Title: In the Wilds of Florida: A Tale of Warfare and Hunting

Author: William Henry Giles Kingston
Illustrator: John Steeple Davis

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W.H.G. Kingston

"In the Wilds of Florida"

Chapter One.

Without a profession—An Irish "squireen"—News from abroad—Uncle Nicholas and his family—Preparations for the voyage—Tim Flanagan—Parting calls—On board the "Liberty"—Our fellow-passengers—Table-talk—A friendly hint—A sail on the starboard bow—Monsieur Lejoillie—Little Paul overboard—Gallantry of Rochford—The lion of the day.

I had just left school, in a very undecided state of mind as to what profession I should select. The honest truth is, that I had no great fancy for one more than for another. I should have preferred that of a gentleman at large, with an independent fortune. But it had been so ordained that I should not possess the latter very satisfactory means of subsistence; and it was necessary, if I wished to support myself like a gentleman, that I should choose some calling by which I could at least obtain an income, supposing that I had not the talent to realise a large fortune.

My father, Captain Michael Kearney, had a small estate, but it was slightly encumbered, like many another in old Ireland; and he had no intention of beggaring my brother and sister in order to benefit me. In a certain sense, it is true, they were provided for. Ellen had married Captain Patrick Maloney of the Rangers, who had, however, little beyond his pay to live on. My younger brother, Barry, had entered the navy; but as he drew fifty pounds a year and occasionally other sums from my father's pocket, it cannot be said that he was off his hands. I also had once thought of becoming a sailor, for the sake of visiting foreign lands; but I had allowed the time to pass, and was now considered too old to go to sea. I then took a fancy for the army; but my father declared that he could not afford to purchase a commission for me, and I had no chance of getting one in any other way. I talked of the law; but when I heard of the dry books I should have to study, and the drier parchments over which I should have to pore, I shuddered at the thought, and hastily abandoned the idea.

My kind aunt, Honor Molloy,—the sister of my mother, who had been dead some years,—pathetically urged me to enter the church, in the hope, as she said, that that would keep me in the right way; but I honestly felt that the church was not my vocation, and that I was much more likely to go the wrong way if I assumed an office for which I was unfit. Then she proposed that I should become a doctor; but I declared that I hated physic, and could never bring myself to drug my fellow-creatures with stuff which I would not take myself. My father offered to try to get me into a government office, though he acknowledged that he had but slight interest with people in authority, and that I might have a long time to wait before I could obtain a satisfactory appointment. He suggested, in the meantime, that I might become a clerk in a mercantile house, and that I might one day become a partner; but that day seemed so very far off in the perspective, that I begged he would not trouble himself about the matter, deciding rather to seek for some government appointment, either at home or abroad.

"Well, Maurice, my boy, you'll become wiser as you grow older, and you'll be glad to accept the first offer made you," remarked my father.

He, however, immediately wrote to Dublin, to the only friend of the family who was likely to render us assistance. This was Councillor Roacharty, who in the course of a few days replied that he would do his best; but that his friend Maurice must put his impatience under lock and key until Ireland had her rights, and Irishmen ruled their green island home. As I confidently hoped that this happy event would soon be an accomplished fact, I was content; but my father was not so well satisfied as I was with the councillor's reply.

Meantime I shot, fished, hunted, and visited our neighbours, and was rapidly adopting the habits and customs of Irish squireens, when one day, returning home from shooting, just before dinner, I found my father deeply engaged in reading a foreign-looking letter. So absorbed was he in its contents that he did not perceive my entrance. Not wishing to disturb him, I retired to get rid of my muddy boots and leggings; and on my return, dinner was on the table. During

the meal he was unusually silent, not even inquiring what sport I had had. Dinner over, he drew his chair to the fire, and I followed his example. Taking the letter I had before seen out of his pocket, he glanced it over, and then looking up at me, he said—

“Maurice, you’ll be after wondering about the contents of this epistle. I have been thinking over it before telling you.”

“I observed that you had received a letter,” I answered. “I hope it contains no bad news.”

“Faith, it is difficult to say whether it’s good or bad,” he replied. “You have heard me speak about your Uncle Nicholas, who went away many years ago to America, but of whose subsequent adventures, or whether he was alive or dead, I had obtained no certain tidings. This letter is from him. He tells me that after knocking about in various parts of the Union, he found his way to Florida, down south, where he married a Spanish lady, Donna Maria Dulce Gallostra, of ancient family, young and beautiful, and, what was of no small consequence, considering his own financial condition, the owner of a fine estate. She has blessed him with three children,—two daughters, Rita and Juanita, and a son, Carlos: the former take after him, and are regular Irish girls, fair and pretty, fond of riding, fishing, and boating, full of life and spirits; while the boy, Carlos, takes after his mother, being a dark-eyed, handsome little chap, but restive as an unbroken colt, and passionate in the extreme when roused,—for his mother has humoured and spoiled him until she has lost all control over the young rascal, so that he fancies he can rule the roost better than his parents. Your uncle describes the country as being in a somewhat disturbed condition. The Indians are greatly irritated, and even threaten the destruction of the whites, in consequence of the intention of the United States Government to drive them out of the country across the Mississippi. His own health has lately been giving way, and he is very anxious as to what would become of his wife and daughters in the event of his death. His wife, Donna Maria, he says, though a charming woman, has very little notion how to manage the estate, and his son is too young to help her, or to take care of himself; while his daughters, delightful young creatures as they are, do not appear to possess the requisite qualifications. Having lately seen my name in an Irish newspaper, and knowing from this that I had come back to the old place, he determined to write to me, to implore me, by the brotherly affection which always existed between us when we were together, to come out and take charge of his daughters, whom he proposes to leave to my care in his will. Carlos will, on the death of his mother, inherit the Florida estate, unless in the meantime the boy succumbs, which my brother fears is not improbable. In that case his daughters would come into possession of the property; but as it is not in a part of the country in which it is desirable that they should live, he has arranged for the sale of the estate on the death of their mother. The girls have had three or four years’ schooling in Philadelphia, and have only lately returned to the south. Although they appear at present to enjoy the untrammelled life they lead, he thinks they will soon grow tired of it, and wish for a more civilised state of existence. He appeals to me so earnestly that I am unwilling to refuse his request; and he urges me to cross the Atlantic immediately, if I desire to be of service to him before he dies.”

“Sure then, father, what could be easier than to take me with you!” I exclaimed. “I would help you, and look after my cousins; and I daresay Carlos and I would get on together very well. Besides, I should like to see Florida. I have heard something about the country—that there is no end of game and sport of all sorts to be had in it.”

“Bless my heart, I never thought of that!” exclaimed my father. “Well, as it may be some time before you can possibly obtain employment, perhaps you could not do better than accompany me. There will be the additional expense; but your uncle generously offers to pay the cost of my voyage, and I shall see what funds I can raise. We’ll leave old Molly in charge of the place till we return, so that there will not be the expense of housekeeping. As my brother urges me to come without delay, we will forthwith set about our preparations. I have been too long in a marching regiment to require many hours for getting ready.”

I was delighted that my father had agreed to my proposal, and that he could not think of any other way to dispose of me. We talked the matter over until we settled that we should start for Dublin the next day if possible, and thence crossing to Liverpool, look out there for a vessel bound for one of the southern ports of the United States,—either Charleston or Savannah.

As soon as we had finished our talk, I jumped up and set about getting our traps in order.

“You’re the boy not to let the grass grow under your feet,” observed my father, well pleased at my alacrity.

Our first care was to look over our guns and sporting gear; the next, to put up such clothing as we thought we should require. My father then sent off for his agent; and I, meantime, wrote by his direction several letters of business.

While I was thus engaged, Tim Flanagan—an old follower of my father, who had served in his regiment, and on getting his discharge had come to live with us, uniting the offices of butler, groom, and general factotum—made his appearance, I having told him to come in as soon as his work was over.

“Tim, I’m thinking of running across to America for a few weeks, or months it may be, with Maurice here. I have not quite made up my mind how to find you employment. In the meantime, Molly will look after the house, and Dan Rafferty will mind the farm.”

“Sure, if your honour’s going to foreign lands, you wouldn’t be afther leavin’ me behind?” interrupted Tim. “An’ the young masther going away too! Though there might be work enough for me, I had much rather be followin’ you, capt’n, whether it’s fighting or hunting you’d be afther. It isn’t wages I want; so just let it be settled, if you plase, that I go with you and the young masther. I’ve heard say that there are Indians, rattlesnakes, and panthers, and all sorts of wild beasts out in them parts, an’ he’ll be wantin’ a steady man to be at hand to help him; and sure Tim Flanagan’s the right person to be following his masther’s son. So just say the word, capt’n dear, an’ I’ll be ready to march the moment I get the route.”

To my infinite satisfaction, my father answered, “If you wish it, Tim, you shall accompany us. In case anything should happen to me, I should be glad to think that Maurice had some one ready to stand by his side; and there’s no human

being to whom I would so readily intrust him as to you."

"It's mighty thankful I am to ye, capt'n; an' we'll be afther seeing about the baggage, and getting all things ready for the march."

Molly came in after Tim, and frequently applied her apron to her eyes, as my father went on to describe his plans. She was distressed at hearing of the illness of Master Nicholas, as she called my uncle, and at the thought of our going away.

"It's your honour and Mr Maurice going off that grieves me," she said. "Sure, if you must go, you must. I'll not let the house go to ruin for want of dusting and cleaning, and looking afther the poultry and the pigs, and Dan Rafferty and the boys!"

Molly was much comforted when my father assured her that he could intrust the place to her care with perfect confidence.

In pretty good spirits she set to work to overhaul our wardrobe, and prepare everything for packing. There was little sleep for any of us that night; and the next morning, as soon as my father had made certain necessary arrangements with Mr Nolan, the attorney, his agent, we started for Dublin by Bianconi's car, which passed our gate. Having settled some money matters, we visited Councillor Roacharty, who, with a bland smile, assured me that he would not forget my wishes during my absence. We then went on to Belfast, whence we crossed to Liverpool. Here, on our arrival, we immediately called on various shipping agents, and, much to our satisfaction, found that a vessel which was to sail that evening for Savannah had cabin accommodation for two or three additional passengers. A few hours after, we found ourselves again afloat on board the good ship *Liberty*, of four hundred tons, belonging to Liverpool, gliding down the Mersey with a fair breeze, which, we hoped, would carry us quickly across the Atlantic.

My father and Tim, who were old voyagers, lost no time in making themselves at home—the former with the captain, mates, and cabin passengers; the latter with the seamen and his companions in the steerage.

We had an assemblage of various nationalities. Almost every one on board was interested to some extent in the growth of cotton, the chief produce of Georgia, to the principal port of which we were bound. While we sat round the table at supper, the relative values of sea-island cotton and upland cotton, and the best modes of manufacturing sugar and tobacco, were the general subjects of conversation; but as I knew no more about these articles than I did of the cultivation of cloves and nutmegs, I could only sit and listen: though I was able to note the remarks of others, and tried to gain some idea of the character of the speakers. Two other persons were at first as silent as myself. One of them at length began to ask a few questions, speaking with a strong French accent. He appeared far more interested in what was said than the other. I heard him addressed as Monsieur Lejoillie. On inquiring about him from the gentleman who sat next me, he replied—

"What! don't you know him? If you had seen his luggage coming on board you would have guessed—cases of all sorts, mostly empty, except a few containing instruments and bottles. He is a great naturalist,—and, I may add, linguist, for I don't know how many languages he speaks. Not equal to our own Audubon, I guess, but a man of wonderful talent, notwithstanding. But, to confess the truth, I am not very well versed in the matters in which he excels."

This information impressed me with a due respect for Monsieur Lejoillie, and I hoped to become better acquainted with him before long.

A remark made by the hitherto silent personage on the subject of slavery, which caused many of the party to prick up their ears and cast angry looks at the speaker, showed me that he was a fellow-countryman.

I heard Monsieur Lejoillie say to him, in a low voice, "Hush, my young friend! Liberty, equality, and fraternity may be very fine things to talk about in the Old World; for being incompatible with our advanced state of civilisation, people can there afford to laugh at such notions. It is quite a different thing in the New World, where hostile races are brought close together; and I would advise you not to give expression to your opinions except among intimate friends, or they may prove inconvenient, if not dangerous to you."

"My heart burns with indignation when I think of the wrongs inflicted on those noble red men, the rightful inheritors of the soil, and on the down-trodden negroes, dragged from their native land to become the helpless slaves of arbitrary tyrants," answered the other.

"Hush, hush, my friend!" again repeated Monsieur Lejoillie. "Such words, just as they may be, are not suited to the atmosphere of the land for which we are bound. I entreat you not to let them pass your lips in mixed society, such as is here assembled."

Fortunately at this moment a warm discussion engaged the attention of most of the persons at table, who failed to hear the remarks made by my countryman, or the friendly advice given him by the naturalist. I saw that an old gentleman was seated near the former, a young lady only intervening. The old gentleman, who was listening to what was said, cast a look more of pity than of anger at the young man, but did not speak. The lady smiled, and said in a pleasant, sweet voice, "I would counsel you, Mr Rochford, to follow the advice of Monsieur Lejoillie. There are some on board who would resent such remarks as you have made. You must pass some time among us before you can form a correct opinion as to the way the Indians or the slaves are treated. You may discover that the red men are not quite the heroes you suppose, and that the negroes are far better off with us than they would be in their own country."

"Faith! I cannot but desire to be guided by so fair an adviser," answered Rochford, in a rich Irish brogue, bowing as he spoke.

The next day, as we were sailing down the Channel, I spoke to my countryman, Maulins Rochford—for such I learned was his name—not letting him understand that I had overheard his remarks on the previous evening. When he found that I was a countryman, he became frank and communicative. He was two or three years older than myself. His appearance and manner were prepossessing, and we at once became intimate. He had lately, by the death of his parents, come into a small property; but instead of spending his time idly at home in hunting and shooting, as many in his position do, he was anxious to be of use to his fellow-creatures. Having but a limited knowledge of the subject, and no one to consult, he had taken it into his head that he might aid the red men in retaining their rights, and the slave population in obtaining theirs. He was warm-hearted and generous, and from his manner, I had little doubt, as brave as steel. By many he would have been looked upon as a crazy enthusiast or a dangerous character, for whom the walls of a prison or a mad-house would prove the safest abode. He, however, had the discretion to follow the advice he had received, and did not again in public broach the subject of Indian rights or the iniquity of slavery. They were, however, common subjects of conversation between us, and he almost won me over to his opinions. What he intended to do he did not say. Indeed, I found that he had no very definite plan of proceeding. Had I been by myself, I do not know how I might have acted, but I fortunately did not commit myself by promising to aid him in any of his schemes.

I found the old gentleman I have spoken of was Mr Archelaus Shurtleff, a judge, whose residence was in Florida. The young lady, whom I at first supposed to be his daughter, was his wife. They had but one child, called Paul, a fine little fellow four or five years old, who happened to be with his black nurse in their cabin when I first saw them, and hence I did not discover my mistake until the next day. The kind old gentleman told my father and myself that he should be very happy to see us at his house, which was not far from that of my Uncle Nicholas, with whom he was well acquainted. My father replied that he would gladly pay him a visit, provided the state of his brother’s health and spirits would allow him to do so.

“Sorry to hear that our friend Nicholas is ill,” said the judge. “As to his spirits, he is over anxious about the state of the country. He is always apprehending an attack from the red men. It is a mistaken fancy of his. They’ll never dare to interfere with the settlers. They know too well the fearful retribution that would overtake them.”

The worthy judge and his wife, who appeared to have taken a liking for Rochford, had frequent conversations with him, and he told me that they had given him an invitation to their home, which he had gladly accepted.

“I hope that we shall meet there,” I observed. “At all events, as we shall not be far away from each other, we may have some sport together, and kill no end of crocodiles, bears, deer, and other wild beasts and birds of all sorts.”

I had expected that in crossing the Atlantic we should have encountered at least a gale or two of wind, and witnessed the sea foaming and roaring and running mountains high. Instead of this, with the exception of a little tossing and pitching for a week or two, we ran along over a smooth ocean, generally with a fair wind and delightful weather. Occasionally, when we were becalmed, the sun shone down on our heads, and sent us in search of every shady spot that could be found. Most of our companions were accustomed to a hotter atmosphere, which they told us we should find when we got on shore; but even they kept out of the rays of the sun as much as possible. When a breeze sprang up, we glided along with studding-sails on either side at the rate of some seven or eight knots an hour, and the look-out forward shouted, “A sail on the starboard bow!”

The captain remarked that, from the way she was standing, she would pass close to us. Most of the passengers on deck hurried across to look at the stranger. Rochford, who was seated on a coil of rope writing in his note-book, continued his occupation without moving.

Lejoillie, who had just come from the cuddy, sauntered along the deck towards him.

“What, my friend, are you inditing sonnets to your lady’s eyebrow, or composing your first speech as president of your model republic?” he said in his bantering way.

LEJOILLIE BANTERING ROCHFORD.

“Whatever I am about, I am not fond of being interrupted,” answered Rochford, looking up with a more angry glance than I had yet seen on his countenance.

“My dear friend,” exclaimed Lejoillie, taking his hands out of his pockets and stepping forward, “I am sincerely sorry, and beg your pardon. I thought you would like to see yonder fine ship as she passes us. Happily the world is at peace, or I should fear she was an enemy, and had some intention of attacking the *Liberty*; neither can she be a pirate, as our captain does not endeavour to keep out of her way.”

Rochford, quickly appeased, rose to look at the stranger. Instead, however, of crossing to where the rest of the passengers were standing, I saw him dart aft towards one of the ports, all of which had been left open to admit of a free current of air. At the same time, little Paul’s black nurse, Rosa, uttering a wild shriek, fell to the deck. I guessed what had happened. The child had escaped from her arms, and running heedlessly away, had fallen overboard through the port. Rochford, who had seen the occurrence, without stopping for one instant, plunged in after him. I felt inclined to follow, but I distrusted my own powers of swimming. I had, however, what was of far more use, presence of mind to run aft and drop a grating, which was fortunately at hand, over the side, and shout out, at the top of my voice, “Man overboard!”

While some ladies gathered round the poor mother, who was almost frantic with grief, and others attended to the nurse, who had gone off in a swoon, the captain issued the necessary orders for shortening sail; for, with all the flying-kites set, it was impossible, until the canvas was taken off the ship, to bring her up to the wind.

The judge, in the meantime, retained his calmness and presence of mind in a wonderful manner. My father, Lejoillie, Tim Flanagan, and two or three others, made preparations, under the superintendence of the second mate, for lowering a boat, every man of the crew being required to shorten sail. The helm was put down, the yards braced up, and the ship quickly brought to the wind. I was going to assist in lowering the boat, when the captain called me aft, and told me to keep an eye on Mr Rochford and the child.

Not having stopped to throw off his clothes, the moment he reached the water he struck out towards the boy, who had just risen after his first plunge: his head, I saw, was above the surface, and he had unconsciously turned on his back, stretching out his little arms for help. In another instant Rochford got up, and holding the child’s face well out of the water, was evidently trying to dispel his fears; then looking round, he saw the grating, towards which he at once swam, and placed the child upon it. All this time the ship was, of course, running away from the spot, and gradually he and his little charge became less and less distinct. I saw, however, that he was holding on to the grating, which, I was thankful to see, perfectly supported the child. A very long time seemed to elapse before I heard the order to put the helm down, and I even fancied that the ship was running away altogether from where little Paul and Rochford were floating. But what was my horror just then to see a black fin come gliding by. On the previous day we had passed several huge monsters of the deep. What if the shark should discover our fellow-passenger! I longed to be able to shout out to him to keep his legs moving; but he could not have heard me, even if I had shouted ever so loudly, and by so doing I should have still further alarmed the judge and his poor wife. Had Rochford been seized, there would have been little hope of the child escaping.

The moment the ship was hove-to, having pointed out to the captain the exact position of those in the water, and being unable to restrain my eagerness, I sprang forward, and just had time to glide down the falls into the boat, which, under the charge of the mate, pulled by her crew, was shoving off.

“Glad you have come, sir,” said the mate; “you can nurse the child when we get him into the boat.”

“If we do,” I said, and I pointed with a thrill of horror to the fin of the shark as its wicked eye glanced up at us. The fear seized me that it might follow the boat and discover Rochford. “I wish I had a pistol to shoot it!” I exclaimed.

Without answering, the mate seized the after oar and struck with all his force, the edge of the blade entering the water at the shark's back.

The brute disappeared, and, I trusted, had sunk far down into the depths of the ocean. Away we pulled as hard as the men could lay their backs to the oars, the appearance of the shark making them still more eager to get up to the assistance of the brave young man and the child. To my joy I saw, as I got closer, that little Paul was resting securely on the grating, while Rochford was striking out with his feet, and one of his hands being still at liberty.

"Bear a hand, friends!" he cried out. "Take the child on board first, and the sooner you help me in I'll be obliged to you. There are some ugly brutes cruising about here who have a mighty fancy for my legs."

The boat approached the grating. I leaned over to grasp the little boy as soon as I could reach him, and as I did so I heard the mate tell the men to keep striking the water with their oars.

We soon had Paul safe. Not until then would Rochford allow the crew to help him on board. He had a providential escape as it was, for scarcely were his feet well over the gunwale, when the brute of a shark shoved its hideous snout above the surface, getting, however, an ugly prick in the nose for his pains from a boat-hook.

Rochford was well-nigh exhausted; but owing to his courage and presence of mind, the child appeared very little the worse for its plunge. What would have been his fate, however, had the monster of a shark we saw been near at hand at the moment he fell overboard!

We were speedily alongside, and I had the satisfaction of handing the little boy to his parents. The poor mother was about to thank me, supposing that I had been the means of saving him; but I pointed to Rochford, who stood dripping wet on deck, as the man who had performed the gallant act.

The judge wrung his hand. "I thank you, sir! I thank you!" he exclaimed.

The mother burst into tears as she held the child to her heart; then taking Rochford's hand, she pressed it to her lips. The nurse, seeing the child was saved, quickly recovered, and exhibited her gratitude in even a more demonstrative way than her master and mistress.

I came in for a share of their thanks when they were informed that I had thrown the grating overboard which had contributed so much to save the lives both of the little boy and our friend.

Rochford having assured those who had collected round him to pay compliments, that he had really done nothing to deserve all the fine things that were said, dived below to change his wet garments. In a short time afterwards he appeared on deck as if nothing particular had happened.

As may be supposed, he became a greater favourite than ever with the judge and his wife; and even some of those who had before looked at him askance, acknowledged that he was a very fine fellow.

The ship was again put before the wind, and away she stood on her westward course.

Among those who looked upon Rochford as a hero was Tim Flanagan, who regarded his fellow-countryman with unbounded admiration, and declared himself ready to go through fire and water to serve him. Lejoillie had also taken a great liking to him, and they frequently walked the deck together, engaged in earnest conversation. Following the Frenchman's advice, Rochford had been very careful not again to express his political opinions in public, though he did not hesitate to talk freely to me, as I have no doubt he did to the naturalist.

He was thus generally liked, and with the ladies, especially, he became a great favourite. No one, indeed, would have considered him a dangerous character, if one had seen him, whenever he could get little Paul out of the black nurse's arms, carrying the child about and playing with him on deck, but taking very good care that he should not again slip through a port.

The weather continued brilliant; and the numerous sea-birds, which flitted high in the air or hovered round the ship, told us that we were nearing the end of our voyage.

Chapter Two.

First sight of land—On board the "Great Alexander"—Scissor-bills—Flying-fish—Off Amelia Island—Something about Florida—Indian treaties—Rochford's desire to serve the Red Men—Entrance to Saint John River—The Hazard Lighthouse—A good cure for intemperance—Saint John Bluff—A sad history—A change of weather—The storm—A Florida swamp—A successful hunt—Surprised by Indians—Parting with our new friends.

Early one morning I was taking a walk on deck with Rochford, when we heard a cry aloft of "Land! land!"

"Ere long, then, I shall have an opportunity of commencing the glorious task I have undertaken!" murmured my companion.

As he did not exactly address me, I made no reply. We immediately went up the fore-rigging, but could only see a long faint line, distinguished from the ocean and the sky by the difference of tint. It was the coast of Georgia, the eastern portion of which is but slightly elevated above the water, though a hilly region exists in the northern part of the State. It was not till some hours afterwards, when we were approaching the mouth of the river Savannah, that we could see the land clearly from the deck.

