—your gun, rod, and camera—none of which will be improved by a plunge in the water. Or it may so happen that you are on the shores of a lake unsupplied with boats, and you have good reasons for supposing that big fish lurk in some particular spot out of reach from the shore. A thousand and one emergencies may arise when a craft of some kind will be not only a great convenience, but almost a necessity. Under these circumstances a Logomaran may be constructed in a very short time which can bear you and your pack safely to the desired goal. In the Rocky, Cascade, and Selkirk Mountains, the lakes and streams have their shores plentifully supplied with "whim sticks," logs of fine dry timber, which the freshets have brought down from the mountain sides and which the rocks and surging torrents have denuded of bark. These whim sticks are of all sizes, and as sound and perfect as kiln-dried logs. Even in the mountains of Pennsylvania, where the lumberman's axe years ago laid waste the primeval forest, where the saw-mills have devoured the second growth, the tie-hunter the third growth, the excelsior-mills and birch-beer factories the saplings, I still find good sound white pine-log whim sticks strewn along the shores of the lakes and streams, timber which is suitable for temporary rafts and logomarans. In the North Woods, where in many localities the original forest is untouched by the devouring pulp-mills, suitable timber is not difficult to find; so let the green wood stand and select a log of dry wood from the shore where the floods or ice have deposited it. Cut it into a convenient length, and with a lever made of a good stout sapling, and a fulcrum of a stone or chunk of wood, pry the log from its resting-place and roll it into the shallow water.

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