The passengers having packed up their personal property in their portmanteaus and carpet-bags, ready for landing, we collected on the poop. As I stood near the judge and his wife, who were seated on the skylight, their little boy, guarded watchfully by black Rosa, playing near them, I heard the former say to Rochford that, as he intended to charter a schooner to convey himself and family up the Saint John River, he begged to have the pleasure of Rochford's company on board.

"I purpose going on to Florida with Captain Kearney and his son and Monsieur Lejoillie; and as I cannot desert them, I regret that I am unable to take advantage of your kind offer," was the answer.

"Get them to come with us then," said the judge. "They can, if they wish it, pay a proper proportion of the expenses of the voyage; but I cannot allow you to do so. You must come under my wing, and you can join your friend Lejoillie whenever he starts on his proposed expedition in search of the wonders of our flowery land."

When the judge made the offer to my father and Lejoillie, they at once accepted it, both being anxious to reach Florida with as little delay as possible.

We ran up the river until we anchored, seventeen miles from its mouth, off the city of Savannah, built on a sandy expanse, and elevated about forty feet above the level of the tide. I have little to say about the city, except that it struck me as a fine place, many of the streets being wide and bordered with trees, and that it contains numerous churches, hospitals, stores, and other public buildings.

On landing, the judge immediately engaged a schooner, known by the high-sounding name of the *Great Alexander*. Her skipper's name was Ebenezer Crump. The craft was not unlike an Irish "hooker;" her great beam showed that she was likely to carry her canvas well. That very evening the judge and his family, my father, Tim, and I, accompanied by Rochford and Lejoillie, went on board, and dropped down the river with the tide, ready to sail the following morning.

SCISSOR-BILLS FISHING.

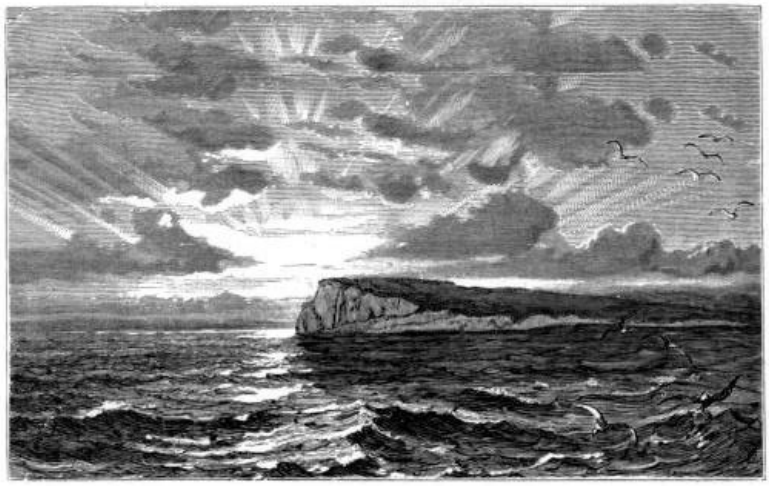
We had plenty to amuse us. Crossing the bar at daybreak with a fair breeze, we ran along outside the line of islands which fringe the coast of Georgia, and which are devoted to the cultivation of "sea-island cotton." The water teemed with fish, and birds innumerable came flying round us. The most remarkable of the latter were the scissor-bills, with black plumage, which went skimming along the surface, scooping up with their long lower mandible any unwary mollusc or fish of small size which came within their reach, and uttering every instant loud and discordant cries. Lejoillie told us that they were of the gull tribe, about twenty inches in length. The peculiarity of their beak consists in the lower mandible being considerably longer than the other into which it shuts. It is of an orange-red at the base, and deepens into black at the tip. To prevent the water rushing into its throat as it skims the surface with its beak, the bird is provided with a very small gullet. When unable to procure food by the method we saw it employing, Lejoillie said that it frequents the sea-shore as the tide is ebbing, where, finding mollusca with open valves, it inserts the lower mandible of its beak so as to prevent the shell from shutting; and then dashing it down on a rock, breaks it, and devours the inhabitant.

We frequently caught sight, too, of the frigate-bird, with its long forked tail sweeping behind as it came swooping down on its prey, which its keen eyes enable it to see from afar.

More curious to those who, like myself, have never been in the tropics, were the coveys of flying-fish, which rose out of the water, and even darted to great distances before their fins became dry and they fell again into their native element. Lejoillie told us that there were two species, one much smaller than the other. The larger are somewhat like red gurnards, and are said to prey on their smaller cousins, which are also pursued by bonitos, albicores, and dolphins of various species, as well as by numerous sea-birds. Several times we saw a large covey of the smaller kind rise above the surface, followed closely by another of the larger species, when at the same moment a dozen sea-birds would descend, and, quick as lightning, a dolphin would dart by, intent on sharing the prey. Looking down through the clear blue water, we could see the beautiful dorados, of pure turquoise hue, as they darted here and there, keeping away from the vessel while they gambolled round her.

We kept so close in-shore, that we could sometimes through our glasses distinguish the scissor-bills standing on the beach, and, in the distance, the buildings attached to the long staple cotton plantations for which the low islands are celebrated.

At length we came in sight of a line of sand-hills, with palmetto, pine, and live-oak growing at their summits, while below was a glittering beach, stretching away to the south; and close in front, low banks, over which the white-crested breakers dashed with a fury which made us careful not to get amongst them. To the south was a headland, which our skipper informed us was the north end of Amelia Island. Close to the island was a river of the same name, which united with another stream, the Saint Mary; they together made their way over a bar into the ocean. Crossing the bar, we passed close under the old Spanish Fort Fernandina, and shortly after brought up off a modern city called after the fort, consisting of half a dozen huts. We were now actually in Florida.



AMELIA ISLAND.

Lejoillie shrugged his shoulders, Rochford looked very blank, and I felt not a little disappointed; until the judge told us that we had only reached the most northern extremity of the country. The sight of what might some day become a thriving place did not afford us a favourable specimen of the scenery of Florida. Though there was not much to admire in the city itself, we saw several country houses surrounded by trees; but we were told that the sea-beach on the eastern side of the island, to the extent of thirty miles, is beautifully level, and so hard as to afford a delightful drive or ride.

The schooner having discharged her cargo, we again sailed, steering our course for the mouth of the Saint John River, twenty miles off.

As many of those who read my journal may be unacquainted with Florida, they may like to have a short description of the country. First, as to how it came to be called Florida. It was so named, it is said, by the Spaniard, Ponce de Leon, the first European who landed on its shores on Palm Sunday, 1513, either in honour of the day—Pasqua Florida—or because, being struck by the number and beauty of the flowers which covered the ground, he denominated it Terra Florida, or the Flowery Land. In shape it somewhat resembles a boot. The northern portion, joined to Georgia, is about three hundred miles from east to west; while the rest of the peninsula, which may be likened to the leg, extending from the Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico, is about one hundred miles across. On both shores are numerous islands and sand-banks. There are neither mountains nor hills even, the greater part of the country rising but a few feet above the level of the sea. It contains, however, a great many lakes and a few rivers. The largest of the latter—the Saint John River—rises far away in the south, frequently expanding during the early part of its course into broad lakes, and in some places closely approaching the Atlantic coast. The southern point of Florida reaches to within twenty-five degrees of the equator, so that the vegetation is of a tropical character. Alligators swarm in the streams and pools; flowering shrubs of rare beauty clothe the banks of every river; and birds innumerable inhabit the forests, lakes, islets sand-banks, and sea-coast.

At the time I speak of there were several forts, with small garrisons, scattered here and there, and a few huts and stores in their neighbourhood; but the white settlers generally were located on the Atlantic coast or on the banks of the Saint John; while over the rest of the country the Seminoles, a detached tribe of the Creeks, who inhabited Georgia, roamed at large.

“A short time ago,” observed the judge, “the State of Georgia resolved to compel the Cherokees, the most civilised and most powerful of the Indian tribes, to abandon their territories, and remove to the western side of the Mississippi. Though they had written laws and an established government, the legislature of Georgia refused to allow them the rights of citizens, and passed a law, declaring ‘that no Indian, or descendant of an Indian, residing within the Creek or Cherokee nations of Indians, shall be deemed a competent witness or party to any suit or in any court where a white man is defendant.’

“Notwithstanding this, the Cherokees still determined to remain on the land of their fathers; but when they found that the whole of the white settlers of Georgia were arrayed against them, knowing that ultimately they would be compelled to succumb, they accepted the offers of government, and agreed, provided they were allowed time, to part with their lands and to remove to the territories allotted to them. The Creeks, then a numerous tribe inhabiting the western portion of Georgia, followed the example of the Cherokees, and consented to remove westward, although great opposition was offered by many of the chiefs to this treaty with the white men.

“The government of the United States, having succeeded with these two tribes, came to the resolution to deal with the Seminoles in the same manner, and had already issued a notice to their chiefs, ordering them to make preparations for migrating westward.

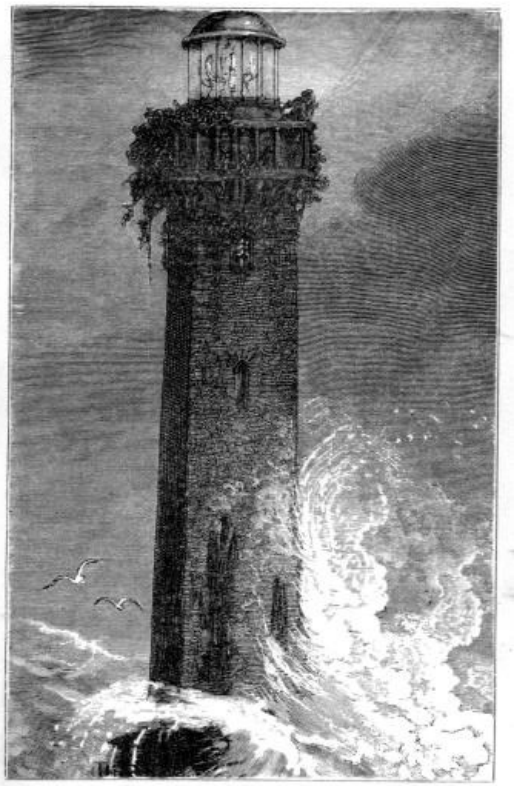
“Such was the state of the country at the time of which I am speaking.”

Rochford listened to the account given us by the judge, of which the above is only a brief outline. I observed his eyes flash, and the colour mount to his cheeks, but he restrained his feelings sufficiently to keep silence.

“I am more determined than ever to visit these ill-treated Indians, and endeavour, by some means or other, to serve them,” he said to me afterwards, as we stood together at a distance from the rest of the party.

“Let me know when you go,” I said; “for I should like to visit the red men in their native wilds, and learn their ways and customs.”

“I will not fail if I have an opportunity,” he answered. As Lejoillie joined us just then, he made no further remark.



THE LIGHTHOUSE.

In about three hours we were opposite some sand-hills and a lighthouse which mark the entrance to Saint John River; but as a long line of foam-covered breakers was rolling over the bar, our skipper ordered the sheets to be hauled aft, and we stood off, waiting until the tide had risen and we could pass with safety.

We had plenty of time to examine the lighthouse, which appeared to be entirely surrounded by the foaming sea. Many a gale it had stood, and being composed of solid masonry, it seemed capable of standing many more. Through our glasses we could distinguish a female form standing on the gallery. We inquired of the skipper who she was.

“She is the keeper’s wife; they say she’s not altogether right in her mind, so he brought her there, that she might be out of harm’s way. My idea is, she was fond of the bottle; but as she’s kept on short allowance out there, she is not likely to be the worse for liquor.”

“Poor creature! what a terrible existence for her, to be compelled to live from month to month surrounded by water, without seeing any one except her husband and his mate!” observed the judge’s wife.

“To my mind, marm, she’s better off up there out of the way of temptation than she would be if left at home alone hankering after the grog bottle. Maybe by the time she gets ashore she’ll be cured, and happier than she was before,” observed the skipper.

After making several tacks in sight of the lighthouse, we again kept before the wind, and the skipper taking the helm, we dashed on boldly towards the line of foaming breakers. The water bubbled and hissed around us, sometimes leaping up and falling with a splash on our deck. The schooner sailed on, and in a few minutes we were gliding calmly up the Saint John River, here a mile broad. We kept to the south shore for some time, till we came to a cliff some twenty feet in height, covered at the summit with palmetto, pine, and cedar.

Lejoillie inquired of the skipper the name of the cliff, and was told it was called Saint John Bluff; upon which he looked at it with great interest.

“Ah! I thought so,” he said; “it is the scene of the death of many of my compatriots. Have you not heard the story?”

“No,” I replied; “I thought the Spaniards were the only Europeans who held possession of the country until it was taken from them by the English, and being afterwards restored, was sold to the United States.”

“Ah! but I speak of some centuries ago, as far back as the year 1562. The brave Admiral Coligny wishing to found a settlement in the New World, where his co-religionists might be freed from the persecutions to which they were subjected, sent out a stout Breton navigator, Jean Ribaut, to search for a suitable spot.

“Entering the Saint John River, he fixed on yonder bluff, and, taking possession of it in the name of the King of France, he erected a stone to mark the site, and returned home with a favourable report. In a short time three ships were got ready to convey a large party of colonists, under the command of a Huguenot gentleman, Réné de Laudônière. On their arrival in the river, the Huguenots built a fort, which they called Fort Caroline, and strengthened it by stockades, behind which they might be able to defend themselves against the Indians, who, ill-treated by the Spaniards, had learned to look upon all white men as their enemies.

“For many months the colonists were ill supplied with provisions, but hoping to receive them from home, they struggled on, though closely surrounded by hostile natives. At first they endeavoured to win over the red men; but, pressed by hunger, they made prisoners of some, whom they detained as hostages, threatening them with punishment if food were not brought to the camp. The Indians, resenting this treatment, informed the Spaniards of the state of the French settlement, when Pedro de Menendez, who was engaged in the colonisation of the West Indies, landed on the coast, some miles south of the River Saint John, at the head of a large band of ruffian troops. Guided by a party of the treacherous Indians, he and his band made their way through the forests, and fell suddenly, sword in hand, on the almost defenceless colonists. Not a human being who could be overtaken was allowed to escape; men, women, and children were ruthlessly slaughtered by Menendez and his savage followers. When the work was done, he set up a stone, on which he caused to be engraved, ‘Not to Frenchmen, but to Lutherans and heretics.’ Laudônière, with a small party of followers, had been outside the fort when it was attacked. Getting down to the shore, they made their way on board a ship, one of a small squadron, under the command of Jean Ribaut, which had just arrived with new settlers and fresh provisions for the colony. The ship on board which the gallant Breton sailed had not reached the mouth of the river, but, encountering a storm, it had been thrown on shore some leagues farther to the south. Menendez, on hearing of this, immediately marched in search of the shipwrecked crew, numbering nearly one hundred men. Ribaut, on finding that Fort Caroline had fallen, agreed to surrender under a solemn promise from Menendez that his life and that of his companions would be spared. But no sooner had Ribaut and his party laid down their arms than they were set upon by the Spaniards, and slaughtered to a man. When Laudônière and the surviving colonists returned to France and told their sad tale, most of their countrymen only shrugged their shoulders, declaring that it was a fate Huguenots well merited, and the government declined to take any steps to punish the murderers.

“The history of the cruel act, however, inspired a Breton gentleman, Dominic de Gourgue, with the desire of avenging the outrage committed on his co-religionists. He soon collected round him a small body of friends animated by his spirit; but as the government would have put a stop to the expedition, they kept it a secret, giving out when they sailed that they were bound for the coast of Africa.

“Menendez had, in the meantime, rebuilt Fort Caroline, and established a colony on the spot. On the arrival of De Gourgue in Florida, he made friends with some Indians, who, having been cruelly treated by the Spaniards, gladly welcomed him. Guided by his Indian friends, he made his way through the forests and swamps, just as Menendez had done three years before. The French, rushing on, surprised the fort, and put every Spaniard within it to the sword. This act of retribution accomplished, De Gourgue erected a monument, on which he inscribed the words, ‘Not to Spaniards, but to robbers and murderers.’ He then set sail for France, where he arrived in safety.

“Since that day my countrymen have made no attempt to colonise the country; and from the view we have had of it hitherto, I consider they have acted wisely.”

I thought Monsieur Lejoillie’s account very interesting; but I have since reflected that although De Gourgue’s act of vengeance was sanctioned by the opinions of those days, it was utterly at variance with the spirit which should animate Christians, who profess to be guided by the precepts of the gospel.

After this the Spaniards made no attempt to rebuild Fort Caroline; and Saint Augustine, which was founded shortly after it some thirty miles farther south on the east coast, may therefore be considered the most ancient city on the American continent.

Not a vestige remains of Fort Caroline, which, probably being built of wood, soon fell into decay.

We continued our course west, up the broad river,—which has the appearance of an estuary, the country being flat and wooded on either side,—until, rounding a point, we began to steer due south, in the direction whence the river takes its rise, three hundred miles or so away.

Passing Cowford, near which now stands the very flourishing town of Jacksonville, then not in existence, we continued our course up the stream, here between two and three miles wide. We could see but little vegetation on the banks; but as we neared the shore, we saw that they were covered with forests of pine, live-oak, magnolia, and laurel, with occasional cypress swamps in the lower ground. The current was so sluggish that it impeded us very little; and as we made good way, the judge expressed a hope that we should reach his house—Roseville—early the next day. My uncle’s estate was only a few miles farther on, and the judge invited us to go on shore at his house, and to proceed there by land; but as my father was anxious to see his brother, he thanked the judge, and got the skipper to undertake to convey us thus far in the schooner, which was afterwards to go on to Bluespring, the most southern settlement then existing on the river.

As night approached, the weather suddenly changed, dark clouds gathering in the sky. The thunder roared, the lightning flashed, and the wind blew with a force which threatened to drive the schooner on the tree-fringed shore. We shortened sail, and endeavoured to gain the eastern bank, where we might have anchored in comparative safety. The generally calm surface of the river was broken into foaming seas, which dashed up over us, while the schooner heeled over to the blast. Sometimes I thought that our voyage would end in our being carried to the bottom to become the food of alligators. Before, however, so undesirable a catastrophe happened, our skipper bore up and ran for a creek on the western shore, with the navigation of which he was fortunately acquainted. After tearing along for a few minutes before the wind, we saw by the fast waning light an opening in the trees, towards which we steered,

the branches almost catching our rigging. After lowering every stitch of canvas, we ran on a short time longer, and, rounding a point, brought up in what had the appearance of a lagoon, under the lee of some tall trees. Darkness suddenly came down upon us,—such darkness as I had never before witnessed, making the flashes of lightning which darted through the air, and crackled among the cypress-trees, appear still more vivid. The thunder crashed louder than ever; the wind roared and howled through the forest. The judge's wife sat in her cabin, holding her boy in her arms and trying to quiet his alarm, while she herself retained her composure. Black Rosa, however, looked dreadfully frightened, and, crouching at the feet of her mistress, hid her eyes whenever a louder crash of thunder was heard.

We at length lay down, wrapped in our cloaks, in different parts of the vessel—on the top of the cargo, or wherever we could find room to stretch our legs—leaving the little cabin to the judge and his family. But what with cockroaches crawling over us, and the mosquitoes buzzing round our ears and running their sharp stings into our flesh, sleep appeared out of the question. However, I at length did close my eyes.

When I awoke I went on deck. The storm had passed away. Not a breath of air ruffled the surface of the lagoon, or stirred the boughs of the surrounding trees,—among which were cypresses, live-oak, water-oak, the cabbage-palm, and many others, festooned with wreaths of the gorgeous trumpet-flower of crimson hue, wild-vines, and parasites innumerable; while a short way off I could distinguish a meadow of tall grass or reeds a dozen feet in height at least. All nature seemed alive. Numberless birds, many of large size, flew through the air or waded on the banks. Among them were the black and white wood-ibis, which appeared in large flocks from among the branches of the trees; there were blue herons, snow-herons, pelicans, and cranes. Ever and anon an osprey could be seen darting into the water, to rise with a fish in his claws, which he was quickly compelled by the baldheaded eagle to drop. This true pirate of the air, soaring above on the look-out to deprive the weaker bird of its prey, generally seized it before it reached the water. Here and there, among the water-lilies, I caught sight of a happy family of small alligators, waiting for an opportunity to lay hold of the legs of some of the waders, who were, however, too cautious to be so entrapped.

While I was watching, a herd of deer, headed by a fine stag with branching horns, came down to the water to drink. The sight excited my sporting propensities; and rousing my father, Lejoillie, and Rochford, I proposed that we should borrow the schooner's boat, and try to get a shot at them. The skipper, who had turned out of his bunk forward, consented to lend it, but advised us to look sharp, as, should a breeze spring up, he would sail immediately. Rochford, though the best sportsman of the party, as he shortly afterwards proved, declined to come. Tim and I took the oars, while my father and Lejoillie held their rifles ready to fire, as soon as we got near enough.

On leaving the schooner we kept close to the bank, so that we might approach the deer without being observed. "We should be afther keeping to windward; but when there is no wind, sure it's a difficult matter to say which side to pull," whispered Tim to me.

We selected the side from which a point projected thickly covered with long grass; and on rounding it, we expected to be close to where the deer were standing. We roused numberless water-fowl, many of magnificent plumage; and I saw Lejoillie lift his rifle, as if inclined to fire.

"If you do, we shall miss the deer, to a certainty," observed my father. "The birds will stay for us until we come back, so that we can bag them by-and-by."

I kept my rifle by my side, ready for service. We rowed on, now and then knocking a young alligator on the nose as he popped his ugly head out of the water to have a look at us.

"Faith it isn't a place I'd like to be capsized in," observed Tim in a low whisper.

At length we got close to the end of the point. "Now, give way, boys," said my father; and we pulled round it as quickly as we could.

In another instant we were face to face with the deer, not thirty yards away from us. I drew in my oars. The herd gazed at the boat a few moments, giving us time to take a steady aim. My father hit the buck; and the same instant I shot a doe, which had turned to fly, but dropped before she had got many paces. Lejoillie wounded another; but, notwithstanding, the animal went off with the rest of the herd.

Tim and I having resumed our oars, we pulled in to secure our prey. Rushing in among the reeds, we sprang on shore, and quickly put out of suffering the deer which had first fallen. Not to lose time, we carried it to the boat, that it might be cut up on board. We were returning for the other, when a number of figures, bursting out of the forest, rushed towards us; some running to intercept the deer wounded by Lejoillie, others bounding along in the direction of the one I had shot. A glance showed us that they were red men, with feathers in their hair, their leathern dresses ornamented with coloured beads and cloth.

"Shove off!" cried my father. "These fellows don't look very friendly; and it will be as well to be out of their reach, until we see what temper they are in."

Doing as he directed, we pulled the boat a short distance away from the shore, when the Indians, lifting the deer, carried it off, casting a look of triumph behind them.

"Sure, that's pretty impudent, to carry off our game before our very eyes!" exclaimed Tim. "You'll be afther shootin' them, captain, won't you?"

"I should certainly be sorry to shed blood for a deer," answered my father; "but we will show them that they do not escape from our want of the means to punish them." And lifting the rifle he had just reloaded, he sent a shot which struck a tree a considerable distance beyond the Indians. Observing it, they redoubled their speed, and were soon beyond our reach. We had, however, secured one deer, which would afford us more venison than we could use.

On our return, Lejoillie shot a number of birds of various species, being highly satisfied with his morning's sport. Disregarding the neighbourhood of the Indians, he set up the birds on reaching the schooner, and began drawing them as rapidly as he could.

The judge seemed greatly surprised at the appearance of the Indians, and their behaviour. "I thought that they had all beat a retreat from this part of the country," he observed. "It is fortunate that they did not catch you, for they are treacherous fellows, and would probably have taken your scalps, as well as your rifles and ammunition; and if they could have got hold of the boat, they would have boarded the *Great Alexander*, and to a certainty put us all to death."

Mrs Shurtleff looked dreadfully frightened, and hugged her boy as the judge spoke.

"I cannot believe that the noble Indians would have been guilty of so barbarous an act," exclaimed Rochford. "They probably considered the deer their own, and that they were justified in carrying it off."

"Wait, my dear sir, till you have seen more of these red-skinned gentlemen before you pronounce an opinion," said the judge; and Rochford was silent.

We lost no time in cutting up the deer, and had some of the venison steaks for breakfast. Soon after, a light breeze enabled us to get clear of the creek, and once more to continue our course up the main stream.

The judge talked a good deal about the Indians. "The Redskins require to be kept in order," he remarked. "They will not, however, dare to face white men who show a bold front, as our settlers are sure to do if attacked." I did not forget the judge's remarks. Before long we were to have fearful proof of the mistaken character of his views.

It was some time past noon when we came in sight of several huts or shanties scattered along the shore, with a store or two, a chapel of unpretending architecture, and a few other public buildings, which the judge pointed out as the commencement of a city. Soon afterwards, running into a small bay, we hove-to before a house of superior pretensions, with a veranda round it, backed by an orange grove, a vegetable garden and orchard on one side, and plantations of various sorts on the other. It was the judge's home. He warmly pressed my father and me to accompany him on shore, Rochford and Lejoillie having accepted the invitation he had given them. But my father, eager, as I before remarked, to reach my uncle's house, declined promising, however, if possible, to visit him on a future day.

Chapter Three.

First view of my uncle's house—The landing—My cousins—We are shown over Castle Kearney—In the orange grove—A pleasant walk—My uncle's health—Proposed visit to Judge Shurtleff—A Florida hummock—Rita and the puma—A timely shot—Captain Norton—Shall we turn back?—Arrival and reception at Roseville—The Judge on Indian troubles—The chief inn of the settlement—Captain Norton and the black—An agreeable evening—A strange disappearance.

"There's where Nicholas Kearney lives," observed the skipper, pointing to a small island off the left bank of the river, towards which we were steering. "I'll send the boat on shore, gentlemen, with you and your traps, and will heave the schooner to until she returns. As we shall be up to the spot in a short time, the sooner you are ready the better."

I looked eagerly ahead, but at first could distinguish only a wood of cabbage-palms and pines towering above the shrubbery of magnolias and laurels. As we got nearer, I caught sight of the roof of a house on the inner side of the island. We had enough to do, however, in getting our traps into the boat, which was hauled up alongside. The schooner was hove-to, and two blacks stepping in to pull, we wished the skipper farewell, and shoved off.

"I trust you may find your brother better than you expect, captain," he said, as he waved his hand.

We had some little distance to go, as we had to row to the western or inner side of the island, where the captain told us we should find the only landing-place. As we approached, our astonishment was considerable on seeing the style of house inhabited by my uncle and his family. It was a building of considerable pretensions, erected on piles close to the edge of the water, above which it rose with a somewhat sombre and gloomy aspect. Not a window could be seen on the lower story, and the only entrance, which had the appearance of a gateway, with a portcullis, looked towards the mainland, to which access was obtained by a drawbridge, lowered and raised by two heavy chains. A broad veranda ran round the building above the ground-floor, on which the windows, unusually narrow, opened. From the part of the veranda above the entrance of the gate, projected the muzzles of two ship's guns, commanding the approach to the house on the opposite side. The windows of the upper story were exceedingly small, and seemed intended to serve as loopholes for musketry, as well as to afford light to the rooms. The building was entirely surrounded by a strong palisade of stout timber; and besides this, there was, along the edge of the water, an outer line of defence of the same character, pierced here and there with loopholes. Altogether, it had the appearance of a regular fortress of the olden days; though, if attacked by an enemy possessing cannon, it could not have afforded protection to its garrison for a single hour. But it was well calculated to resist an attack from Indians, even if armed with musketry.

"How are we to get in?" asked my father. "Stop, massa cap'n, me holloa," said one of the rowers. "Hi dare, Pedro Manoel, one ob you niggers dare. Some gen'lemen come to see padrone; hurry up an' let dem in."

Instead of a black, a youth appeared on the balcony with a rifle in his hand; but seeing us, he waved his hand, and quickly disappeared.

In a short time a small wicket in the palisade, which we had not before noticed, was opened, and the same youth appeared, and pointed to some steps by which we could reach it.

“Who are you?” he asked, as we got up.

“My son and I have come to visit my brother, Nicholas Kearney,” said my father.

“What! are you Uncle Michael, to whom my father wrote some time back?” exclaimed the youth. “He’ll be very glad to see you, for he has been doubting whether you would come.” And the speaker, who was, as I rightly conjectured, my cousin Carlos, turning round, shouted up a passage, when several blacks came rushing down, and forthwith began assisting Tim and me in landing our traps.

Dismissing the boat with a present to the crew, we followed Carlos up the dark passage which led into the interior of the building. On reaching the upper floor, we had abundance of light.

“I’ll tell my father of your arrival,” said Carlos. “It might agitate him too much if you walked in without being announced. In the meantime, you will find my mother and sisters in yonder room. As the windows look up the river, they did not perceive your arrival.—Go and tell the ladies that Captain Kearney and his son have arrived,” said Carlos to one of the blacks, who appeared to be a butler or major-domo.

By this time I had been able to observe my young cousin. His figure was small but well built, his features regular, his complexion and black hair showing his Spanish descent. He seemed to be wonderfully self-possessed, and his manners were those, as far as I could judge, of a well-bred young gentleman. That Carlos might have time to prepare Uncle Nicholas for our arrival, we followed the servant into the sitting-room.

“Who do you say?” asked a voice in Spanish, as the black announced us.

The man had time to repeat what he had said before we advanced. On entering the room we saw three ladies, the eldest one with a spinning-wheel by her side, the other two, evidently my young cousins, busily plying their needles.

On hearing our names, the two girls, jumping from their seats, hurried forward to meet us, exclaiming, “Uncle Michael!—Cousin Maurice!” and as they did so, they presented their fair cheeks to be kissed.

The elderly lady rose more leisurely, and with stately politeness welcomed us to Castle Kearney. “My husband will indeed rejoice to see you,” she said in very good English. “He has been a sad invalid for a long time, and keeps much to his own room. He told us that he had written to you, and was sure that you would come if you were able, so that we had begun to look out for your arrival, though we scarcely expected that you could reach us so soon. He is full of anxiety about the present and future of the country, which, owing to the warlike character of the natives, he considers to be in a more alarming condition than most settlers will allow; hence the fortified state of our dwelling-house, with which you must have been struck as you approached.”

My father replied that he considered his brother had shown wisdom in protecting his family against any attack which might be made on the house by the Indians. He then explained how we had been fortunate in finding a vessel sailing for Savannah, and had come on without a moment’s delay. My cousins and I were soon engaged in a lively conversation, they rapidly asking questions which I had to answer.

On hearing that Judge Shurtleff and his wife and little boy had returned, they both declared that they must, as soon as possible, go and pay a visit to the lady, who was a great friend of theirs, though Juanita said that she could not admire her taste in marrying the old judge.

“But then she has such a charming little boy; he is a great pet of ours,” exclaimed Rita.

When I told her how nearly he had been lost, and how Rochford had leaped overboard to save him, she exclaimed—

“Oh, I should so like to see your friend! He must be a fine fellow.”

“What if he were a little hump-backed man, with one eye?” I observed, laughing. “Still the gallantry he displayed would be the same, and probably he would have run still greater risk of being drowned. However, as he is staying with the judge, you will be able to form an opinion about him if you go over to see your friends.”

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Carlos to summon us to his father’s room. My uncle, who had risen from a network hammock in which he had been reclining, stretched out both his hands, and grasping those of my father, exclaimed as he looked him in the face—

“I knew, Michael, that we loved each other as boys, and that age would not diminish your affection more than it has mine. Your coming proves that I was right; and I thank you, I thank you.” As he spoke, he threw his arms round his brother’s neck and burst into tears.

My father then introduced me to my uncle, who gave me an affectionate reception. In a short time Carlos returned, and invited me to come with him, which I gladly did, that I might leave the two brothers to themselves.

“Would you like to inspect our castle, and see my guns, and dogs, and fishing-tackle? Or do you wish to go back to the girls, to whom you appear to have had plenty to say just now when I interrupted you?”

He spoke in a somewhat sarcastic tone, which I did not altogether like.

“I shall be happy to return to the young ladies if you think they wish it,” I answered.

“Oh, of course; they cannot fail to be delighted with a young gentleman who can give them all the news of the old country,” he answered, leading the way back to the drawing-room.

“Here, girls, Cousin Maurice puts himself at your disposal; talk away as long as you like, and when you have done with him send for me. I in the meantime have matters of importance to attend to.” Having made this remark, he hurried out of the room with an air which made me much inclined to laugh. My fair cousins, however, did not appear to notice the style of his exit, and talked on as before, asking all sorts of questions, and answering those I put to them. My aunt spoke little; indeed, I was struck with her reserved manner and melancholy expression of countenance. After a time Carlos returned.

“Well, are you now inclined to take a stroll round our castle and grounds?” he said.

“With much pleasure,” I replied.

“We’ll go too,” exclaimed the young ladies together; and each putting on a large straw hat which lay near them, they accompanied us.

Carlos led the way with the air of a person who considers himself master of the house. He first showed me the various rooms, which opened into a broad passage, and then going into the veranda, he pointed out how completely it commanded the approaches to the house on every side.

“You see these two guns, and you observe that we can wheel them round to any point which may be attacked. Not that I, for my part, believe the Redskins will ever venture to come near us.”

The house, I saw, was built on a point, so that, except on one side, it was surrounded by water. The upper floor to which he conducted us contained several rooms. The roof, however, was low, the windows narrow, and so placed that musketry could be fired from them in all directions, or missiles could also be showered down on the heads of any assailants who might reach the gallery below. The rooms were furnished in a way suitable to the climate, and wore an air of neatness and comfort. Two of them, I guessed, from their appearance, belonged to my fair cousins; while another, the walls of which were ornamented with guns and pistols, swords, bows and other Indian weapons, Carlos told me was his.

At the back of the house were outbuildings and huts, in which the blacks on the property lived; and the whole of the rest of the island was occupied by an orange grove and garden, in which grew a great variety of vegetables.

“Now you must come down and see the lower regions of our castle,” said Carlos, descending the steps.

The ground-floor had but a few strongly-barred windows, opening on the water, which we had not observed on approaching, and a single door into the back of the house. There was a kitchen of large size on one side, and on the other the rooms of the domestics.

“We are not without our dungeon,” said Carlos, striking his hand against a strongly-barred door. “A captive would find it a difficult task to get out of this, and it has safely held more than one in its time.”

“As soon as Maurice is satisfied with a sight of this gloomy place, I hope that he will come and see the garden,” exclaimed Rita, I of course said, “Yes.”

Two fine dogs, whose kennels were near the entrance, came up, wagging their tails, and rubbing their noses against my legs, as if to know me again. A short distance to the right were some open sheds serving as stables, in which were several stout horses, generally called mustangs in that part of the world. The girls said that they and their brother frequently rode out on horseback, but that of late they were not allowed to go far from home. Passing the huts of the slaves, which for economy of space were huddled close to the stables, we entered the orange grove. It was the first I had been in. In all directions ran small aqueducts formed of bamboo, so that the ground might be easily irrigated. The water, my cousins told me, was let on every evening, and while we were there, we saw it trickling along the miniature canals, and almost instantly the flowers gave forth the most delicious perfume.

“That’s what the Spaniards call ‘returning thanks,’” observed Juanita. “It is a pretty idea, is it not?”

Carlos, fancying that I took more pleasure in the society of his sisters, left us, and I had a pleasant stroll round the whole island with my cousins. They showed me that the wild trees I had seen coming up the river were left there merely as a protection to the garden, and I saw that the stockades which surrounded the island were so placed as to prevent any persons landing, and might serve also as an outer fortification to the castle. When we returned to the house, we found supper prepared, and my uncle, accompanied by my father, entered the room.

“Why, papa, you are already better for Uncle Michael’s coming,” said Rita, giving him a kiss.

“I feel so,” answered Uncle Nicholas. “I hope, before long, to be myself again, and be able to show him and Maurice some of the wonders of the country.”

The young ladies, mentioning the arrival of the judge, begged permission to ride over the next morning to pay their friend his wife and little Paul a visit.

“You need have no fear of Indians,” observed Carlos; “for it is said that the few families which occasionally visited this neighbourhood have moved away west, having probably made up their minds to accept the offers of the government and vacate the country.”

When I mentioned our encounter with the Indians in the lagoon, he replied that they were probably a party of hunters who considered that they had a better right to the deer than we had, and that, notwithstanding the apprehensions of

the old judge, they would not likely have molested us; besides which, as the place was a long way off, we should certainly not meet with them on our contemplated excursion. Though my uncle at first offered some objections to the proposal, he ultimately gave his daughters permission to make the excursion.

Tim came into my room before he went to bed, and expressed himself as highly satisfied with his quarters.

“Sure, it’s a fine place, Mr Maurice,—a regular castle. The drawbridge is raised and the portcullis closed, so that a thieving Redskin would find it a hard matter to make his way in. From what I hear, it is not unlikely that before long they’ll be trying to drive the whites out of the country.”

“I heard very differently at supper,” I observed. “My uncle is satisfied they are peaceably disposed, and that there will be no more trouble about them.”

“That’s because he gets his knowledge from the whites, Mr Maurice. The nigger boys know more of what’s going on than they do.”

After breakfast next morning we set out on our expedition. Carlos had provided me with a pony like those he and his sisters rode. We were accompanied by Toby, a black boy, who went to hold the horses and make himself useful in any other way, and by Tim, who carried a rifle. I took mine, and Carlos said that he never went out without a brace of pistols and a fowling-piece.

The ground in the immediate neighbourhood of Castle Kearney was part of my uncle’s property, and was well cultivated; but we very soon got into the primeval forests, where the woodman’s axe had been employed only in cutting a path along which baggage animals could proceed in single file. The trees were mostly live-oak or pine, amid which grew magnolias and laurels. The ground was very uneven, though from the river it looked level. We had to cross what is called a hummock, which was in reality a depression, but not low enough to be swampy. Here grew huge cabbage-palms, cotton-trees, and scarlet maples, with a dense undergrowth of sumach, hydrangeas, azaleas, and many other shrubs; while from the branches hung in profusion wild-vines, convolvuli of many colours, and numerous other parasites. The path was so narrow, that although we had previously contrived to ride two abreast, we were now obliged to allow one to go before the other. Rita, with whom I had been riding, whipping on her pony, dashed forward, exclaiming,—“I am in my native land; it is my duty to show you the way, Maurice.”

A TIMELY SHOT.

Several trees had fallen over the path, which was exceedingly rough. Her little mustang leaped them, however, with wonderful activity, and mine followed. She had got some distance ahead, when suddenly I heard her utter a cry; her pony stopped short; I saw her clasp her hands as if paralysed with fear. She had cause for alarm. Not five paces off, crawling along the top of a bank, was a huge puma, apparently about to spring upon her. In another instant the monster might have seized her in its paws and carried her into the jungle, where none of us could have followed. I shouted to try and frighten the brute, and endeavoured in the meantime to unsling my rifle; but my pony, alarmed, endeavoured to turn round, and I was compelled to handle my rein to make him go forward: indeed, it would have been difficult to fire without a fearful risk of injuring my cousin. While I was endeavouring to make my horse move forward, and at the same time to unsling my rifle, expecting every moment to see the puma make its fatal spring, I heard a shot, and the animal, leaping into the air, fell over dead close to the pony’s feet. On looking round, I saw that it was a stranger on horseback who had fired the shot.

I made my way up to Rita’s side, for I thought she would have fallen, but she quickly recovered herself.

“I was in a dreadful fright, Maurice,” she said; “but you saved me from the creature’s claws by your timely shot.”

“No, it was that person out there,” I said, pointing to the stranger, who now, leaping over the fallen trunks, joined us close to where the puma lay.

He bowed politely to Rita, and I now saw by his uniform that he was a military officer. Of course, I thanked him, as did my cousin. On the rest of the party coming up, they joined us in expressing our gratitude.

He laughed as he answered, “I should have been glad to have killed the beast at all events, so pray don’t thank me. Let me ask where you are going. I don’t think it prudent for ladies to be riding through the country without a large escort.”

On hearing that we were going to the judge’s, he advised us to hasten on, saying that he was going in the same direction, and would be happy to accompany us. He introduced himself as Captain Norton, and told us that he had received information that a band of Indians was in the neighbourhood, and that he was about to collect a party of volunteers to defend the settlement should they exhibit any hostile intentions. Hearing this, I proposed to Carlos to return; but he was of opinion that as we had already performed three-fourths of the distance, we should proceed to the settlement, observing that there were plenty of people to defend Castle Kearney, that a sharp look-out was always kept there, and that it was very improbable that the Indians, even if they were intent on mischief, would venture to attack it.

Captain Norton agreed with Carlos; and as Rita had now recovered from her fright, we continued our course as before.

Getting clear of the hummock, we were now in more open ground. In a short time a hut came in sight, then another and another, and we found that we were in the suburbs of Roseville. The huts varied in character, though most were of the roughest description. Some were built of logs placed horizontally one upon another, others were frame erections covered with boards; very few were of a more substantial character. At last several edifices of superior architectural pretensions, having two stories and broad verandas on all the sides, and surrounded by gardens and orchards, came into view.

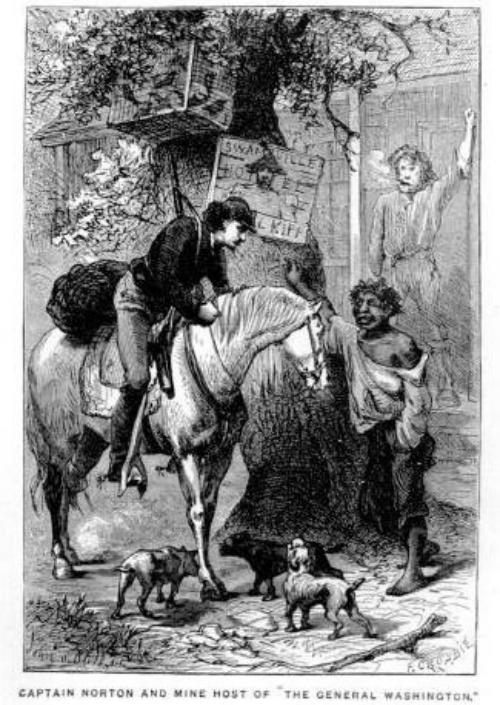
Captain Norton parted from us at the outskirts of the settlement, saying that he should have to call officially on the judge, and hoped to hear that Miss Kearney had not suffered any ill effects from the alarm she had experienced.

“You need be under no apprehensions on that score, captain,” said Rita, laughing; “I am quite myself again, though none the less grateful to you for having saved me from the claws of that hideous creature.”

The judge was pacing up and down the broad veranda surrounding his house, while little Paul, with a hobby-horse between his legs, was trotting about, watched over by black Rosa. The judge waved his hand while he shouted indoors to his wife, “Marian, Marian, here come our friends from Castle Kearney.” Then taking hold of Master Paul’s hand, he ordered Rosa to call the boys to look after the horses.

Mrs Shurtleff quickly made her appearance, and she and her husband greeted the young ladies as they ran up the steps, and gave Carlos and me a cordial welcome. When the judge heard of Rita’s narrow escape, he exclaimed—

“We must have a broad road cut through that hummock. It will not be safe to traverse until that’s done. We are all deeply indebted to Captain Norton for his timely shot, and I shall be happy to make his acquaintance if he comes here.”



CAPTAIN NORTON AND MINE HOST OF "THE GENERAL WASHINGTON."

We inquired for Rochford and Lejoillie.

“They went away at daybreak into the forest—the one bent on slaughtering game, the other on collecting objects of natural history. A clever fellow is that Frenchman, and I have begged him to remain here as long as he can find subjects for scientific research,” he answered.

When we told him the object of Captain Norton’s visit to Roseville, he laughed, and replied—

“I don’t believe the Indians will venture near the place; they know too well the effect of our fellows’ rifles. Since I came home, I find that a treaty has been entered into with them. The meeting took place at Payne’s Landing, on the Ocklawaha River, and they have agreed, in the course of a few months, to move westward across the Mississippi, where the Creeks and Cherokees are also about to migrate; so that we shall, in a short time, I hope, see the end of all these Indian troubles.”

We found that the judge had business to attend to, and Carlos suggested that we should take a stroll through the settlement. We had got some little distance, when my companion pointed out, with a laugh, the chief inn of the place, in front of which, nailed to a tree, hung the sign of “The General Washington.” It was a weather-boarded shanty, fixed up in an open space between several trees, which the builder had not thought it worth while to cut down. From the boughs hung several cages full of birds, while a number of hideous little mongrel dogs ran about, attended by a black boy, who sat on the steps, apparently having nothing else to do than to scratch his woolly pate. As we approached, Captain Norton rode up, and calling to the boy, directed him to summon his master.

“What you want him for, massa cap’n?” asked the black.

“I tell you to call him,” answered the captain.

“Him fast ’sleep in him hammock now. No want to be ’sturbed.”

“Go and call him, whether he is asleep or awake,” said the captain, getting angry.

Just then a person, who I had no doubt was “mine host,” appeared at the door, though as unlike my notion of what a landlord should be as possible.

“Wal, cap’n, what do you want?” he asked.

“I am sent to require you, and all able-bodied men to turn out armed, for the defence of the country, and of this settlement in particular, against the Redskins, who, we have information, are approaching the place with the intention of attacking it.”

“I guess though we’ll soon put them to the right about,” answered mine host. “Won’t you step in and liquor?”

The officer excused himself, and having mentioned the spot where the volunteers were to rendezvous, he turned his horse and rode towards us. We asked him what success he had had in obtaining recruits.

“Those living on the outskirts are willing enough,” he said; “but some of those whose houses are near the river, and who believe that the Indians will not molest them, are less inclined to turn out.”

As our new friend had to hurry on, we parted with him; but he promised to call at the judge’s in the evening.

Wherever we went, we found people talking about the supposed approach of the Indians, though no one seemed to think there was much chance of their attacking the settlement. We hoped, on getting back, to find Rochford and Lejoillie; but they had not returned. Soon afterwards, Captain Norton came in, and the judge and Mrs Shurtleff, by their kind reception, at once made him feel at home. He appeared to be much struck with my cousins, and I heard him observe to the judge’s wife that he was not aware such charming young ladies were to be found in that part of the country. Rita was, at all events, well pleased to listen to his conversation, which was lively and sensible.

Late in the evening Lejoillie arrived, guided by a black whom he had engaged for the purpose. He had lost sight, he said, of Rochford, and though he had hunted about in every direction, he could not rejoin him. He hoped, however, that he would before long find his way home.

Latterly we became somewhat uneasy at the non-appearance of our countryman. Could he possibly have fallen into the hands of Indians? If so, anxious as he was to serve them, they, ignorant of this, would kill and scalp him as certainly as they would any other white man.

The night passed on. The judge sent us to our sleeping-rooms, saying that he would have a watch kept to let our friend in, should he appear. The captain had, I found, also sent out scouts, to prevent the risk of the settlement being surprised; and before he turned in, he rode round, to ascertain that they were on the alert.

Chapter Four.

Rochford’s disappearance—Organising a searching party—Muster of the Roseville Volunteers—The start—A pine-barren—Through hummocks, swamps, and forests—A mid-day halt—The alarm—Strange behaviour of our party—Recovery from the panic—Scouts—Rochford and the native Chief—The return to Roseville—An introduction to the Judge—Our native guest—His strange disappearance—What Captain Norton knew about him—A pleasant discovery—Rumours of Indian outrages—Hunting expedition—Rochford and Juanita—Good excuses—An incident in the orangery—Cuban blood-hound—An ocelot—A successful day—Rochford again goes off—Search for him—A note of explanation received—Return home.

When I awoke in the morning, I sincerely hoped to find that Rochford had returned; but on inquiry I was told that he had not made his appearance, nor had any news been received of him. Lejoillie, who had taken a great liking to him, became more and more anxious, especially when he heard that Indians were in the neighbourhood.

“I have no wish to lose my scalp, even for the sake of science; and it will be a great disappointment to me if I am unable to continue my travels through the country,” he remarked.

“You need not be anxious,” said the judge; “these Indian troubles will soon be put a stop to. If Rochford doesn’t return during the morning, we must organise an expedition to search for him. I fear that I cannot undergo the fatigue myself, but I will use my influence with others; and with the assistance of Captain Norton, we may send out a strong body, who will defy the Redskins, should any be met with. In my opinion, however, the appearance of a few hunters, or a single family or so, probably gave rise to the report.”

The judge’s idea was entertained by the greater part of the inhabitants, and, I suspect, contributed not a little to the readiness with which they volunteered to form a party to go in search of our missing friend. Captain Norton, who was met by an orderly and four troopers, had to leave us and push on to carry out his instructions. Before he left, he warned the people not to venture far from the settlement. He especially counselled Carlos not to allow his sisters to return by land, but advised that, as soon as possible, they should go back by the river, as he considered that Castle Kearney was the safest place in the neighbourhood. The remainder of the day was spent in preparations; and it was agreed that the party should set off the next morning, should Rochford in the meantime not have made his appearance.

Carlos at first declared that as he had nothing to do with the stranger, he should remain to look after his sisters; but he afterwards consented to join the party, Tim and I, with Lejoillie, felt ourselves bound to go.

As Rochford did not return, the Roseville volunteers assembled in front of the judge’s house at daybreak, the time agreed on. They formed a motley group, in every variety of costume: some were whites, others brown men and blacks, with two or three half-caste Indians. The question was, who should take the command. The judge would have been the proper person; but as he could not possibly go—and had he done so, he would have greatly impeded the progress of more active men—Lejoillie, though a stranger, was requested to lead the party.

“For one object I will go,” he said. “I am not fond of fighting; but I wish to find my friend, and will endeavour to conduct you to the best of my ability.”

We mustered between thirty and forty men and boys, with all sorts of arms and, as I have said, in every variety of costume. Each man had been directed to carry provisions for his own consumption, as we should certainly be out the whole of one day, and perhaps for a night and a second day. I don’t know what Captain Norton would have said had he seen us as we marched along in a straggling fashion, many of the men with pipes in their mouths, and all either talking or laughing loudly.

Having left the settlement behind, we crossed a wide extent of prairie land, where the sun beat down on our heads, and we had to force our way among the sharp teeth of the saw-palmetto, which scratched our legs and tore our trousers, and sometimes inflicted disagreeable wounds. Then we came to what is called a “pine-barren;” the ground being flat and the soil of a sandy nature, out of which rose enormous tall pines, having beneath them a growth of rank grass, and here and there clumps of low bushes, well calculated to conceal an enemy, while our course was often impeded by fallen trunks and half-burned stumps. Several times we had to turn aside to avoid the swampy ponds, fringed with tall saw-grass; from amid which rose snipes, plovers, and wild-ducks, and occasionally flocks of the beautiful white egret and snowy heron. The water was brackish, and covered with lilies of varied colours; from amid which, every now and then, alligators popped out their heads to look at us. Other birds, among them the great sand-hill crane, stalked about, until, uttering loud whoops, they took to flight, frightened by our shouts.

When we came to spots where the forest was too thick to see far ahead, we sent out scouts; but I observed that few of the men were willing to get out of hearing of the main body. At last we found ourselves in another hummock: a dense jungle of tall cabbage-palms, oaks, hickory and cotton-trees, with an undergrowth of shrubs such as are to be found only in carefully-cultivated gardens in England—hydrangeas, azaleas, lobelias, and shrubs and creepers of varied colours and gorgeous hues; while overhead the green leaves of the wild-vine and other climbers formed a delicious roof to shelter us from the sun’s rays. Out of the wood burst forth a concert of song-birds, amid which the notes of the sweet-toned mocking-bird could be especially distinguished. To Carlos it was no novelty, nor was it to most of our companions; but Lejoillie and I were delighted.

We had as yet discovered no trace of our friend. The few woodmen we met had seen nothing of him. We had passed the spot where Lejoillie and he had separated; and we felt convinced that unless we took a much wider range, we should have little chance of finding him.

Several of the party now called out that they were getting hungry; and as we had reached a shady spot, we agreed to halt and dine.

“Before we do so, gentlemen, we must ascertain that no enemies are lurking in the neighbourhood,” said Lejoillie.

FLIGHT OF THE ROSEVILLE VOLUNTEERS.

Accordingly, he directed three of the men, who had proved to be the best scouts, to push forward and examine the ground around us. Many of the party had unstrapped their wallets; some had thrown themselves on the ground; and others had gone to a green and unattractive pool to obtain water.

Two of the scouts had come in, and assured us that they could discover no trace of the red men. “We may then venture to recruit our strength, my friends,” said Lejoillie.

Carlos and I seated ourselves before a fire kindled by Tim, at which he was cooking some slices of bacon. Our motley party lay about in all directions: some had thrown aside their coats, as well as their shoes and hats; and others had even taken off their shirts, that they might the more completely enjoy the cool air. We had begun our meal, and Lejoillie was offering Carlos a *petit verre* from a bottle he carried at his side, when suddenly a shout was raised—“The Redskins! the Redskins are upon us!”

“Stand to your arms, men!” cried Lejoillie, leaping up.

Carlos and I, following his example, seized our rifles; Tim did the same. But the words produced a terrifying effect on the rest of our companions, who, without waiting to ascertain the number of our enemies or how far off they were, took to their heels, and scampered away, leaving their hats, coats, and shoes behind them, many even forgetting their rifles. In vain Carlos, Lejoillie, and I shouted to them to stop.

“Halt, ye villains! halt!” cried Tim, “or I’ll be afther sendin’ a shot among ye that’ll make a hole in one of your backs.”

Tim’s threat produced no effect, and away went our brave party, tumbling over each other; and certainly, had the Redskins been close at hand, every one of us would have been scalped.

The scout who had given the alarm, and who was a brave fellow, now joined us, and explained that he had seen a large party of Indians in the distance, making, as he supposed, towards the hummock; and that he had shouted out, not supposing that his warning would have produced so terrifying an effect.

Lejoillie directed him to hurry on, and try to induce the men to come back for their clothes and arms; and to point out to them that should their flight be discovered by the Indians, they would certainly follow, believing they would obtain an easy victory; whereas, if we were to halt and show a bold front, they would probably not attempt to molest us.

Tim accompanied the scout, and fortunately overtaking the fugitives, gave them Lejoillie’s message. Having pointed out that we had remained behind, and that the Indians were still at a distance, they induced them at length to come back and collect their scattered garments. We then retreated at a rapid rate, in somewhat better order than before, as we were anxious to get out of the hummock, where the Indians, had they discovered us, would have taken us at a great disadvantage. In the open prairie, or even in the pinewood, we should have no fear of the Indians, though more numerous than ourselves, as our rifles would tell with more deadly effect than their inferior arms or bows and arrows. I cannot say that I felt very confident that, should an enemy appear, the Roseville volunteers would not again cut and run. I must say, however, that most of the heroes looked very much ashamed of themselves. The truth was, they had been seized with a panic, such as occurs sometimes even among regular troops. Lejoillie, who was acting as their leader, was a stranger to them, and they probably also had very little confidence in each other. Having got to a sufficient distance from the hummock to prevent it affording shelter to an enemy firing at us, a halt was called, and Lejoillie advised that scouts should be sent back to ascertain the whereabouts of the Indians.

Carlos and I volunteered to undertake the duty. On hearing this, Tim stepped forward.

“Sure, Mr Maurice dear, it’ll be better for me, an old soldier, accustomed to the ways of the savages, to go out and scout than you,” he said. “What could I say to the capt’n if the varmints were to shoot you down and take your scalp?”

“I am not afraid of that,” I said. “If my cousin and I hang back, we cannot expect the rest of the people to show any courage; though I shall be very glad if you will accompany us.”

“Then, Mr Maurice dear, I’ll go with you,” said Tim; “and if I say, ‘Run,’ just promise me that you will run; and I won’t say it unless I see it is the best thing to be done.”

To this I agreed, knowing that Tim was a stanch old soldier, who would not beat a retreat unless we were likely to be overpowered.

On seeing us prepared to set out, two other men stepped forward who had before acted as scouts. We made our way as rapidly as we could towards the hummock. Advancing quickly through the forest, keeping ourselves concealed from any one in front by stooping down behind bushes, or running from one trunk to another, we reached the spot where our party had so ignominiously taken to flight, without having seen an enemy. After this, we expected every instant to discover the Indians who had caused the alarm, as, unless they had halted, they could not be far off. We had thus worked our way to the farther side of the hummock, when looking out from behind a tree I had just reached, I saw two persons advancing across the open, neither of whom had much the look of an Indian.

“Sure that’s not the band of Redskins that set our fellows running so hard!” exclaimed Tim, who had at the same time caught sight of the two men.

As they drew nearer, to my infinite satisfaction I discovered that one was Rochford. It was difficult to determine whether the other, a tall, fine-looking man in hunter’s costume, was an Indian or a white.

There being no further need for concealment, I hurried forward, followed by Tim, when Rochford and his companion rapidly advanced to meet us.

“Where have you been?” I exclaimed. “We feared that you had met with some accident, and we have been hunting for you all the morning.”

“I am sorry to have caused you and my other friends any anxiety, but I could not help myself,” he answered. “While chasing a deer which I had wounded, I was made prisoner by a band of natives, who dragged me off, and were about, I feared, to put me to death, supposing that I was a settler, when my companion here, who is a chief of importance among them, made his appearance. On my explaining who I was, and my object in coming to Florida, he at once set me at liberty, and treated me with the greatest kindness. As he appeared anxious to see the settlement, I induced him to accompany me to Roseville, having pledged myself for his safety.”

“No one would wish to interfere with him,” I observed. “I feel very sure he will meet with a friendly reception.”

To my surprise, the Indian chief, turning to me, said, in perfectly good English—

“I know that I can rely on the honour of an Irishman. My sole object in entering the settlement is to assure the white inhabitants that my countrymen desire peace, and that they need be under no apprehension of an attack from us. All we wish is to retain our hunting-grounds, and to cultivate our lands unmolested.”

While we were speaking, Carlos and the two other men came up, when Rochford’s companion repeating what he had said to me, they invited him to accompany us back to the settlement. On our way I inquired of Rochford what could have caused our scout to suppose that a band of Indians was approaching.

“He must have seen my new friend’s followers in the distance,” he answered. “They set out to accompany him, but returned by his directions to a wood a short distance from this. There are a couple of hundred of them, fine-looking fellows, all well-armed, and evidently devoted to him. It proves, I think, his friendly disposition; for, were he ill disposed, they might pounce down on the settlement at any moment, and destroy it before the inhabitants could have time to defend themselves.”

“Then he does not altogether rely on your safe-conduct; for he knows well that should the inhabitants of Roseville attempt to detain him he would quickly be rescued by his followers,” I remarked.

Lejoillie showed his delight at recovering Rochford by giving him a warm embrace; and then turning to the chief, he welcomed him cordially.

I observed that the latter carefully eyed the countenances of our companions, as if wishing to ascertain if any of them knew him, while, at the same time, he kept his rifle in his hand, ready for instant use. When we began our march, he came alongside Rochford, Carlos, and me, in the rear of the party, who now hurried on, eager to get back to their homes.

He addressed himself especially to Carlos, from whom, it appeared to me, he was endeavouring to obtain information which neither Lejoillie nor I was able to give him. It was late in the evening by the time we reached Roseville. The judge, on seeing Rochford, blamed him for having caused us so much anxiety.

“Now we’ve got you, we’ll not let you run away again,” he exclaimed, shaking him by the hand.

Rochford then introduced his Indian companion.

“I have seen many of your people, but I don’t know that I have ever before met you,” observed the judge, eyeing him narrowly.

“I am fonder of the chase than of war or treaty-making with the whites,” answered the Indian. “I have visited you now for the sake of assuring you of the friendly feelings of my people, so that you may rest in quiet without any apprehensions of an attack from us.”

“I said so! I always said that the red men were well disposed!” exclaimed the judge. “I expect Captain Norton back to-morrow, and I should be happy if you could remain, and give him the same assurances that you have given me.”

“I would willingly have an interview with Captain Norton, but my stay here must be short. I will leave you to repeat to

him the assurances of our pacific intentions," answered the Indian.

The judge's wife and my cousins now made their appearance. The Indian chief appeared to regard them with great admiration. They on their part declared that he was very agreeable and good-looking, and that he behaved like a polished gentleman, conducting himself at table with thorough propriety.

The judge offered him a bed, but he declined, saying that, accustomed as he was to sleeping in the open air, he should prefer to pass the night in the veranda,—where a hammock was accordingly slung for him, so that he might occupy it whenever he felt disposed.

THE EMPTY HAMMOCK.

I forgot to say that Rochford, being introduced to my cousins, at once entered into conversation, and appeared to be winning his way into their good graces. He seemed much pleased when Carlos invited him to Castle Kearney.

After the ladies had retired, the gentlemen sat up some time smoking their havannahs, the Indian taking part in the conversation.

At last we all turned in to our respective quarters, the judge having, some time before, set us the example. On looking out of the door of the room I occupied, which opened on to the veranda, I saw the Indian throw himself into the hammock. In another minute he was apparently fast asleep.

On awaking early the next morning, the first sound I heard was the voice of black Rose, little Paul's nurse, uttering exclamations of surprise. Presently I heard the judge's voice; and on looking out, I saw them examining, with puzzled looks, the hammock in which the Indian guest had slept. One of the ropes had apparently been cut, and the hammock had come to the ground.

"Can anything have happened to him? Where can he have gone to?" exclaimed our host. "Hunt about, Rose, and see if you can find him anywhere."

"Me ask Toby," said Rose; "he up early, perhaps he see him."

Toby was the black boy of the establishment, and was a great admirer of Rose.

I heard the judge walking about the veranda. I dressed as rapidly as I could, and went out to meet him. He presented, it must be confessed, a somewhat curious figure habited in his morning costume, a coloured dressing-gown, with a red night-cap on his head, and spectacles on his nose, while he looked puzzled and annoyed in the extreme.

"I trust no one has knocked my guest on the head during the night," he said. "The Indian has gone—vanished—disappeared! I would not have had it happen on any account!"

"Perhaps he has only gone to stretch his legs, and will return for breakfast," I observed.

While we were talking, Rose and Toby appeared together, and reported that they could nowhere find the Indian. The judge then sent off Toby and two or three other black boys to make inquiries through the village.

In a short time they returned, declaring that no one had seen him, and that if he had gone, he must have taken himself off during the night.

"I fear the worst then," said our host. "He would not have gone away without at least paying his respects to me. These Indians are as ceremonious as the courtiers of an emperor."

We were soon joined by the rest of the party in the veranda, and Rochford seemed more astonished than any one on

hearing what had happened. He told us that he had thought of offering to accompany the chief back to his home, that he might have an opportunity of seeing Indian customs and manners.

“Any romantic opinions you might have entertained on the subject would quickly have been dispelled,” observed the judge. “I would advise you, my friend, to keep out of their way, and live among civilised people.”

Rochford, who made no answer, probably considered the judge prejudiced against the Redskins.

Our kind host pressed us so warmly to remain another day, that we consented. He promised that he would arrange for our conveyance back by water the following morning, when Lejoillie and Rochford agreed to accompany us.

In the afternoon Captain Norton returned. On hearing of the visit of the chief, whose appearance was described to him, he exclaimed—

“Why, he is no other than Powell, or Oceola, as the Indians call him, their great leader, and the most dangerous person in the country. I believe that no Indian bears a more deadly hatred to the Palefaces, as he calls us, than does that man. Notwithstanding all his promises, I would not trust him. So violent was his behaviour while the other chiefs were making the treaty at Payne’s Landing, that General Thompson caused him to be seized and carried off in irons, though he managed to slip out of them, and to make his escape. He has since sent word that he would agree to the treaty; but those who know him best mistrust him most. What could have induced him to run the risk of coming to this settlement, I cannot say; probably he supposed no one here was acquainted with him, and evidently had some object in view.”

“At all events, he saved my life when his countrymen were threatening to take it,” observed Rochford, stepping forward; “and I am deeply indebted to him.”

“My dear, sir, he may have had an object in saving your life; and knowing you were a British subject, he would not hate you as he does Americans. Am I wrong in supposing that you are an Irishman, though I have not the pleasure of knowing your name?”

“Maulins Rochford,” said my friend, bowing to the captain; “may I ask yours?”

“Roger Norton, of the United States army. I am familiar with your name, having some relatives of the same in the old country. May I ask if you belong to the Rochfords of Killmallan?”

“Mr Rochford of Killmallan is my uncle,” answered Maulins.

“Then we may hail each other as cousins,” said Captain Norton, putting out his hand. “We Americans are always glad to meet with relatives from the other side of the Atlantic. I shall be truly glad if, after you have seen something of the country, you make up your mind to remain with us.”

Rochford, who was warm-hearted in the extreme, cordially shook his cousin’s hand. Of course they each had numerous questions to ask and answer.

The remainder of the day was happily spent, in spite of the judge’s anxiety as to what had become of his Indian guest. Captain Norton, however, assured him that he was confident the chief had gone off of his own accord some time during the night, fearing that it might be discovered who he was, and that he might again be made prisoner.

The young captain would gladly have accompanied us to Castle Kearney, but his duties prevented him from doing so. He undertook, however, to come over in the course of a few days, and to bring our ponies, with a sufficient escort. He expressed himself very glad that we had arranged to return by water.

Our friend Lejoillie had not been idle, but had been constantly employed in searching for objects of natural history, of which he found no lack even in the judge’s garden. He had been watching, with great attention, the nest of a humming-bird, which he had discovered a short distance from the house, and invited me to come and see it. No parents could be more attentive to the wants of their young than were those bright little gems, the smallest of the feathered tribe. They were constantly flying hither and thither, bringing insects too minute even to be seen, which they put into the gaping beaks of their young ones, each scarcely larger than a humble-bee. As we were looking, we saw a spider, one of the largest I had ever seen, crawl up the branch to which the nest was attached. Slowly and cautiously it made its way upward, with the fell intent, I felt sure, of seizing the young birds, and perhaps the parents also, in its embrace.

HUGE SPIDER ATTACKING HUMMING-BIRD'S NEST.

“Stay,” whispered Lejoillie, holding my arm, “it is a question I have long desired to have settled, whether these spiders really do feed on birds.”

“But there is no doubt about it!” I exclaimed, trembling for the fate of the beautiful little creatures.

“It is not yet an accomplished fact,” answered Lejoillie; “the creature may have some other object in view. Overcome your humanity this once for the sake of science;” and he held me back.

On crawled the horrid monster. The hen-bird sat on the nest with open beak, while the cock fluttered with wings expanded just above the creature’s claws, endeavouring to attract its attention, or to seize one of the claws in its beak, which at times I thought its parental feelings would induce it to do. All its efforts were in vain. The monster, knowing its power, crawled on, and putting in its claws, seized one of the young birds, which in an instant it applied to its mouth.

I could bear it no longer. “You are satisfied of the fact,” I cried; and rushing forward with a stick, I struck the hideous creature to the ground.

“Not that it kills the older birds as well as the young,” said Lejoillie, somewhat vexed at my proceeding.

“It would have done so, depend upon it. Pray enter the fact in your note-book.”

He did so, fully satisfied, I believe, and really not sorry that I had saved the humming-birds, or, as he called them, the “fly-birds,” from destruction.

The next morning a large boat, having a gay-coloured awning, with six rowers, provided by the judge, was in readiness to carry us up the river. Captain Norton escorted the ladies on board. It took us very much less time to proceed by water, even though the current was against us, than to have come by land.

We found my uncle greatly recovered. He expressed his pleasure at seeing our friends Rochford and Lejoillie, and begged that they would remain at Castle Kearney as long as they felt disposed to honour him with their society. They expressed their admiration of the house and everything about it, including my fair cousins, who certainly did their best to entertain them.

In consequence of the rumours which had reached my uncle regarding the threatened hostility of the Indians, he would not allow us to engage in any shooting excursions. We contrived, however, to amuse ourselves by making occasional trips in a boat up the river, when Lejoillie succeeded in obtaining a number of specimens of birds.

In a few days Captain Norton arrived with the ponies, and set my uncle’s mind at rest by reporting that the Indians had retired westward, and that it was supposed they would before long finally take their departure, according to the treaty they had entered into, and cross the Mississippi. As soon as Carlos heard this, he proposed that we should set off on a shooting expedition.

Lejoillie at once agreed, hoping thus to find opportunities of adding to his specimens of natural history; but Rochford showed no desire to accompany us. It was very evident that he preferred the society of the ladies, and especially of my cousin Juanita, to whom it appeared to me, he was paying devoted attention. Whether or not the elders of the family observed this I could not make out. The girls were also both so lively and animated, that it was difficult to be certain that my young cousin had discovered our guest’s feelings towards her, or, at all events, that she returned them. Her manner was in no way altered; she treated him, as she did Lejoillie and Captain Norton, in a frank and easy manner.

Carlos showed some annoyance when Rochford made excuses for not going with us.

“We are not a large party, and we fully relied on having your company,” said my cousin. “You came out here to see the country, and you will know nothing about it if you stop in the house and only take a short ride occasionally with the girls or paddle them about on the river. You can return with us, and stop here afterwards as long as you like.”

Still Rochford would not promise to go.

Captain Norton also excused himself. He had, he said, traversed the country and camped out often enough in the course of duty. He was not particularly fond of sport; at all events, it would not recompense him for the life he should have to lead. He could spend but a few days at Castle Kearney, and must then return to Saint Augustine, where his regiment was quartered. At this I was not surprised, though I liked him so much that I should have been glad of his society. He, however, I suspected, was paying attention to Rita, and, as far as I was able to judge, was making progress in her good graces. My uncle and aunt were, of course, grateful to him for having preserved her from the puma; and though he claimed no merit for the service he had rendered, it was very natural that it should be in his favour.

We had all gone out in the evening to enjoy the cool air in the orangery, in which were seats on raised terraces, where views could be obtained up and down the river. I had separated from the rest of the party, when, after wandering about by myself for a short time, I passed one of the bowers I have mentioned. On looking in I saw Juanita and Rochford. I overheard my cousin say, in answer to something her companion had said—

“It is impossible—I cannot quit my home; and I tell you frankly that you have not won my heart.”

As my cousin did not call, though I was sure she must have seen me, I felt that it would not be right to interfere, and therefore hurried on until I was out of sight.

Some time afterwards, when the ladies had returned to the house, Rochford came up to me.

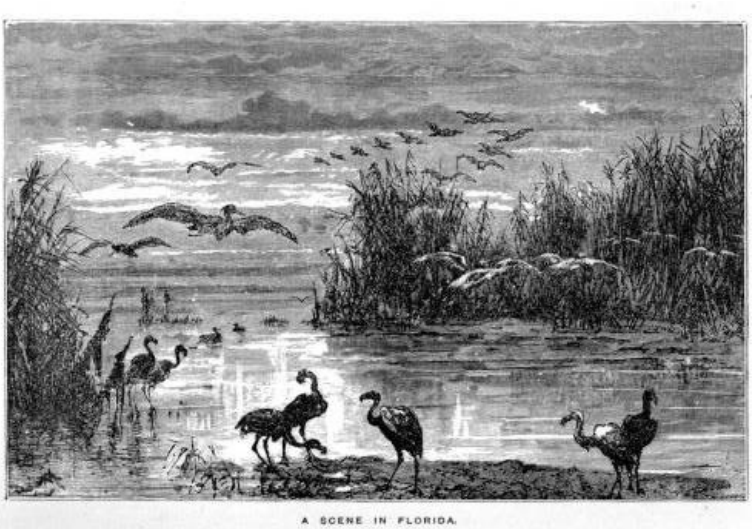
“Maurice, I have made up my mind to accompany you on your expedition,” he said. “I shall be obliged if you will let Carlos know. I see that I cannot with propriety stay here any longer.”

He did not tell me, but of course I guessed, the cause of his sudden change of plan. I could not help thinking Juanita had done right, for he was in reality a comparative stranger; and except that he was a warm-hearted, impulsive young man, we knew little of his principles or character. Carlos, on hearing of his intention to go with us, exclaimed, “I am very glad of it; he’ll make a capital companion: he sings a good song, and I dare say will prove a good shot.”

At daybreak on the following morning we started, our party consisting of Lejoillie, Rochford, Carlos, Tim, and myself, with two ponies for carrying game, and four blacks to beat the bushes and make themselves generally useful. We had six dogs, well-trained animals, two being retrievers, the others, powerful brutes, taught to rush into thickets and turn out the game, or to pull down the larger animals. The blacks carried guns, axes, and machetes; while we had our rifles, a brace of pistols, and a long knife a-piece.

We at once struck away to the south-west, in the direction in which Carlos considered we were most likely to find sport. Rochford was unusually silent; a change had evidently come over him, and he seemed almost morose and sullen. When Carlos bantered him with not being as merry as usual, he turned away, and soon afterwards dropped behind the rest of the party. Lejoillie was too much occupied in observing the various birds and animals to remark our friend’s behaviour.

I should have said that one of the dogs was a large handsome spaniel—“Caesar”—of which my uncle had kindly made me a present some days before. The animal seemed to understand the change of masters, and having taken a great fancy to me, obeyed my orders as readily as if I had trained him from his puppyhood. Three other animals, if not perfectly well-bred, were closely allied to the Cuban blood-hound, too frequently employed in hunting runaway slaves, although equally useful for driving game out of thick coverts or protecting the camp when committed to their charge. They were possessed of great keenness of scent, were fierce, courageous, and very powerful animals, and could endure the intense heat of a tropical sun. They could follow the wily ocelot, making their way noiselessly through the dense palmetto-scrub, and could fearlessly tackle panthers or bears.



A SCENE IN FLORIDA.

We passed, on our course, alternate narrow strips of grass and jungle, with cabbage-palms and numerous live-oaks

scattered about in picturesque groups. Sometimes we came to ponds fringed with saw-grass eight or ten feet in height, from amid which rose large flocks of the beautiful roseate spoonbill ibis, while the white ibis and ducks of varied colours stalked and swam around the edges, and snipes rose frequently almost from under our feet. From among a flock of turkeys, which flew up from a thick palmetto jungle, we knocked over four fat gobblers, sufficient for two substantial meals to our whole party.

I must not stop to describe the adventures of each day. For the first three or four, we met with less large game than we had expected, Carlos always telling us that farther south we should find much more.

We were not altogether unmindful of the reported bad temper of the Indians, and had we not taken precautions against surprise, we might possibly have been attacked; but at night two of the party were always on watch, accompanied by a blood-hound, to give notice of the approach of a foe. We put up rough tents, which afforded us sufficient protection against the weather, though not against the mosquitoes, which frequently troubled us severely. It was only towards morning that we felt any sensation of cold. We were then glad to draw our blankets tightly around us, though a small amount of exercise soon warmed our blood. Our plan was to breakfast before daylight, so as to get some of the cool hours of the morning for hunting.

We had not been long on foot—the fourth day after leaving Castle Kearney—when we saw the hounds running backwards and forwards from one large clump of scrub-palmetto to another.

“They are after a cat,” exclaimed Carlos; “but it will be some time before they catch it.”

“A cat?” I asked.

“We call it ‘cat’ for shortness’ sake. Its common name is a ‘catamount,’ or, more properly, an ‘ocelot.’”

The hounds, who well knew where the ocelot had gone to, were chasing it from tree to tree; but still it continued to elude them. All we could do was to stand by with our rifles ready to shoot the creature, should it burst forth into the open. Nearly two hours must have passed since the dogs first got scent of it, and yet the animal managed to evade them. I was standing in a palmetto-scrub almost up to my shoulders, when about a dozen paces off I saw a movement among the leaves, which I suspected was caused by a wild beast of some sort. I stood ready to receive it. In a few seconds, catching a glimpse of a yellow skin, I fired, but my bullet failed to take effect; and the next instant an animal, with glaring eyes and outstretched claws, sprang towards me, as if about to fly at my throat. I was endeavouring to reload, when I heard a shot, and the creature fell dead almost at my feet. Turning round, I saw that it was Rochford who had fired.

“Thank you,” I said, as he came forward to examine the animal.

It was, as had been supposed, an ocelot, the most beautiful creature of that region. It measured about three feet in length from the nose to the root of the tail. It had a reddish fur, marked with black spots, oblong on the back, and round or streaked on the under part and paws. The strongly-formed shoulder showed the power which it could exert when seizing its prey. Its handsome fur was soon taken off, and placed on the back of one of the ponies.

The dogs in a short time hunted out two other ocelots, which were speedily shot; and we killed also several racoons, polecats, opossums, two deer, besides turkeys, ducks, snipes, and quails,—which I mention to show the abundance of game to be found in that part of the country.

We encountered several rattlesnakes; but as they gave us notice of their whereabouts, we easily despatched them, and carried off their rattles as trophies. The one I killed, by blowing off its head, was upwards of seven feet in length, and would have proved a disagreeable customer to meet with in a narrow pathway. We fell in also with several herds of wild hogs; but as we had brought no salt for pickling them, we shot only one each day, that we might have fresh pork for dinner, for in that climate meat becomes unfit to eat in the course of a very few hours. As may be supposed, we lived very well, as far as meat was concerned; and we also occasionally added a cabbage-palm, and some wild roots and fruits, to our bill of fare.

At length Carlos and I agreed that we ought to turn our faces homewards, as we had almost come to an end of our ammunition, as well as of our flour and other stores. On our return journey we shot merely what we required for food.

On the evening of the first day, when we were on our homeward march, Rochford did not make his appearance in camp. “He’ll soon be up to us,” observed Carlos in an unconcerned tone; “though it may be as well to fire a shot or two to show him where we are encamped, should he fail to catch sight of our fire.”

We soon had two fires blazing up, round which we gathered to cook our provisions, and to shield ourselves from the attacks of mosquitoes, which were kept at a distance by the smoke. Supper was over, and we were preparing to lie down. Still Rochford did not appear. I began to grow anxious about him. As it was not likely that he would be discovered should we set off to search for him in the dark, we settled to wait till the following morning, hoping that in the meantime he might come into camp.

The night passed away, and he did not appear. At daybreak, leaving two of the blacks to look after the animals, we divided into three parties: Tim going with me; and Lejoillie and Carlos, each having a black with him. We traversed the country in the direction from which we had come, but no trace could we discover of our missing friend. I wished that we had had Indians with us, or more experienced woodmen, who might have perceived traces which we failed to observe.

Tim and I returned late in the evening to the camp, where Lejoillie and Carlos had shortly before arrived, as unsuccessful as we had been. If Rochford had met with any accident, we should, we thought, have discovered some traces of him. On inquiring, however, of the blacks what had happened at the camp during our absence, one of them

presented me with a small piece of paper, saying that an Indian had left it to be delivered to the young white stranger. I eagerly held it to the light of the fire, and I read the words:—

“Farewell! I have too long neglected my duty. I must endeavour to carry out the object for which I came to this country. I trust that justice will be done to the children of the soil, and peace be maintained. Hoping to meet you again,—yours sincerely—

“M.R.”

Though this paper showed that our friend had not met with any accident, I regretted that he had not returned, as I feared that he contemplated engaging in some hopeless enterprise, which could not benefit the Indians, while he himself would be exposed to considerable danger.

Carlos was very indignant at the way he had left us. “Why couldn’t he have told us where he was going?” he exclaimed. “If he puts the Indians up to mischief with any of his wild notions, he will be hunted down, and to a certainty will get hung on the nearest tree.”

The appearance of the Indian showed that some of his people were in the neighbourhood, and Carlos thought it prudent to keep a strict watch during the night. Not waiting for daybreak, as the country before us was tolerably level, we struck camp and pushed homewards. Although we occasionally saw Indians in the distance, none came near us. It was, however, pretty evident that our movements were closely watched, but for what object we could not surmise, as we were allowed to proceed without being molested.

I missed Rochford greatly; and though I was interested by Lejoillie’s remarks on the natural history of the country, I was very glad when we at length reached Castle Kearney.

I watched my cousin Juanita when Carlos was giving her an account of Rochford’s disappearance, “I am very sorry,” she answered in quite an indifferent tone. “I thought he would have come back again; but as he has chosen to go away, I only hope that the Indians will treat him well. Perhaps he’ll return with a red squaw, as a proof of his affection for the Indian race.” She laughed, but perhaps not quite so heartily as she tried to do.

Chapter Five.

A cruise on board the Great Alexander—Oyster-beds—A curious sight—Pelicans fishing—Specimens for the naturalist—A storm—Martyr to science—Tim finds oyster-trees—The racoon—A fishing-party—Florida wreckers—On the Everglades—Look out for snakes—Indians—Retreat through the forest—The old lighthouse—A siege—Killing for killing’s sake—Attempt to burn us out—The Redskins defeated—The turn of the tide—Safe on board.

We had returned but a few days, and Lejoillie had scarcely had time to arrange the collections he had made daring our late trip, when the *Great Alexander* anchored off the island, and Captain Crump came on shore to deliver some goods he had brought for my uncle. He was going afterwards down the east coast to the Florida Keys, as those coral reefs and islands which fringe the southern end of the peninsula are called. He intended to touch at several places on his way, and perhaps afterwards run up the west coast as far as Cedar Keys.

Lejoillie at once inquired whether he would convey passengers; and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, he invited Carlos and me to accompany him, and Tim if he wished to go.

My father and uncle willingly gave us leave, and we lost no time in making preparations for the voyage. This was soon done, and that very evening we went on board. Captain Crump had brought a fresh supply of ammunition; and as we had plenty of provisions, we were in want of nothing.

I took Caesar, and Carlos had two other dogs. I have already described the schooner, as well as that portion of the Saint John River which we now sailed over. Rounding the Hazard Lighthouse, we steered for Saint Augustine, not only the oldest city in Florida, but the most ancient built by Europeans in the whole continent of North America. It stands on a narrow peninsula formed by the Sebastian and Matanzas rivers.

Carlos had often been there before, as it is only a few miles across from the Saint John River, and he had friends and relatives of his mother residing there. It still contains many old Spanish buildings, which give it a very picturesque appearance. The streets are, however, somewhat narrow and paved with stone, or rather with a conglomerate of shells. As we remained there but a few hours, I can say little more about it.

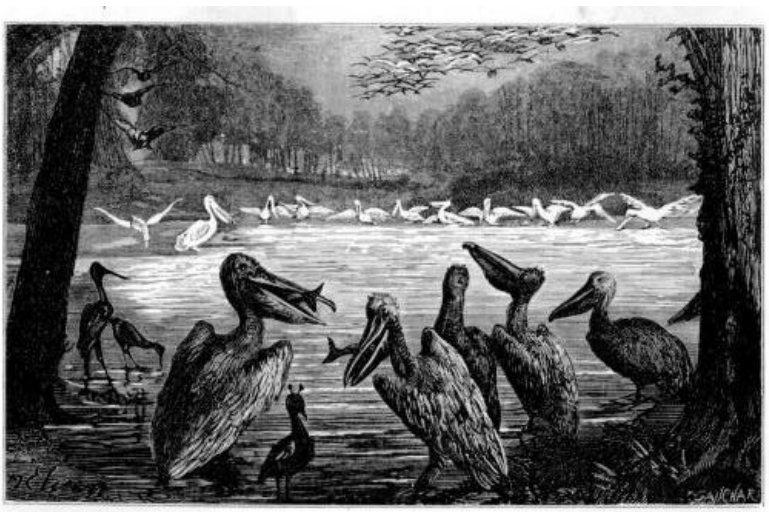
From Saint Augustine, for three hundred miles southward, there extends a succession of long narrow banks, which form the outside of a series of lagoons, so shallow that only vessels drawing a very few feet of water can navigate them. We kept out to sea for about a hundred miles, when, passing through the Mosquito Inlet, we entered the Mosquito Lagoon. Outside, we had been tumbling about in the rolling Atlantic. We were now in perfectly smooth water; but our skipper and his mate had to keep a sharp look-out, to avoid running on the numerous shoals which lay in our course. The narrow strip of land outside was only a few feet in height, covered with pines, oaks, and palmettos. As it was impossible to navigate the lagoon at night, we came to anchor. The next morning we continued our voyage. Looking over the side, we could see the fish swimming about in vast numbers. Frequently we found ourselves scraping along over oyster-beds, which in some places rose to within a couple of feet of the surface. As we got farther to the south, the banks were fringed with mangroves, and the cabbage-palm and palmetto made their appearance. On some of these oyster-reefs the mangrove trees had struck root—thus forming islands, which are constantly increasing, and still further narrowing the channel.

Leaving the Mosquito Inlet, we entered another lagoon, known as Indian River, upwards of a hundred miles in length, and in some places only sixty or seventy yards across, though in others three miles in width. The most interesting objects on shore were the orange-groves, for which the banks of the Indian River are celebrated. Some of the plantations are of large size; and our skipper told us that one we were then passing produced in good years a crop of more than a quarter of a million of oranges.

One afternoon, the wind having dropped completely, we came to anchor off a sandy point which afforded an easy landing-place. Our skipper having lent us his boat, advised us to go on shore, and to make our way towards the south, when, as he said, “we should see what we should see;” adding, “Don’t let your dogs get ahead of you, friends, or they will spoil your sport.”

Making our way in the direction pointed out, we saw before us a creek falling into the lagoon. Extending some distance from it was a forest of dead trees, the stems and branches bare and gaunt, crusted with white, and supporting on their highest branches the roughly-constructed nests of a vast colony of pelicans, the most curious-looking birds of the feathered tribe.

As we approached the spot, our ears were assailed by a chorus of discordant sounds, proceeding not only from pelicans, but from numerous other aquatic birds collected on the shores of the creek. Holding back our dogs, we made our way through a tangled wood, concealing ourselves as much as possible, until we got within a short distance of the creek, where we lay hid behind some bushes, whence, on looking through the branches, we were rewarded with a most curious sight. An army of white pelicans was drawn up in a row across the middle of the creek, the water reaching half-way up their bodies, while they stood upright with their necks raised in the air, evidently engaged in some important occupation, in which they were so absorbed that they did not observe our approach. They were apparently waiting in the attitude of attention for a signal from a large, grave-looking old pelican, the chief of their band, who stood on the shore ready to issue his orders. Presently we heard him utter two loud cries in a hollow tone, which sounded like “Heou-korr, heou-korr!” The instant the signal was given the troop started forward, beating the water with their outstretched wings, and holding their necks far forward; their object being, as we soon afterwards discovered, to drive before them into shallow water the fish swimming in the stream.



PELICANS FISHING.

The two ends of the line advanced faster than the centre, so that in a short time the birds formed a vast crescent, which stretched across a good-sized bay; and as the distance from one bird to another was measured exactly by the span of their wings, not a single fish could break through the circle of menacing beaks. Indeed, the pelicans enclosed the fish with their united wings in a regular line as close and compact as a trawl or drag-net. As the circle gradually contracted, the fish began to jump into the air, and to dart about in all directions, leaving many a muddy streak to mark their course.

Besides the old “fugleman”, there were several other patriarchs, who now advanced into the water to perform the office of fishermen. Standing perfectly motionless, they seized the fish as they passed, and stowed them away methodically in their enormous pouches under their beaks. The whole of this time the rest of the troop continued to beat the water with their wings, and appeared to be fully occupied in preventing their prey from escaping, without attempting to catch any in their own beaks.

This curious fishing appeared to have excited immense interest among the feathered tribes of the neighbourhood. Birds of every description were collected on the surrounding trees, filling the air with their discordant cries, apparently jealous of the pelicans, and eager to take a part in the feast which they were engaged in providing.

Clouds of gulls and sea-mews fluttered over the surface of the water, seizing any small fry they could reach, while robber crows quarrelled over scraps of stolen fish; and three or four bold grebes succeeded in getting into the circle, where they floated and dived at leisure, successfully avoiding the numerous thrusts aimed at them by the formidable beaks of the pelicans.

Several cormorants, perched on the trunks of submerged trees, now and then darted down like arrows on some big fish which their keen eyes had espied, and as they rose, tossing them up in the air with their tails, they never failed to catch them again by the head, and swallow them at a mouthful. The pelicans did not venture to interfere with these rovers of the deep, being probably well acquainted with the strength of their powerful beaks. Lastly, came a mob of egrets, crab-eaters, and little herons, which perched on the surrounding trees, stretched out their necks,

rolled their wild eyes, and danced about on the dead branches, uttering their jealous cries, but not daring to interfere with the industrious pelicans.

The fishing over, the pelicans arranged themselves in a circle on the sand, when those who had been engaged in fishing proceeded to empty deliberately their pouches, spreading the contents before their grave old chief, each taking care to knock on the head any fish which was still living. Then, at a signal from the chief, a bird advanced, and taking a fish swallowed it; then came another croak, and another pelican walked forward and took his share, and so on until every bird had been fed.

The feast over, they began carefully to prune their damp plumage, turning their necks over their backs in a way of which I should not have supposed them capable. Having arranged their plumage, they moved off towards their roosting-places, and the rest of the birds which had been watching their departure darted down, hoping to pick up some of the fish they might have left.

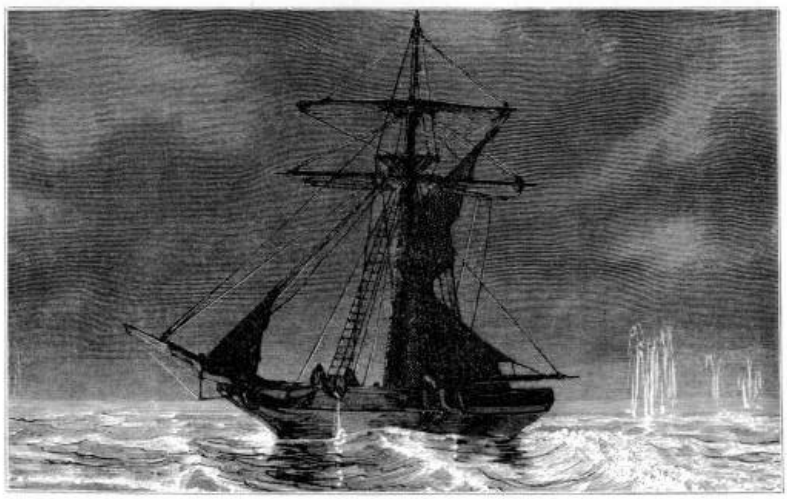
Lejoillie all the time, though scarcely able to contain himself for laughter, was holding his gun, ready to obtain specimens for his collection.

At length, fixing his eye on a blue crab-eater, he fired, and the bird fell to the ground. At the sound of the shot the pelicans took to flight in good order, followed by the cormorants and crows; the gulls and terns flew off up the creek; but the herons, more courageous or more stupid, remained perched on the higher branches of the neighbouring trees.

Not to let them all escape, I aimed at a beautiful egret with white plumage, and to my great delight down it fell. It was nearly three feet in height, with a long tuft of silken and silvery feathers down the back of its neck. Carlos knocked over a beautiful little bird with a chestnut-coloured head, a perfect heron in miniature, but only the size of a thrush. Lejoillie was delighted, and would have hugged us both as we brought him the specimens.

As there was no chance of a breeze, we agreed to spend the night on shore, where we could stretch our legs and enjoy a cooler air than we could find in our close little cabin. We accordingly sent for a sail, rigged a tent, lighted a fire, and did our best to make ourselves at home, while Lejoillie skinned his birds and “potted” his insects, as Carlos used to call the operation.

“I wish he’d pot these mesquitoes,” exclaimed my cousin, as clouds of what he called “blind mesquitoes” came round us, dropping into the pot in which our coffee was boiling, and covering all our food. As, however, they did not bite like the “galley nippers” of other parts, we soon got accustomed to them, and if they added to the strength of our coffee we did not mind. We were not, however, allowed to finish our night’s rest. A breeze unexpectedly getting up, the skipper called us on board, and we continued our course down the lagoon. I never remember seeing the water so phosphorescent in any other part of the world. We could distinguish the jew-fish, the saw-fish, and many other denizens of those Southern waters, which, disturbed by the schooner’s keel, darted away in all directions in a blaze of light, every scale on their bodies being clearly defined. Indeed, they looked like meteors, their rapid course marked by trails of light. The next day the wind was so light that we made but slow progress. The appearance of the shore on either hand was monotonous in the extreme. At length, passing the settlement of Saint Lucie, the most southern in Florida, we might have got out to the ocean through the Indian River Inlet, but the sea was breaking heavily on the bar; and as the weather looked threatening, we continued our course down the lagoon, steering for an opening called Jupiter Inlet. At night we lay-to among a number of mangrove islets, on the east bank of the sound, being just able to see our way until we dropped anchor.



THE PHOSPHORESCENT SEA.

Scarcely were the sails furled than the storm which had been brewing burst above our heads. The thunder roared, lightning flashed, and down came the rain in torrents, flooding our decks. We had to take refuge in the cabin, which we shared with the troops of cockroaches, centipedes, and numberless other creeping things. At length the rain ceased, and the thunder rolled away, and we were expecting to enjoy some sleep, when clouds of mosquitoes and sand-flies came off, literally filling the air, and, finding their way into the cabin, made a fearful onslaught on our bodies. In vain we endeavoured to shield ourselves from their sharp stings. They defied the clouds of tobacco smoke we puffed at them. We had no sulphur, or we would have submitted to inhale its noxious fumes in preference to being bitten by these abominable creatures.

“Have patience, my friends!” cried Lejoillie, when he heard Carlos, Tim, and me crying out as we slapped our hands

and faces, and tried to drive off our assailants; “recollect we are suffering in the cause of science.”

“All very well for you who get the honour and glory, but, for my part, I hope never to endure such another night of misery again,” cried Carlos.

Daylight came at last, when, going upon deck, we found ourselves in the midst of a forest of mangroves, rising some forty or fifty feet above the water, the lower branches, stems, and spider-like limbs, within reach of high-tide, being completely covered with thick clusters of oysters.

“Sure, do them shell-fish grow on the trees?” exclaimed Tim. “Though I’ve been the world round, never did I see such curious fruit.”

Captain Crump explained that the young oysters seize on every hard object on which to fix themselves; and he pointed out the mud-banks, where they lay three or four feet in depth Tim, jumping into the boat, rowed off, and soon brought back several branches of oysters, which he thought would serve us for breakfast. We found them, however, very bitter to our taste.

THE RACOON.

The skipper told us they were called ’coon oysters, as the racoons are very fond of them, or perhaps can get at them with greater ease than they can obtain the common oyster. While we were watching the shore, sure enough a racoon came down, and seizing several oysters which hung just below the surface, picked them off the branch, and shaking them violently backwards and forwards, ran back with his prize to a convenient spot on the beach, where, with his teeth and claws, he opened the shells, and speedily devoured the contents. Presently we saw him dart into the water, and return with a handful of shrimps, which his keen eyes had perceived; and he again immediately sat himself down to devour them, giving each of them a pinch as he placed them by his side. He appeared perfectly fearless of the neighbourhood of the vessel, though, no doubt, had we been on shore with our dogs and guns, he would quickly have concealed himself.

Lejoillie remained in the bows of the vessel watching its movements with his gun ready. As soon as the poor ’coon had finished its meal, destined to be its last, he fired, and over it fell, though still struggling violently. Tim and another man immediately jumped into the boat, and pulling to the shore, quickly put it out of pain, and brought it on board. It was about the size of a fox, being somewhat larger than the common racoon. Lejoillie called it the agouara, and our skipper said it was the crab-eater. The fur was of a blackish-grey, with a tinge of yellow. The tail was somewhat short and marked, with six black rings on a greyish ground.

As there was but little chance of our making progress for some hours to come, after breakfast we pulled off in the boat to secure some fish for dinner. Our skipper possessed a species of harpoon called grains, which consists of a two-pronged iron-headed barb, about ten inches in length. The head is loosely slipped into a socket at the end of a staff about twelve feet long, and the two are connected by a rope. A double prong is used for catching fish, but for killing turtle a single-pronged barbed head is employed, as it pierces the shell more easily. We had not gone far when Captain Crump, standing up in the bows like an old Triton, lowered his weapon close to the water; it flew from his hand, and immediately afterwards he drew up a red-fish of about twelve pounds weight, and threw it into the bottom of the boat. He then stood ready for another stroke. Again he darted down the deadly weapon. The head, which had a long line attached to it, by slipping off at once from the staff, remained sticking in the fish, which, after being allowed to struggle so as to exhaust its strength, was hauled on board. Three or four other fish having been caught in the same way, we had an ample supply for ourselves and dogs. We pulled back to the schooner, on our way collecting, off a bank, a number of fine oysters, very superior to those which the ’coons are addicted to eating.

A FISHING EXCURSION.

At length a light breeze sprang up, sufficient to carry us at a slow rate down the sound. We passed vast numbers of the Florida cormorants—a small species, which breeds in the mangrove islets. They were feeding on shoals of mullet, which rushed along the surface of the water, endeavouring to escape the attacks of sharks, porpoises, and other cruel foes beneath the surface. The cormorants, however, did not have it all their own way; for, watching their opportunity, numbers of ospreys and pelicans incessantly splashed down among them to rob them of their prey. Whenever we brought up, we pulled off in the boat to supply ourselves with fish, which we seldom failed to take with hook and line, even when the skipper was unsuccessful with his grains. We baited with land-crabs, which abound in the mangrove swamps. Frequently within a quarter of an hour we caught red-fish, dark-fleshed jack, and black and white banded sheep's-heads, in numbers sufficient to feed all on board. Indeed, we agreed that no one need starve in Florida, if only provided with guns and ammunition, hooks, lines, and harpoons.

At length Jupiter Inlet was reached. It is narrow, and very shallow, and is occasionally closed by a strong easterly gale. We were now once more in the open sea, steering southward for Key Biscayne, at the north end of a line of keys or islets which sweep round the whole southern coast of Florida. Our skipper kept a sharp look-out for wrecks, numbers of which occur on this dangerous coast. His object was, he said, to assist the crews, and to take possession of the cargoes. There were, he told us, a number of vessels so employed—cutters and schooners constantly cruising about in search of wrecks. Their skippers were honest men; but there were others—"beach-combers," he called them—who not only plundered shipwrecked crews, but endeavoured to allure to their destruction, by means of false lights, any vessels approaching the coast. Many a stout ship has thus been lost, their crews miserably perishing.

Although our skipper spoke with just indignation of such a mode of proceeding, he had no objection whatever, when a ship was on shore, to get out of her all the booty he could obtain. We passed the skeletons of several wrecks; but they had long before been visited by the ever-vigilant wreckers, and everything of value on board carried away.

Lejoillie had a great desire to visit the Everglades—a large tract extending over the greater part of the southern end of Florida. It consists of a vast plain of coarse saw-grass; above which, here and there, rise well-wooded and fertile islands, composed of coral rock of a crescent form, which they assumed when first forced up, by some convulsion of nature, above the surface of the ocean. The plain is swampy; and down it narrow channels exist, which drain the water in a great measure towards the west.

As our skipper wished to obtain some cocoa-nuts which grew abundantly on the shore, and proposed to employ the time of our absence in catching turtle, he consented to bring up for a few hours; advising us to keep a sharp look-out for Indians, and to avoid them, as they would certainly rob us, and perhaps take our lives, should they find us off our guard. He offered to allow one of his crew to accompany us, who, being well acquainted with the country, and a good sportsman—as most wreckers are—would act as our guide.

Standing into a small bay, lined on either side with mangroves and cabbage-palms, having at the farther end a grove of cocoa-nut trees, we came to anchor. At the outer point was a deserted lighthouse, which we agreed would serve as a guide to us should we have any difficulty in finding our way back. We lost no time in going on shore, accompanied by Tim and Bill Dixie, boatswain of the *Great Alexander*, and forthwith made our way west towards the nearest point on the Everglades. We had not gone far before we fell in with a deer, which I shot. Knowing how welcome it would be on board, and hoping the schooner had not sailed, we despatched Bill to request the captain to send for it. In the meantime, leaving Tim to guard the game, we went forward, and were fortunate enough to shoot a couple of parrots, which were sent on board with the men who shortly afterwards made their appearance.

Having as much game as we required, Lejoillie begged that we would at once push forward, as our object was to visit the Everglades, which we had not hitherto reached.

The Everglades answered the description I had heard of them. Carlos and I agreed that there was so little attractive in the region, that except for the sake of saying we had been there, we would rather have remained on board and amused ourselves by fishing or spearing turtle with the skipper. However, as we had come, and our friend wished to proceed, we went on with him. Though we had shot several birds, Lejoillie wanted to reach one of the woody islands I have described, which appeared some way ahead; so on we went.

"Keep a look-out for snakes," said Carlos, "or we may very likely step on one before we see it."

"It will not be very easy to avoid the creatures in this high grass," I observed. "Don't you think we had better turn

back?”

“Not until we have attained the object of our visit to this region, my friends,” answered the naturalist. “The love of science should make us despise all dangers and difficulties.”

The next instant Carlos fired. Running forward, we found that he had blown off the head of a huge rattlesnake which his keen eye had detected in the grass, though the rest of us had failed to see it. It proved that his warning was not unnecessary. The creature was over seven feet long, and a bite from its fangs would quickly have proved fatal.

Still, Lejoillie insisted on going forward, and we were ashamed of deserting him. At length the island for which we were aiming was reached. It extended for several miles, in a crescent form, from north to south-west, rising abruptly eight or ten feet above the plain. It was composed entirely of coral, though covered over thickly with creepers of various sorts. On the summit grew enormous trees mostly of the palm species, such as I have before described.

We halted on the top to refresh ourselves with the provender we had brought. Not until then did we discover how large a portion of the day had gone by. We lighted a fire to boil our kettle, and were seated round it, the smoke partially keeping at bay the mosquitoes and other stinging creatures, when Tim, who had gone a short distance from the camp, came running back.

“We had better be afther puttin’ our best foot foremost, gentlemen!” he exclaimed. “As I was lookin’ away to the westward, my eye fell on a number of creatures moving among the grass. I stopped until they came to an open space; then I saw that they were Redskins, with feathers on their heads and firelocks in their hands. I counted twenty of them, at least; and there were more behind. Maybe they have seen the smoke of our fire, and are coming to see who we are and what we are about. They may be friendly; but I’m afther thinkin’ that if they find they outnumber us, they’ll be for taking our scalps, if they can get them. I’m an old soldier, and I wouldn’t be afther sayin’ ‘run’ from an enemy if there was a chance of driving him back; but still the best thing we can do is to beat a retreat in time.”

“I believe that Tim’s advice is good,” observed Carlos.

“I am sure it is,” I added. “If we were to stop here and try to defend ourselves, the Indians would starve us out, at all events. What do you say, Lejoillie?”

“*Ma foi*! that we had better retreat,” exclaimed the naturalist.

“Well, then, gentlemen, we will throw a few more sticks on the fire, to cause plenty of smoke; and that’ll make the Redskins fancy that we have a large party encamped, so that they will approach more cautiously, and we shall have time to get well ahead,” said Tim.

The old soldier’s advice was therefore acted upon. We gathered up our rifles and the various articles which lay on the grass, and began to retreat, as far as I could judge, by the way we had come. The sky, however, which had hitherto been clear, had, unfortunately for us, become obscured, and it was difficult to decide which was the right direction. We pushed forward as fast as we could; but the old wrecker, our guide, seemed, as we thought, somewhat uncertain of the path we ought to take. We frequently looked back, and, as long as we could see the island, it assisted to guide us. Nothing of the Indians could be discovered; but that was no proof that they were not near, as they would keep concealed in the tall grass, and wait until they had a favourable opportunity of pouncing suddenly upon us. I must say that we felt rather ashamed of ourselves for running away from what, after all, might prove an imaginary danger. Still, it was better to run than to be overpowered and scalped,—our probable fate should the Indians prove to be hostile; and, from Tim’s account, they were certainly on the war-path. The sun had sunk beyond the vast plain of grass stretched out behind us, when we emerged from the Everglades, and found ourselves in the forest-belt which separates that region from the sea. We now called a halt, to consider what course to pursue. It was evident that we had not returned by the same way we had come, for we could discover no signs of having been on the spot before.

“We cannot be more than a couple of miles from the shore, and when we reach it, we shall know which direction to take,” said our guide. “We may still, if we push on, keep ahead of the Redskins.”

Though tired and hungry, we agreed that it would be more prudent to push on than to halt longer. Scarcely, however, had we got among the palmetto-scrub, than looking back, to ascertain if we were followed, I caught sight, amid the thickening gloom, of a number of dark figures following up our trail. I pointed them out to Tim.

“Do you advise that we should halt and face them, or continue our course?” I asked.

“No use halting unless we are prepared to fight it out to the last,” he answered; “better to keep moving on, while we can see our way. And maybe they don’t intend to attack us at all until we have encamped, in the hope to find most of us asleep.”

Lejoillie and Carlos agreed with Tim. We spoke in undertones, so that our voices might not reach our pursuers. They, probably, were well aware that there were only five of us; but they knew that five rifles might bring down as many of their number before they had killed us, and this made them afraid of approaching too near until they could find us, as they hoped, off our guard. It was not a pleasant feeling to know that a party of savages was close upon our heels, and yet not to be able even to get a sight of them; for after the momentary glance Tim and I had obtained of our pursuers, they did not again show themselves, though we felt sure that they were skulking along under cover of the trees and bushes.

The old wrecker kept us at a good pace, scrambling and leaping over fallen trunks, until we saw the top of the old lighthouse, for which we had been looking, rising above the palmetto-scrub. The dense foliage had hitherto concealed it, though it was not more than a hundred yards off. We hurried on. Its massive walls would, at all events, afford us a place of safety until daylight. At that instant our ears were assailed by a fearful war-whoop, and a shower of bullets

and arrows whistled about our heads; but, happily, not one of us was hit.

“Keep together, gentlemen,” cried Tim; “and don’t fire until we can see our enemies. If we do, they’ll take the opportunity of springing upon us before we have time to reload, and we shall be done for.”

Happily the ground between us and the lighthouse was pretty open. As we made our way over it, lighted by the moon, which had just risen, I could see our schooner in the distance, standing in for the bay, and another vessel farther off.

We dashed across the open as fast as our legs could carry us, expecting every moment to have another shower of missiles sent rattling after us; but the Indians were either stopping to reload, or were so much astonished at seeing us unhurt that they thought it useless to fire again. At all events, we gained the lighthouse in safety. There was a strong door at the base, which, happily, had been left unbarred. We dashed in and secured it, while we made our way up the winding steps to the first landing-place, whence two narrow windows commanded the ground below on either side. Scarcely had we reached it than we saw the Indians bursting out from among the trees, not aware, apparently, that we had already gained a place of safety. As we had not fired, they might possibly have supposed that we were unarmed; for they advanced fearlessly, shouting and shrieking, close up to the walls of the tower.

“Let them shout on,” said Lejoillie, “their shrieks cannot hurt us; and, unless they attempt to break in, it would be useless to shoot the poor wretches.”

The enraged cries of the Indians increased when they found that the door was closed. They attacked it with their tomahawks; but their weapons were blunted against the hard oak, clamped with iron as it was. By Tim’s advice we still reserved our fire, as our stock of ammunition was small, and we might require it for an emergency.

The closed door must have showed the Indians that we were within, though, as we took care to conceal ourselves, they might not otherwise have known it.

The door was, fortunately, fitted into the wall of the building, and was so strongly and tightly closed as to prevent the entrance of water, which we saw, from the marks on the walls, must occasionally rise some feet in depth round it. As we did not venture to look out of the window, we could only judge, by the sounds which reached us, what the Indians were about. There was not much to fear from the blows of their tomahawks, though in time they might have contrived to cut a small hole through the door. We could, however, hear the sound of chopping again and again repeated, while the shouts and shrieks of the savages, as they ran round the building looking out for an opening, became more and more vehement. At last they were silent. Wishing to ascertain what they were about, I crept up to the window, and put out my head far enough to take a glance round one side of the tower and over the ground below me for some distance. I saw that a party of Indians were engaged in bringing up a long log of wood, which they evidently intended to use as a battering-ram. I must have been seen, for, although I withdrew my head as rapidly as I could, the next instant a couple of arrows entered the window, and several others struck the wall outside. Had I remained a moment longer, I should probably have been killed or wounded.

“We must prevent them battering in the door,” I exclaimed, after telling my companions what I had seen. “We must show the fellows that we have got fire-arms, and know how to use them.”

The difficulty, however, was to reach our assailants without exposing ourselves. One window only commanded the approach to the door. Here Tim offered to station himself, and begged us to hand the rifles up to him as fast as we could load them.

“I’ll teach the spalpeens a lesson they’ll not forget,” he said, as he took aim with his rifle. He fired, but with what result we could not tell.

“Hand up another,” he cried; “quick, quick!” Again he fired, while I loaded the first. In this way one after the other was discharged and reloaded, so that Tim was able to fire with a rapidity which must have astonished the Indians, who had not, apparently, until then discovered the existence of the window, as he fired eight or ten times before any arrows were shot in return. Still the savages, with unusual perseverance, rushed forward, carrying the log in their arms, and drove it against the door, which creaked and groaned under their repeated blows. From the sounds which reached us, it appeared too probable that they would succeed in breaking it in. But even should they do so, we might still defend ourselves on the staircase; for, as it would allow only one person to ascend at a time, we should be able to keep the whole horde at bay. How many Indians had fallen from Tim’s fire we could not ascertain, on account of the uncertain light and the rapid way they were moving about. He had probably oftener missed than struck an enemy. It was evident, however, that his fire had at length become too hot for them, as the blows on the door ceased, and he told us that they had thrown down the log, and were retreating.

“Hand me up another rifle,” he cried; “I’ll give them a few parting shots.”

“Oh, let them escape without further punishment, my friend,” said Lejoillie. “We should not wish to take their lives. They only acted according to their instincts, and considered that we were trespassing on their property.”

Tim did not seem to understand this idea; nor did Carlos, who, having his musket ready, sprang to the window and fired. The act nearly cost him his life for at that moment an arrow flew in, and, grazing his head, struck the wall behind him. This showed us that the Indians were on the watch, and that we must be careful how we exposed ourselves.

In the meantime, Dixie, our guide, had gone down to examine the door, and came back to report that it still stood firm, although the Indians’ weapons had made some impression on it, having formed a slit in the upper part, two or three splinters being actually driven in. It was thus evident that had they persevered they might in time have cut through the door; though the aperture would have enabled us to fire at them, and would probably have given us an

advantage which they little expected. As it would have been difficult to stop up the hole, we allowed it to remain.

Doubting, however, that the Indians had gone off altogether, we kept a vigilant watch for their return. We soon found, indeed, that they were not so easily defeated as we had hoped. Again looking out of the window, I saw them coming back, each man loaded with a mass of brushwood. Their object was evidently to kindle a fire round the door; and having burned it down, to rush in and capture us while we were smothered with smoke. It was of the greatest importance to prevent them from placing the fagots as they intended; and Tim once more resumed his post at the window to fire at them as they approached. The wood they carried served as shields, which they held over their heads, and trusting to this protection they rushed forward, each man throwing down his load as he got near the door; but the bullets from Tim's rifle struck several of them before they got as close as they intended. Notwithstanding this, however, a heap of firewood was piled up, in a short time, close to one side of the building. The Indians must, however, have known that the moment the flames burst forth, they would be brought into sight, and be more exposed than heretofore to our shots, and they therefore seemed very unwilling to set fire to it. At length the last fagot was thrown down, and Tim told us that he saw an Indian approaching with a flaming torch, which he had kindled at a distance.

"The fellow keeps leaping about like a regular Jack-o'-lantern; but I'll soon put a stop to his dancing," he added.

The Indians, however, must have foreseen that the torch-bearer would be specially exposed, and to cover his advance they began shooting their arrows with a rapidity which compelled Tim to keep under shelter. Several came through the window, while others struck the stones on either side. Still undaunted, Tim stood ready to fire. It must be remembered that we were in comparative darkness, the faint light which came through the windows alone enabling us to load our rifles, and see our way about the little rooms in which we were stationed. Again Tim stepped forward; the crack of his rifle was heard.

"I'm mightily afraid that I missed him," he cried, as he sprang back under shelter. "Hand me up another rifle."

Once more he fired.

"I've hit him this time," he cried out; "but sure the fellow has thrown his torch among the fagots."

The thick smoke which in another minute came curling up around us proved too truly that the Indian had effected his purpose; while the arrows which flew in at the window prevented us from firing. We could hear their shrieks and cries of triumph, as they believed that in a short time we should become their victims. None of us, however, thought of yielding. To avoid the smoke we went down to the lower story. Although a small quantity made its way through the crack, we could breathe freely, and we calculated that it would take some time before the outer door was burned through. We held a consultation as to how we should act when that should happen. Carlos was for rushing out, firing a volley at our assailants, and endeavouring to drive them back with our hunting-knives. Tim advised that we should hold the fort to the last.

"Sure, a little smoke won't do us any harm," he exclaimed. "The Redskins will have to clear away the ashes before they can get in, an' we shall then have an opportunity of shooting down not a few of them when they do that."

Lejoillie proposed that we should retire to the upper story, to which the Indians would not probably venture to ascend, as it could only be reached by a trap-door.

I, however, pointed out that they might fill the interior of the building with fagots, and setting them on fire, literally roast us. I therefore thought our safest plan would be to remain on the ground-floor, as Tim had proposed. Our guide also thought Tim was right, and we soon won Carlos and Lejoillie over to our opinion.

We spent, as may be supposed, a very anxious time. The fagots, being composed chiefly of green wood, though they caused a great smoke outside, did not burn as rapidly as we expected, and as yet the door, when we felt it, was not even hot. This satisfied us that hours might elapse before it was burned through. I again ran upstairs, and in spite of the smoke which came through the window, on looking out as the wreaths were occasionally blown aside, I saw that the Indians were keeping under cover to avoid our bullets, and waiting until the fire had done its work. They, of course, knew that the glare of the flames would expose them to view should they venture into the open. Finding that the top of the tower was tolerably free from smoke, I climbed up to the lantern whence I could obtain a view over the sea. I looked out eagerly for the schooner. She must have come up to the spot where we had left her, but she was nowhere visible. One thing I observed, however, was, that the tide, having already risen, was washing round the mangrove trees at the base of the tower; and it appeared to me that in a few minutes it would be surrounded.

As our distance from the schooner could not be great, I hoped those on board had heard the firing, and, guessing that we were attacked, would come to our rescue. On that point, however, I was uncertain, as the skipper would be unwilling to leave his vessel, and the few hands he could bring with him would, he might think, be insufficient to drive back the Indians. I was, therefore, not very sanguine that we should receive assistance from him.

I did not remain long in my exposed position, as, should I be seen by the Indians, I thought that some of them might steal up and make me a target for their arrows. I therefore hurried down again, to report my movements to my companions. That I was right in my conjecture as to the rising of the tide we soon had proof, for the water was already bubbling up under the door, loosened somewhat by the blows of the Indians' battering-ram; and to avoid wetting our feet, we had to retreat from the lower steps of the stair. A hissing sound soon after showed us that the water, rushing in, was extinguishing the fire burning nearest the ground, though the upper part of the pile of brushwood still crackled and smoked as before. We now hoped that it might be an unusually high-tide, so that the tower would be completely surrounded.

Our hopes were not disappointed; the hissing sound increased, while the smoke decreased. In a short time the floor of the tower was a foot deep in water, and the smoke ceased to come through the slit in the door. I ran upstairs,

though I could see the glare of fire. On looking out, I discovered that it was produced by portions of the burning brushwood, which were being carried away by the water as it swept in a broad sheet round the base of the tower. I uttered a silent prayer of gratitude. We were safe for the present. The attempt of the Indians to burn us out had failed; and after the reception they had met with from our fire-arms, they were not likely to venture again up to the tower by wading through the water. I called down to my companions, who soon joined me.

“We must not trust too much to them, though,” observed Carlos. “I know the cunning of the Redskins; they’ll wait until the tide falls, and then again attack us.”

As we watched the water, it seemed as if about to cover the whole level ground, leaving only a rock here and there above the surface.

“At all events, we shall be safe till daylight, as the tide won’t go down for some hours after then,” observed Dixie; “and by that time it will be curious if Captain Crump doesn’t send to look for us.”

On hearing this, I proposed that we should fire off our rifles from the summit of the tower, when probably the sound would reach him. Just as we were about to do so, Carlos exclaimed—

“Can that be a boat coming round the point there?”

I looked in the direction he pointed. I had little doubt about the matter. In a short time we clearly made out a boat pulling towards us. I fired off my rifle, and we all shouted at the top of our voices. She came on quickly, and we now saw her directing her course to the tower. The water was perfectly smooth; she was thus able to get up close to the base. Captain Crump himself was seated in the stern. He hailed, to know what had happened. A few words explained this. The difficulty was to get into the boat. Should we open the door, the water, which was of considerable height outside, would rush in and wet us all through, if it did not drown us. There was, fortunately, a long rope in the boat. By means of the straps to our knapsacks, our handkerchiefs, and some pieces of string which we mustered among us, we formed a line of sufficient length to lower down and haul up the rope. The end of this we secured to an iron hinge, to which a shutter had once been fixed.

Dixie, as the only sailor amongst us, offered to go first. He very quickly descended into the boat. We followed in succession; when the captain, standing up, cut the rope above his head.

“Now, lads, let’s make the best of our way back,” he said; “the tide will soon be falling, and I have no fancy to be stranded and have to fight a battle with Indians, or, what would be worse, find that they had made their way on board the schooner during our absence.”

We, of course, were equally anxious to get away from the dangerous neighbourhood; and pulling the boat out through the slight surf which broke on the shore, we were soon clear of the land.

On hearing our account, our worthy skipper congratulated us on our escape, and blamed himself for having allowed us to go on shore.

“I ought to have warned you not to go so far, for the Indians hereabouts are always ready to attack white men, if they can find them unprepared for resistance; and they have already cut off several settlers and hunters, whom they took by surprise,” he observed.

It was nearly morning by the time we reached the schooner, and as there was a light wind off shore, the captain immediately got under weigh. We were then glad enough to wrap ourselves in our blankets, and lie down on the deck to obtain the rest we so much needed.

Chapter Six.

The cruise continued—Among the islets—Turtles—Harpooning—A beautiful subject for study—Lejoillie obtains a supply of curiosities—A dangerous route—Tim’s advice—Caught in a gale—The schooner comes to grief—Resolve to cross the country—Voyage up the river—Monster fish—The canoe leaks—We land and camp—Silas munch—Appearance of the stream—An alligator island—Good shooting—An unpleasant concert—Encounter with a bear—A curious cry—Lejoillie secures a prize—The voyage finished—friendly counsel—“Jupiter,” our guide—We part with our pilot.

I cannot stop to describe the many adventures we met with on our voyage, or the curious scenes we witnessed. We were now sailing among that group of islands at the southern extremity of Florida, inside the ill-famed Florida reef, on which so many stout ships have been cast away. The inhabitants were mostly ruffianly characters, who lived by the plunder they obtained from the vessels wrecked on their shores. We put into a small bay in one of the largest of these islands, called Cayolargo. Though it is composed of coral rock, there are numerous spaces covered with dark-red soil, from which the inhabitants raise pineapples in vast numbers, as well as lemons, oranges, limes, bananas, mangoes, guavas, tomatoes, alligator pears, peppers, and even sugar-canes; but as there was no near market for their produce, they depended more on the booty obtained from wrecks than on the produce of the soil. As, however, they were all well known to our skipper, who had constant dealings with them, they received us in a friendly way.

FISHING FOR SPONGES.

We afterwards passed numerous inhabited keys, among which was a group called by the Spaniards Los Martires, or The Martyrs, from the number of seamen wrecked on them who have lost their lives. In the shallow water among the keys we fell in with several boats manned by whites and negroes engaged in fishing for sponges. Some waded out from the rocks, having a long pole with a scythe-like knife at the end of it, with which the sponges were cut off from the rocks. Others sat in the boats, using a bucket with a glass bottom, which, being sunk a few inches below the surface, enabled them to peer down into the water to a depth of nearly three fathoms. The sponges were then cut off with the knife I have just described. In deep water, divers were employed; but of course the risk was great, as they were liable to attacks from sharks and other monsters of the deep.

We fell in with a countless variety of animal life in enormous quantities as we sailed along within the reef. The most curious were the beautiful paper-nautili, which swim with their long arms extended in a straight line, their bodies contrasting with their fragile shells, being remarkably ugly, and appearing as if scarcely connected with them. Porpoises rolled along in large shoals, numerous sharks showed their dark triangular fins above the water, and turtles of several species floated on the surface; while ospreys and other sea-birds flew above our heads, darting down ever and anon to pick up a luckless fish which came within their ken. As the breeze fell light, our skipper determined to obtain a supply of turtle to feed us and his crew, and to dispose of at the first port we might touch at. He had been a turtle-hunter from his youth, and knew their ways, he told us, as well as any man. There are four different species—namely, the green turtle, the hawks-bill turtle, the loggerhead turtle, and the trunk turtle. The first is that which makes its appearance at aldermanic feasts. It deposits its eggs twice a year, in May and June. Its first deposit, in which it lays about two hundred and forty eggs, is the largest. The flesh of the hawks-bill turtle is not considered equal to that of the green turtle, but its shell is of great value as an article of commerce. It also lays eggs twice a year, in July and August; generally three hundred at a time. The loggerhead lays three sets of eggs, each averaging one hundred and seventy. The trunk turtle is frequently of enormous size, with a pouch like a pelican’s; the shell is soft, and the flesh is almost of the consistency of butter. It is the least valuable, having no shell, and the flesh being seldom eaten. They all lay their eggs much in the same way. On nearing the shore on a moonlit night, the turtle raises her head above the water to ascertain that no enemy is near, and if she thinks all safe, she emits a loud hissing sound to drive away any which may be concealed from her sight. Landing, she slowly crawls over the beach, raising her head, until she has found a suitable place for depositing her eggs. She then at once forms a hollow in the sand by shovelling it out from beneath her, first by her hind flippers, then with her fore ones, until a hollow has been dug nearly two feet in length. This operation she performs in about nine minutes. Having deposited her eggs in regular layers, which occupies about twenty minutes, she scrapes the sand over them, and then smooths the surface, so that any one passing would not discover that any creature had been there. This task accomplished, she rapidly retreats to the water, leaving the eggs to be hatched by the heat of the sun. On some parts of the shore, within the space of a mile, hundreds of turtles deposit their eggs. Each time they form a new hole, generally near the first. The young, when hatched, are scarcely larger than a dollar. Having scratched their way through the sand, they at once run towards the water, though a large number are picked up on their passage by birds and the numerous other enemies of their race. All turtles have beaks; but the loggerhead has the most powerful set of jaws, which enables it to crush the shells of mollusca of large size with as much ease as a man can crack a nut. Turtles swim through the water, in spite of their shape, at great speed, with the same ease apparently as a bird flies through the air; and we saw numbers of them, as we stood on the deck of the schooner, darting about in search of their prey.

“How will you ever get hold of these fellows?” asked Carlos, as the skipper was preparing to shove off in the boat, armed with his harpoon.

“You shall see,” he answered.

Tim and I took the oars, Carlos steered, and Lejoillie, note-book in hand, was ready to jot down his remarks.

Scarcely a minute had elapsed after leaving the side of the vessel, when the skipper told us to pull in the direction he pointed, while he stood in the bows of the boat, holding a single-pronged harpoon in his hand. He had seen a turtle floating just below the surface. Almost the next instant the weapon darted with tremendous force from his hand. To the harpoon a line had been attached, which had been carefully coiled away in the bows. This quickly ran out until the huge loggerhead turtle which had been struck reached the bottom, when we hauled taut the line and belayed it. We now sat quietly waiting until the turtle should be compelled to rise to the surface to breathe. About twenty minutes passed, when, as it came up, the skipper hurled another weapon into its body. Now began the tug of war. The turtle went rushing backwards and forwards, sometimes sinking, sometimes rising, the skipper taking care to

keep the line over the bows, for had it slipped to the side, we should have been capsized in a moment so tremendous were the jerks the creature gave.

For nearly an hour the struggle continued, until the turtle gave in, when, passing a rope round one of its flippers to prevent its sinking, we towed it alongside the schooner. The turtle, however, was not dead. As we hoisted it on board, by means of the windlass and a couple of tackles fastened to a rope secured round its flippers, its huge jaws, large enough to bite a man in two, opened and shut, biting furiously at everything near it. We calculated that the monster weighed fully six hundred pounds.

We afterwards killed a hawks-bill turtle and two small green turtles, the flesh of which was kept for the cabin table. The meat was preserved by being cut up into slices and hung in the rigging to dry in the sun. After this we had turtle-soup, and turtle-steaks, and turtle-hash, until we agreed that we should infinitely prefer some slices of mutton.

It was extraordinary to observe what tenacity of life was exhibited by the turtles. For some time after the head was cut off it would snap at everything near it. Even the tail wriggled about after it was severed from the body. Captain Crump gravely asserted that, cut up a turtle as we might, it would not die until the moon rose. No doubt the heads still retained their muscular power until nightfall.

While in search of turtle, we pulled over a coral reef, where the water was so clear that we could see to the very bottom; and beautiful indeed was the spectacle we beheld. From the rocks grew sea-weeds of the most brilliant colours,—the peacock's tail, sea-fan, and other lovely forms, hanging in wreaths round the holes; while shells of every variety covered the surface of the rocks, amid which appeared sponges, sea-eggs with long spines, and sea-anemones. Hither and thither darted fish of every size and hue, from huge sharks to green, red, and gold fish of the size of minnows. On the shore of an island where we landed we found an enormous number of shells of the most brilliant colours and graceful shapes, from which Lejoillie selected so many that we could scarcely carry them back to the boat.

After touching at Key West, where the United States Government has a naval station, and in the neighbourhood of which a town of some size has sprung up, we steered due north, intending to proceed to Cedar Keys, where the *Great Alexander* was to finish her voyage. The first place at which we were to touch was called Punta Rassa, at the mouth of the river Caloosahatchee. High up the river was Fort Myers, the most westerly of the line of forts extending across the country to keep in check the Everglade Indians.

Lejoillie proposed that we should try to make our way by these forts to the head-waters of the Saint John River, by descending which we might return to Castle Kearney. Our skipper advised us, however, not to make the attempt. He warned us that the difficulties in the way—cedar swamps, rivers, lakes, marshes, wild beasts, and savage Indians—would prove insuperable, and that we should probably never again be heard of.

"Consider, my friends, how much we should add to our stock of scientific knowledge," said Lejoillie, who was not to be turned from his object.

Carlos and I were ready to accompany him; but Tim, who had listened attentively, took an opportunity of speaking to me on the subject, saying—

"It's all very fine, Mr Maurice, for Mr Jolly to wish to know about the birds an' bastes of the country; but what would be the good to him or any one else, if he got knocked on the head and scalped?—an' from the capt'n's account that seems to me mighty likely to happen. I'd stick to the *Great Alexander*, an' return home in her. The longest way round may prove the shortest way back. Or I'd wait at Cedar Keys until we can find a party of soldiers crossing the country to Saint John River; for, depend on it, the Indians are in a bad temper, an' it wouldn't be safe to cross the country with a small party."

I was much inclined to agree with Tim, and told him I would have a talk with my cousin about the matter.

The river with the long name is the southernmost of three streams which fall into a deep bay full of islets, called Charlotte Harbour. We had nearly reached a mangrove island, called Sanibel, when a squall from the eastward struck the schooner and almost laid her over on her beam-ends. The after-sails were quickly lowered, and as she righted away she flew before the gale, leaving the port for which we were bound far astern. The farther we got from the land, the heavier the sea became. At length the tossing and tumbling to which the old schooner was exposed began to tell on her hull, the seams opening and letting in the water at an unpleasant rate. The pumps and buckets were therefore set agoing, and we all turned-to, labouring at one or the other; but in spite of all our efforts there appeared a great probability that the *Great Alexander* would go to the bottom. Happily, however, the gale abated in time to prevent that catastrophe. Once more we hauled our wind and stood back, steering, however, for the northern entrance to the harbour, as our skipper intended to touch at Hickory Bluff, near the mouth of Pease Creek, instead of Punta Rassa, as he at first proposed doing. On standing in, however, we ran on one of the many oyster-banks which exist between the islands. As the tide was falling, we in vain endeavoured to haul off the schooner, which bumped pretty severely for some time,—an operation not likely to improve her seaworthy qualities. At last we were left almost high and dry,—the only advantage we gained from this being the power of collecting an ample supply of very fine oysters.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lejoillie as he popped one after another down his throat, "this is indeed a fine country, and might maintain a population as dense as that of China with the abundance of food its shores and surrounding seas afford."

"What are we to do next?" asked Carlos, when we had finished our oysters.

"Wait till the tide rises, and then, if we can keep the craft afloat, make for Hickory Bluff, where I guess we shall have to put her on shore and try to patch her up," answered the skipper.

"And how long will it take to perform that operation?" inquired Lejoillie.

“Maybe a week, or maybe a month,” was the answer. “I guess we shall have to put a new bottom into her, for most of her planks are as rotten as touchwood.”

This was not pleasant information, as we had still some miles to sail; but we were thankful that we had made the long stretch from Key West without going to the bottom. At last we did get off, and by dint of hard pumping and baling the *Great Alexander* was kept above water until we reached the neighbourhood of Hickory Bluff, on the northern shore of Pease Creek, when, the wind being favourable for the purpose, we ran the craft at high-water right up on the sandy beach just in time to prevent her sinking. As the tide on ebbing left her dry, we surveyed her bottom, when it seemed doubtful whether she would ever float again, and we had therefore to decide as to our future proceedings. Lejoillie, after examining the map, proposed that we should pull up Pease Creek to its head-waters, whence he calculated it was about a hundred miles to Lake Washington, through which the Upper Saint John River flows. We might perform the journey after leaving the canoe, he calculated, in ten days or a fortnight, or, by crossing another large lake in the intermediate space, considerably shorten the distance by land.

As we found no vessel sailing northward, Lejoillie’s plan appeared the best; and we accordingly, the next morning, having engaged a canoe, with two blacks to paddle and a white man to act as pilot, put up our goods in compact bundles, and bade farewell to the *Great Alexander*, her mosquitoes, cockroaches, scorpions, tarantulas, fleas, and bugs, as well as to her worthy skipper and his crew.

We then embarked on our adventurous voyage. Besides our crew, the canoe held Lejoillie, Carlos, Tim, and me, our stores (including powder and shot), and my faithful dog Caesar, who at once took up his position in the bows, where he sat, as if on the look-out to warn us of danger ahead. There were two spare paddles, of which Tim and I made use, as we were ashamed of sitting idle, and we found that we could greatly add to the speed of the canoe. Several times I felt something bump against the bottom of our craft, and, on asking our pilot what it was, he replied—

“Only maybe a shark or a devil-fish; they are pretty plentiful hereabout.”

Upon looking over the side indeed, so clear was the water that we could see vast numbers of monster fish,—not only sharks and devil-fish, but saw-fish, jew-fish, sting rays, whip rays, and other specimens of the finny tribe, of great size,—swimming below and around us in such numbers that they threatened to upset the canoe, and we actually struck them over and over again with our paddles.

By the time we had gone about a mile, having reached the centre of the river, a strong breeze sprang up, and a good deal of sea constantly broke over us, and compelled Carlos and Lejoillie to employ themselves in baling. Our pilot, however, assured us that, in the course of half an hour or so, we should be in smooth water, if we were not upset in the meantime. It made us shudder at what would be our fate should such an event occur. However, we were in for it, and determined to keep our course up the river. Our canoe, I should have said, was a dug-out, made from a cypress trunk, about forty feet in length and three feet in breadth, and sharp at both ends. She had eight thwarts, on which the paddlers sat, and a seat aft for the helmsman, who also used a paddle for steering. For several miles mangrove trees bordered the river on either side, without a single spot, so far as we could see, where we could land should it become necessary. Wind and tide being in our favour, we made good progress; but still the water bubbled over the gunwale, and the canoe leaked considerably. Our guide assured us that this was nothing, and that he would soon stop the leaks when we got on shore.

“If we don’t go down in the meantime, my friend,” said Lejoillie. “I rather think that in leaving the *Great Alexander*, we only tumbled out of the frying-pan into the fire.”

“Don’t trouble your head about that,” observed our guide, Silas Munch, whom, by-the-by, I ought before to have introduced. Born in the Bahamas, of British parents, he had come over to the States, and had become a naturalised citizen, such characters being known in that region as Conches. Hot sand and sea air had burned his countenance to a mahogany tint. He was small and wiry. His costume consisted of a broad-brimmed hat, a coarse blue cloth jacket worn above a jersey, while his nether man was clothed in leather gaiters reaching to the thighs, and strong boots, so that he was prepared for service either afloat or ashore. He carried a rusty rifle, with a powder-horn and belt slung over his shoulders, and an axe and long knife stuck in his belt.

We had paddled on all day. Still the banks appeared as far off as ever, and the water as rough as at first. Just, however, as the sun was sinking, Munch pointed out a sand-bank, where he thought that we could land and pass the night. We were very glad to get on shore, and haul up the canoe. While some of the party collected wood for a fire, and made other preparations for camping, Munch, taking his gun and a small iron pot, asked me if I would accompany him into the forest. In a short time we reached a group of pitch-pines, one of which he tapped, and collected the juice in the pot. Not far off also were some gum-trees, from which he gathered a handful or two of gum. With these we returned to the camp; when, mixing the juice of the pitch-pine with the gum, he boiled it down in a small tripod. The canoe being by this time dry, he spread the mixture over the leaks, and assured us that she would thus be perfectly water-tight. Though we kept up a blazing fire, the sand-flies and mosquitoes nearly drove sleep away, and we were all ready at early dawn the next morning to continue our voyage. We had now got beyond the influence of the tide, and had the current against us; but as it ran with no great strength, we made good way.

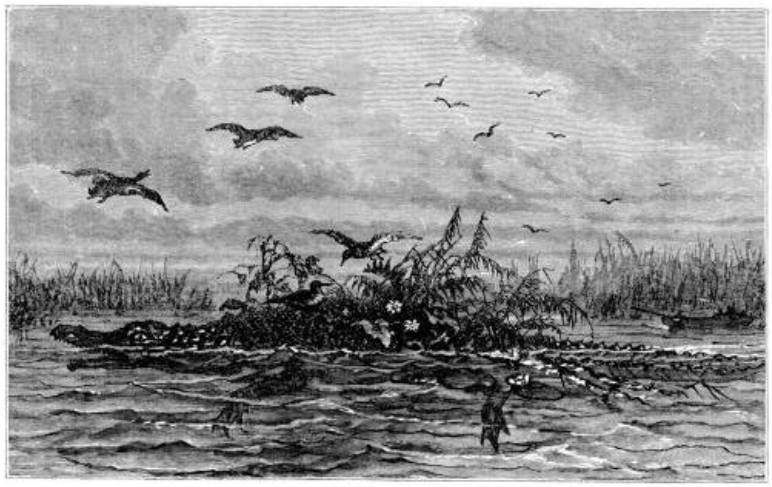
The river was still of considerable width, though the water was perfectly fresh. As we passed along the banks, alligators innumerable were seen. On one occasion a strong blast struck us as we were rounding a point, and almost drove our canoe among the tangled brushwood which lined the banks, where a dozen or more of these enormous reptiles were disporting themselves. They refused to move, until we were within a few feet of them, when half of their number plunged into the water right under our canoe, striking her bottom so violently with their scaly backs that we fully expected to be upset.

ALLIGATORS.

We paddled as hard as we could to get off the shore. Had we been capsized, our fate would have been sealed, for many of them were twenty feet in length, and could have crushed us and our canoe with one snap of their jaws. Happily, the brutes are as cowardly as they are powerful in appearance, and they were probably more frightened at us than we were at them. I rather think that Lejoillie, judging by his countenance, heartily wished himself safe on shore.

As we paddled on, the scenery changed, and animal life became more abundant. Snake-birds, uttering their shrill cries, flew off from every overhanging bough; kingfishers darted hither and thither, astonished at the appearance of our canoe; bitterns flew from tree to tree, and terrapins splashed hastily into the water, as we approached. Tall lilies, with large white, crimson, or purple blossoms, and beautiful flowers of various descriptions, fringed the water's edge; while the banks were overhung with tangled masses of the densest tropical vegetation, beyond which rose forests of cabbage-palm, backed on the higher ground by tall pine-trees. The alligators continued as plentiful as ever; numbers of them lay on the banks, watching us with savage eyes. Lejoillie shot one of the fellows, who refused to get out of our way; indeed, had we not been unwilling to expend our ammunition, we might have killed scores of the monsters. We passed one huge fellow swimming slowly down the stream, with a number of birds on his back, to which also was attached a whole forest of boughs, reeds, and water-plants, so that he had the appearance of a floating island. Lejoillie was of opinion that he had been wallowing in the mud, as his back was thickly covered with slime, to which the water-plants and boughs had become attached so firmly that he was unable to shake them off. It was curious to see several birds flying about him; or settled on his back, exhibiting the most perfect fearlessness.

We encamped on a spot of much the same character as we had chosen on the previous night. A short distance behind rose a rich hummock, where live-oak, mahogany, mulberry, gum, cabbage-palm, and other valuable trees and shrubs, grew together in the greatest luxuriance. Beyond it stretched a savanna, where our pilot told us we should find abundance of small birds. At daylight we took our guns, and went in search of them. We saw plenty of quails, gorgeously coloured red-birds and blue-birds, and mocking-birds of sweet tone, but no animals of any size, though we came across not a few black snakes and rattlesnakes; the former, being harmless, were allowed to live, but we never failed to shoot off the heads of the latter.



AN ANIMATED ISLAND.

We returned with a good bag of quails, which afforded us a luxurious supper. As game would not keep many hours, we had to eat it at once, or throw it away. We formed our camp with more care than usual, as our guide suggested that there might be Indians in the neighbourhood, or that a panther or a bear might pay us a visit, while it was not impossible that an alligator might come foraging into our camp. We kept up a large fire, therefore, and one of the party remained on watch, each man taking a turn of a couple of hours. About midnight we were aroused by a most fearful bellowing. We started to our feet, and, supposing that some unknown monsters were approaching, seized our rifles and pistols, ready to defend ourselves. On looking about, however, we could see nothing. Our pilot's laugh reassured us.

"Those are only 'gators," he said; "it's the sort of music they're fond of, and it's no use trying to stop them. They'll not come on shore while the fire burns brightly. As long as they keep in the water, they're welcome to make all the noise they like."

Never having heard the sound of the alligator's voice before, I had no idea that it could give forth such fearful roars. As our guide had observed, there was no use in attempting to stop them; so they continued their horrible concert, preventing us taking a wink of sleep, until morning dawned, when we turned out, and gathered round our fire to enjoy our breakfast, for which our wakeful night had given us an appetite. As soon as our meal was over, we started; but we met with no particular adventure.

It was time again to land for dinner, or rather forage for our dinner, for we had no meat on board fit to eat.

Carlos and I accompanied Lejoillie, while the rest of our party remained to catch fish, and make up the fire for cooking them.

We had shot several snipe and a fat turkey, when, as we were clambering up a bank, being somewhat before my companions, I was not a little surprised to see, within four paces of me, the huge head of a black bear, peering over the tops of the palmetto to ascertain what was approaching. I mechanically raised my rifle to fire, calling at the same time to Lejoillie and Carlos to come to my assistance should I miss. I never felt more nervous in my life, for although I believed that I should wound the bear, yet I might the next moment find myself in his embrace, with his jaws applied to my neck. Aiming at his chest, I pulled the trigger, and then leaped back to avoid him should he spring on me. He, however, had been more frightened than I was. When my shot entered his body, he must have been on the point of turning to fly; but the bullet had taken deadly effect, and he had not gone ten paces, when over he rolled, and lay struggling on the ground. Lejoillie and Carlos coming up, fired into his head and killed him. We at once set to work to cut him up, and procured an ample supply of steaks for all our party.

BITTERN.

Paddling on again, as usual, we continued our journey, until a favourable camping-place presented itself. During the

night, while I was on watch, I heard a singular cry, ceaselessly repeated, which resembled the words, “Down-ka-dou, down-ka-dou,” accented in a guttural tone. I waited until I was relieved by Carlos; then, instead of lying down, rifle in hand I crept towards the point whence the sound proceeded, when I saw a tall bird standing in the water, every now and then darting forward, poking his long bill amid the reeds which grew around. I should at once have shot it; but I knew that, if I did so, I should be unable to pick it up without the risk of being caught by an alligator. Thinking that probably the bird would remain until the morning, I returned to camp.

As soon as Lejoillie awoke, I told him what I had seen. He and I at once set out with Caesar in search of it. We had not gone far, when, on dashing forward, a large bird rose, and was flying over our heads. Lejoillie fired, and brought it down. He uttered an exclamation of delight as he ran forward, observing that it was a bittern of a peculiar and rare species, of which he had not a single specimen in his collection. It stood nearly two feet high. The plumage was of a rich brown, streaked with black; its breast grey; its beak as sharp as a dagger. The loose plumes on its neck, with its large yellow eyes dilated, like all night-birds, gave it a stupid look. Lejoillie hurried back to the camp to skin it. On cutting it open, we discovered that it ate small birds, as a water-rail, which it had swallowed whole, was found in its stomach.

It took us ten days to ascend Pease Creek. Though the current ran at no place very strongly, it was against us; and as we got higher up, our course was obstructed by the trunks and branches of trees blown down by a tempest, through which we had to cut our way.

At length we reached a small shallow lake, from which the eastern branch of the river takes its rise. We had come to the termination of our voyage.

“I have brought you thus far in safety, gentlemen,” said Munch, as we paid him the stipulated price for his services, and the hire of the canoe. “I wish that I could accompany you farther, and that I could be certain you will get through without misadventure. I have little doubt about your finding the food you require; but I am not quite satisfied that you will escape the Redskins. Keep out of their way if you can; or if you fall in with any, show them that you are not to be trifled with.”

“I have a favour to ask, my friend,” said Lejoillie. “Will you allow your black, Jupiter, to accompany us? I have spoken to him, and he is willing to go if you will give him leave. I’ll pay for his journey back to Hickory Bluff, when we reach Castle Kearney. We should not wish to part with him until then.”

Munch hesitated. “Toby and I will find it a hard matter to paddle the canoe back without him. Still, as we shall have the current with us, I won’t prevent him, if he wishes to go. What do you say, Jup?”

“Me like to go with Massa Jolly, an’ Tim, an’ young gentlemen. Maybe dey not find de way without me,” answered the black.

“In that case you may go, if they pay your wages from the time we left Hickory Bluff,” answered Munch, who had an eye to business, and would thus save several dollars. To this Lejoillie at once agreed; and it was settled that Jupiter, or “Jup,” as he was more familiarly called, should join our party. We were very glad to have him, for he was an active, intelligent fellow; born of free parents in the country, and well acquainted with every part of it. He had frequently joined hunting expeditions into the interior, and knew the habits of the Indians as well as he did those of the animals we were likely to meet with.

The lagoon was filled with alligators, who shoved their noses up among the lilies and other water-plants, looking at us with hungry eyes, as if they would very much like to feast on our bodies. We managed, not without difficulty, to reach the shore, and, carrying our traps to a pine-ridge elevated three or four feet above the lake, we encamped. The next morning, having strapped on our knapsacks, we commenced our march eastwards; while Munch and his companion set off on their return voyage down Pease Creek.

Chapter Seven.

A dreary region—Hunting—The valley of mushrooms—An explosion and cannonade—Gobblers—The cabbage-palm—A palmetto-leaf hut—The mocking-bird—The red Orpheus—An evening’s amusement—Attacked by spiders—Sounds of the forest—“Jup” and the eagle—Indian trails—On the borders of Lake Kissimmee—Canoe or raft—Shooting an alligator—The cat-bird—Future movements—In camp—Our course selected—Making a raft—“Attacus Luna”—What Tim saw in the morning watch—About to start—An alarm—Indians—The raft launched—Under weigh—Out of range—Afloat on the lake.

We five travellers had been for some time making our way eastward in as direct a course as we could steer by compass across a pine-barren. The ground was as level as a floor. Now and then a rivulet appeared, from which we quenched our thirst; while the magnolias and other flowering plants on its banks relieved the dull uniformity of the woods. The sun, however, beat down on our heads with intense force, and our legs were torn by the sharp teeth of the saw-palmetto which covered the ground. Here and there rose distant islands of pine, which give the name to the region. Not a human being could we see, the only animal life visible being some lean wild cattle, which found a scanty subsistence in the natural grasses which had sprung up where the palmetto-scrub had been burned. Frequently we had to turn aside to avoid the swampy ponds fringed with saw-grass. The surface of these ponds was covered with water-lilies of various hues, amid which alligators large and small popped up their heads, warning us not to approach too near. Tall sand-hill cranes stalked about uttering loud whoops, until, disturbed by a shot from one of our rifles, they flew off to a distance. Turkey buzzards, useful but disgusting-looking birds, were feeding on the carcasses of some of the cattle which had died from disease, or been bitten by rattlesnakes. Near the edges of the ponds we observed the tracks of numbers of these snakes. Probably the cattle, going down to drink, had trodden on some of the creatures, and been bitten in return. We killed several which lay in our path.

We had been unable to get near any of the wild cattle, nor had we come across any deer, so that, with the exception of a duck, two snipes, and a plover, we had shot nothing that would serve for our supper. At last a hummock appeared in the distance ahead, and towards it we directed our course, intending to camp near its borders at an early hour, so that we might have time to obtain a supply of large game. As we approached the hummock, we found it to be of considerable size, and apparently denser than usual; still we hoped to be able to make our way into it in search of deer.

I have already described the various trees which grow on these hummocks,—enormous cabbage-palms and cotton-trees, scarlet maples and cedars, black and white gum-trees, magnolias, and many others, the whole festooned with creepers and hung with air-plants of gorgeous hues. The spot we chose for our camp was a high sandy ridge, on which grew a group of pines, affording shelter and firewood, while a stream flowed near, into the bottom, where it was lost to view.

Carlos, who was tired and somewhat out of sorts, remained with Tim and Jup to form the camp, while Lejoillie and I set out with our guns in search of game. We had not gone far when my companion fired at a duck of peculiar and beautiful plumage, with a black body and white tuft on its head. We hurried forward in pursuit between the thick trees, eager to secure the prize. The duck, however, again rose just as we had got up to it, but fell once more in a still thicker part of the hummock, where we could see through the trees the glitter of water. In spite of the numerous impediments in our way, we pushed forward until we found ourselves well-nigh in darkness, though the sun was still high above the horizon, the tree-tops which joined overhead being interlaced by numberless creepers of various descriptions, forming a roof impenetrable by the light of day. An almost insupportable mouldy odour, like the effluvium arising from a dead body, pervaded the atmosphere; but eager to obtain the bird, Lejoillie pushed on, and I followed. The pool into which the duck had fallen was covered with a green scum; and on throwing a piece of wood into it, the green changed into violet, as if some chemical product had been mixed with it. The ground itself was covered with a white efflorescence, which stuck to our feet, and made us slip at every step.

As our eyes became accustomed to the light, we discovered that we were in the midst of fungi or mushrooms of every shape and colour. Some were almost microscopic, collected on the bark of the decaying wood; others were of gigantic proportions, equal in circumference to the trunks of the enormous trees amid which they grew. No vegetables except moss and toadstool-like productions could exist in that airless and pestiferous region. In every direction lay the trunks of enormous trees blown down by some hurricane, so completely rotted by damp that a stick run into them went right through. They lay like vast skeletons, serving to nourish the mushrooms which grew vigorously in the rank vegetation.

Here also were vast gelatinous and transparent masses, from which oozed out a yellow-tinted liquid, of so venomous a character that a drop falling on the skin raised a blister. Other fungi were of dazzling whiteness, which Lejoillie likened to a casket of pearls, supported by an azure stalk. Many were in the shape of a Chinese hat, and of an orange-red colour, striped with silver bands; indeed, the whole tribe of fungi appeared here to have their representatives. Many were as tall as children, with heads upwards of two yards in diameter. Some were of rose colour, and resembled vast umbrellas. Still more numerous were those of a cup shape, and of a bluish tint, the interior resembling a huge pot.

BOMBARDED BY MUSHROOMS.

We advanced in single file amidst the rows of giant mushrooms, not without considerable fear that in this gloomy valley some strange monster would suddenly appear before us, to resent our intrusion into his domains. Suddenly Lejoillie, who was a short distance in front, slipped on the slimy ground over which we were walking, as if on ice, and in falling struck one of the largest mushrooms, which, to my astonishment and dismay, immediately exploded with a report like that of a piece of artillery, throwing into the air a vast cloud of dust. Losing my balance almost immediately afterwards, I followed his example, when directly the whole valley resounded with reports, the mushrooms bursting on every side, as if defending their colony against the visit of strangers. Confused by the sound and blinded by the red dust which, filling our ears and irritating our eyes, made us sneeze and cough continuously, we beat a hasty retreat, entirely forgetting the duck we had come to seek. Not until we had got clear of the fusillade directed against us by the fungi, did we stop in our flight, when, clearing the dust from our eyes, and shaking it off from our heads and clothes, Lejoillie burst into a fit of laughter.

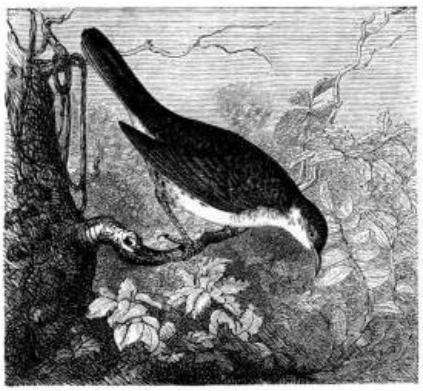
“You will like to understand how this happened, my young friend,” he observed. “Possibly others will be incredulous when they hear of our adventure. These mushrooms, like other vegetables, have the power of suddenly bursting

without being touched, Nature having provided them with this means of spreading their seed over a wide extent of ground. The red dust which so disagreeably filled our eyes is composed of imperceptible spores, each atom containing a germ. The shock produced when we fell caused the explosion of some of the largest of these, and they set all the others agoing, though who would have believed that two brave hunters could be put to flight by mushrooms!”

Comical as was the adventure, the result to us was far from pleasant, for we both had our faces and hands covered with pimples, while it was some time before we ceased coughing and spluttering from the quantity which had got down our throats; indeed, the mushroom germs had completely poisoned us. We were still more vexed at the thought of losing the bird after encountering so much annoyance, when Caesar, who had followed us, appeared, bringing it in his mouth. Although we did not venture back again into the bottom of the hummock, we succeeded in killing a couple of fat gobblers, which amply supplied us all with supper and breakfast the next morning.

Just outside the hummock was a cabbage-palm, which, as I have said, abounds in Florida. It rose in straight and graceful grandeur to the height of a hundred feet without a branch, then burst into a mass of dark-green, fan-shaped leaves. In the centre of this mass grows the far-famed cabbage, which is a tender white shoot, protected by numerous fibrous folds. We were wishing for some vegetable, when Jup undertook to obtain a cabbage. Fastening a belt round his waist and the trunk of the tree, he worked himself up to the summit, when, drawing his knife from his belt, he cut out the vegetable. He then chopped off a number of the large leaves from the summit for the purpose of forming a palmetto hut, which might afford us shelter. We cooked the cabbage, though it is often eaten raw, and agreed that it resembled a Spanish chestnut in taste. Carlos told us that the tree would die in consequence of having the cabbage cut out, and Jup confirmed the statement.

Our huts were of the very simplest description. Fixing in two uprights, we secured a horizontal pole between them at their tops; and from this pole we suspended the enormous cabbage-palm leaves, stretching them out at the bottom, thus forming a thatched roof impervious to rain or sun. Where cabbage-palms grow, the hunter, as I have shown, can in a few minutes form a very efficient hut, capable of holding two or three people.



MOCKING-BIRD.

Numerous birds, inhabitants of the trees near our camp, amused us during the evening by their varied notes. One which we watched was of a graceful form, with a long fine beak, its plumage being grey-brown above and white beneath. Though larger than the nightingale, to which it has often been compared, it has a superior and more varied voice, but lacks that sweetness of expression and melancholy charm which have made the reputation of the plaintive Philomel. It has, however, a song of its own, composed of a dozen syllables, clear, sonorous, and harmonious, which runs over an extensive scale. At first, it entertained us with its own song, but in a short time began imitating those of other birds, which it did to perfection; indeed, Jup told us, and Carlos corroborated the statement, that it can imitate the human voice, as well as the hissing of serpents, the roar of alligators, the gobbling of turkeys, and the cry of all other birds. Lejoillie tried it by whistling a tune, when the bird imitated him, introducing a number of variations. The mocking-bird, for such it was, afforded us infinite amusement during the evening.

Another bird also made its appearance, called the red orpheus. It had a reddish-brown plumage, with a fawn-coloured breast spotted with black. It was about the same size as the mocking-bird, its note being very similar to that of the European blackbird, but more sonorous and melodious, and superior in some respects to that of the mocking-bird. It is of an equally graceful form, and has the same long fine beak. We found numbers of them in the forest among the cedars and myrtles, whose fruit they eat, and where also they chase various winged insects. Both these birds build their nests six or seven feet above the ground, on thorny bushes, or in wild orange trees. The nests are composed of the downy mosses of plants fastened together with the fibres of flax. The eggs of the mocking-bird are blue with brown spots; those of the orpheus are of a beautiful azure tint.

Scarcely had we turned in to our leaf-covered huts when I felt some creatures crawling over me. I jumped up, and running to the fire, shook off two or three horrid-looking spiders. My exclamations aroused my companions, and they likewise found several of the same spiders crawling over them. Tim cried out that he had been bitten, and that he felt an extraordinary numbness in the limb. Lejoillie said immediately afterwards that he also had suffered; and Jup, on seeing the creatures, declared that they were the most venomous of spiders, and warned us that if we went to sleep they might actually bite us to death. Lejoillie recollected having heard of the species, which is called the sleeping-spider. We accordingly, making up our fire, gathered closely round it, hoping that the creatures would not approach its flames. On examining the ground in the neighbourhood, we found a number of small holes, out of which the spiders were creeping in search of prey; but, as we had hoped, they did not venture close enough to the fire to reach us. We spent an uncomfortable night, and I was glad when it came to my turn to walk sentry. As I moved about I kept a watch on my feet, lest any of the venomous insects should climb up my legs. The ground appeared literally swarming with them. In the morning, when we came to examine it, we found that the whole bank was mined below

with the galleries of thousands of these sleeping-spiders. So poisonous is their bite that it sometimes causes a lethargy, during which the person bitten passes from sleep to death. During the day these insects stop up their holes with sand, and only come out in the night. A dark-red line runs down their back, and they have flat heads. To struggle against these venomous creatures was impossible; it would have been more easy to contend with a pack of wolves, or any other wild beasts. The instinct of my dog induced him to crawl close up to the fire, where he remained all night so near to it that he nearly burned off his coat.

At daybreak I proposed to start off, to be at once free from the dangers of the neighbourhood. But Jup observed, “No fear now, massa; de spiders all gone to bed.”

Such was found to be the case, as they are strictly nocturnal hunters, and keep their holes closely shut during the day-time. We had therefore no longer any fear of being bitten, and were able to take our breakfast at our leisure. As soon as possible, however, after breakfast, we were again on the move.

We had much the same description of country to pass through as on the previous day—mostly open prairie, with pine-barrens and occasional hummocks. I cannot describe each day of our journey. In the early morning we were aroused half an hour before sunrise by a wonderful chorus of birds and insects, the mocking-bird and cat-bird making the greatest noise. At that time the inhabitants of the woods seemed to awaken to active life as suddenly as day succeeds the night, and night the day, in those Southern latitudes. The deep-sounding whoops of the sand-hill cranes—the cries of herons, bitterns, and ibis—the gobbles of turkeys—the confused quacking of flocks of ducks—the chattering of pelicans—the melodious voices of thousands of song-birds—the hum of millions of insects,—all combined to create a volume of sound which effectually banished sleep. As the sun rose above the summits of the trees, the various sounds gradually decreased, and during the heat of mid-day all seemed hushed in the stillness of death. As evening approached, once more the feathered songsters suddenly burst forth; then for a short time there would be silence; when again, towards midnight, the hootings and shrieks of numerous night-birds, and the more savage cries and hideous voices of alligators, wolves, and ocelots, would break our slumbers.

One evening we were nearly losing our black attendant, who not only had proved himself an intelligent guide, but was ready to serve us in every way he could. We had just encamped, when a short distance off an enormous eagle rose from a stunted tree on the borders of a neighbouring hummock. Lejoillie was anxious to obtain its eggs, or one of the young birds should they be hatched; and Jup immediately volunteered to climb up and procure one or the other. Supposing that the eagle had flown to a distance, Jup advanced to the tree, leaving his axe and knife, which he had been using, behind him on the ground. Some thick bark, and a few branches and twigs projecting from the trunk, enabled him to make his way up the tree in a manner none of us could imitate.

Lejoillie was engaged at the time in skinning a bird he had just before shot, and we were all busy in preparing the camp, when we heard Jup shriek out. He had ample reason for doing so. He had gained the branch of the tree on a level with the nest—filled with skeletons and bones of other birds and animals which the eagle had brought to feed its young. The parent bird, with its sharp eyes, though far beyond our sight, must have observed the intruder approaching its home. In an instant, down it swooped with discordant shrieks, and Jup with great difficulty managed to spring behind a branch to avoid its onslaught. Every instant it threatened to drive its sharp claws into his woolly head, or to peck out his eyes.

I was the first to see his danger, and rushing forward with my rifle, attempted to obtain a shot. I was afraid, however, that while trying to shoot the bird, I might wound the black. Jup shouted at the top of his voice, hoping to keep the eagle at bay.

“Come down, Jup! come down!” I cried.

“Bery well to say dat, massa, but not so easy to do dat,” answered Jup, who preserved his presence of mind.

I united my voice to his, and we were soon joined by Tim, who shouted as lustily as the black. This prevented the eagle from striking down at Jup, who now began to descend; and as there was sufficient distance between his head and the eagle’s beak, I fired. At the same moment I heard a crash, and thought the eagle had fallen; but when the smoke cleared away, what was my horror to discover Jup lying on the ground, while the eagle was clinging on to a branch just above its nest. Regardless of the bird, Tim and I ran to pick up the fallen black. Great was our satisfaction to find, on seeing him quickly get up, that no bones had been broken.

“Me go ’gain an’ get de eggs,” he said; “nebber fear.”

“We must dispose of the eagle first,” I answered; and Tim and I both firing, the huge bird, fluttering wildly, fell to the ground.

As we approached, it endeavoured fiercely to defend itself with its talons and beak; but Tim, clubbing his rifle, dealt it a blow on the head which put an end to its struggles. Its mate not making its appearance, Jup again ascended, and returned with a couple of eggs, greatly to Lejoillie’s satisfaction.

Eager as we were to get on, we had to lie by during the heat of the day, selecting the thickest shade we could find. After the sun had begun to sink in the west, we marched forward until nearly dark. We found it, however, generally necessary to allow ourselves time for an hour’s hunting, to secure a sufficient amount of game for our support.

We had, as may be supposed, kept a sharp look-out for Indians; but we had seen none, nor had we discovered any recent trails, though we occasionally came upon their abandoned camps, as well as the paths they had formed through the forest or across the prairie. We were somewhat surprised at this; but Carlos said he suspected that those who had inhabited that part of the country had moved northward, or had retreated to the Everglades in the south, where the Palefaces could not follow them. Circumstances afterwards occurred to show that he was right in both surmises—that the old men, women, and children had been sent into the impenetrable fastnesses in the south, while

the warriors had gone north to join the forces at that time assembled under Powell, or Oceola, as the Indians called him.

We were now approaching Lake Kissimmee, which we intended crossing on our way to the Saint John. Reaching a pine-island—as those sandy elevations are called, rising out of the plain—where we intended to camp, we saw the lake before us. It was a question now whether we should march round its northern shore, or save ourselves a journey of twenty or thirty miles by crossing in a canoe, or on a raft which we proposed to construct. We held a consultation on the subject. Should a storm arise, we should be exposed to no small danger; while alligators, from the experience we had had before, might, we thought it possible, strike the bottom of the canoe or raft and upset it.

For the sake of obtaining a variety of food, Tim and I set off with our fishing-tackle—of course, carrying our guns—towards a large stream, which we discovered running into the lake. We saw plenty of birds on our way; among them the white ibis, the white heron, the snake-bird, and vulture. We found a bluff, with deep water below it, into which we had scarcely thrown our lines when we each hooked a large black bass; after which we caught several bream, cat-fish, and perch, until we had as much as we could carry.

I had gone down to the water to clean our fish; and I was so employed when, stooping down, I saw the snout of an alligator raised above the surface. Without moving, I imitated the grunt of a pig. The monster saurian, expecting to have a porker for supper, swam on, with jaws open, its wicked eye turned towards me. I had taken up my rifle, and when it was about eight paces off, suddenly rising, I fired directly down its throat. What was my horror to see it rushing forward at an accelerated speed. As may be supposed, I sprang up the bluff, not stopping to collect my fish; when the monster ran its nose right against the bank, and, in a vain attempt to land, rolled back again, fiercely lashing the water with its tail. Having made its way to the opposite side, after several convulsive struggles, it turned over and died. Had my foot slipped on the grassy bank, my adventures would probably have been ended. I was quickly joined by Tim; and while finishing the cleaning of our fish, we kept a sharp look-out.

Near the spot where we were encamped was a hummock, on which grew mulberry-trees, boxwood, and gigantic cypresses, six feet in diameter, their trunks and branches being completely enclosed in the india-rubber vine, which in this part of the country grows in great profusion.

On our return to camp, Tim and I were passing near a thicket when we were saluted with strange cries, resembling the mewings of a number of deserted kittens. As we approached to ascertain what creatures were uttering these strange sounds, they grew louder and louder. We caught sight, however, only of several birds, about the size of a thrush, flitting in and out among the branches, and stopping every now and then to look at us. As we passed on they followed, until we got close to the camp. We then called Lejoillie to come and see them.

CAT-BIRD.

He at once pronounced them to be cat-birds. Their plumage was brown, with black caps on their heads, their rumps being of a red orange tint. They seemed to have no fear of us; for, gathering on the boughs of the trees near the camp, evidently seeking our society, they began a most extraordinary concert, if such it could be called, for certainly it was not singing. Sometimes one of them would speak in a hollow voice, then another would bark, imitating Caesar; now one fellow would yelp like a fox, and make a rattling sound like that of a rattlesnake. Others croaked like frogs, and imitated the sneeze of a human being. Had we heard them without seeing the birds, we should have thought some strange creatures inhabited the wood; but, in reality, the birds were only trying, by producing sounds familiar to our ears, to tell us that we were welcome to their native forest.

It is very difficult to keep a cat-bird in captivity, as it soon pines and dies; or it would certainly be preferred to a parrot, on account of its far superior talent of imitation. Lejoillie refrained from killing any of our amusing friends, who remained watching us all the time we were in camp.

We required a day’s rest before proceeding farther on our journey; for we could not tell what difficulties we might have to encounter, and it would be necessary to be in full strength to overcome them. Having examined the ground thoroughly, to ascertain that it was not inhabited by spiders, like our last camping-place, we built three cabbage-palm huts, and collected fuel sufficient to keep up the fire during the night. Before turning in, we had another talk about our future proceedings. I undertook, the first thing in the morning, to climb to the top of the highest tree, from which I could get a look-out over the country to the eastward and north-east, round the northern end of the lake. Should it appear practicable, we resolved to proceed by land; but if not, we determined to spend the next day in building a raft to cross the lake. We expected to find it sufficiently shallow to enable us to pole most of the way over. We agreed to make some paddles, and, in case the wind should be favourable, to use our blankets as sails. Jup was the most experienced sailor among us, though we all knew enough about boating to undertake such a voyage without fear. We kept a watch during the night, so that, should any hostile Indians approach, we might fight for our lives, and not be

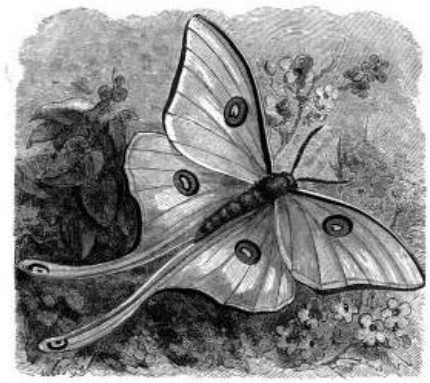
murdered in our sleep, as might be the case should we be caught napping. For the sake of health, and to avoid mosquitoes, it was always necessary to camp on the highest ground we could find. We were more exposed to view from a distance than we should have been had we been able to light our fires in the hollows, where, during the night, we should have had the advantage of concealment. At the same time, from the high ground we could the better see an enemy approaching. Still, we had gone thus far and had not met any Indians, so that we might hope to perform the rest of the journey without encountering them.

The night passed away without our being disturbed. Occasionally a few creatures would pass by, their shadowy forms scarcely distinguishable through the gloom. We knew that they were either deer or wild cattle. Now and then a wolf would approach, or a puma, or ocelot; but a shout would send them to the rightabout.

As soon as daylight appeared, with the aid of Jup, who accompanied me, I succeeded in getting to the top of a tall pine. On looking out I was convinced, from the clear green to the north of the lake, and from its flat appearance, that it was swampy. As far as I could judge, the swamps extended to the shore of another small lake, still farther to the north, Jup agreed with me that it would save a troublesome journey through marshes if we were to cross the lake, as had at first been proposed.

Directly breakfast was over, therefore, we set off for the shore of the lake, where we were fortunate in finding a hard piece of ground by the side of a stream which ran into it, a point extending out into the water; and we could only hope that we should find a similar landing-place on the opposite side. On the hard ground, a couple of feet above the water, grew a number of pines. Several of the smaller as well as larger trees had been blown down by a hurricane, and were sufficiently dry, and yet not rotten, for our purpose. Lopping off the roots and branches, we collected six trees, each about thirty feet long, which one by one we managed to roll into the water. The cross-pieces were more easily obtained. The whole were fastened together with what the Spaniards call sipos, or creepers, which make a very tolerable rope for such a purpose. On the top of this framework we placed a sort of platform of reeds, which would, we hoped, keep us free from the water. We had still to cut some long poles; a couple of spars for masts, and two more for yards; a paddle to steer by, and one for each of us. Night was approaching by the time we had quite finished. Altogether we were well content with our performance, though perhaps a more experienced sailor would have hesitated to trust himself on such a structure. As the mosquitoes would have allowed us but little sleep had we attempted to remain near the lake at night, we returned to our camping-ground on the ridge, having previously dragged the raft up on shore. On our way I saw Lejoillie eagerly eyeing the branches of a tree producing a sweet gum.

“Stop, stop!” he exclaimed, “in case you may alarm it.” And he began opening his butterfly-net, which lay in a case he always carried in his pocket.



ATTACUS LUNA.

I looked in the direction towards which his eyes were turned, and saw a magnificent moth sucking gum exuding from a branch. It was more beautiful than any I had seen. The body was of a flesh colour; the wings broad and of a tender green, with blue, crimson, and orange spots. I stopped while he advanced, trembling lest the specimen might escape him. With what eagerness he closed the net over it! and I felt almost as rejoiced as he seemed to be that he had captured the treasure. He told us that it was called the “Attacus luna,” and that it was the most beautiful moth in Florida. The caterpillar produces silk, though it is not equal to that of the better known silkworm.

The naturalist appeared as delighted to have secured the moth uninjured as most people would have been to pick up a nugget of gold. By degrees we had expended a portion of our ammunition and provisions; but as Lejoillie added to his collection, our loads were not much lightened, though his bird-skins, moths, and insects were not very weighty articles.

Tim, who had the morning watch, averred that he had seen a human being approach the camp, and apparently having examined it, steal off again. He had advanced and challenged, but no reply was made. His first impulse, he acknowledged, had been to fire; but he recollected in time that the intruder might have had no hostile intentions, and, at all events, as we were not in an enemy’s country, he had no business to shoot the man, whoever he was. Tim was so positive on the subject that we could not doubt him.

We breakfasted at daybreak, and strapping on our packs, marched down to the lake, prepared to commence our voyage. Before starting, Jup and I again ascended a tree overlooking the lake, that I might ascertain whether there were any islands in our course, or whether, as is often the case, the surface was covered with water-plants, which might impede our progress.

All appeared clear, however, as far as my eye could reach. I was about to descend, when, looking to the south-west, I caught sight of a number of objects moving across the prairie. I pointed them out to Jup.

“Injins!” he exclaimed. “Dey comin’ dis way; better git off, or maybe dey take our scalps.”

As I agreed with him, we hurriedly descended, and rejoined our companions, who were already beginning to launch the raft. It was no easy matter to do so, and we had to cut some stout sticks for handspikes before we could manage to get it into the water. While thus engaged, several alligators poked their noses above the surface to look at us, but the shouts we raised quickly made them disappear. Scarcely was the raft in the water, when, happening to look round, I caught sight of thirty or forty Indians, bedecked in war-paint and feathers, fully armed, emerging from the brushwood, and not a hundred yards away.

“Shove off! shove off!” I cried. “Their bows carry far, and we must put a wide distance between them and us.”

Springing on board, we each seized a pole and began impelling the raft from the shore. The Indians, seeing that we were about to escape, ran forward, uttering loud shouts and calling on us to come back.

“Very likely we’ll be afther doin’ that,” observed Tim.

No one else spoke; we were labouring for our lives, for it was evident, from the savage shrieks of the Indians, that they intended mischief.

“Let us fire and bring down some of those fellows,” cried Carlos.

“Very little satisfaction in doing that,” observed Lejoillie. “Shove away, my friends, shove away; the farther we can get from them the better, for, packed together as we are, they may shoot us down at once. Shove away, shove away, I say.”

We followed Lejoillie’s advice. We had got to a considerable distance from the bank before the Indians reached it. The moment they did so, they drew their bows and let fly a flight of arrows, which plunged into the water close behind our raft; but happily we were just beyond their range, or not one of us would have escaped. The water by this time was deepening, and we had to take to our paddles, and endeavour still farther to increase our distance; for the savages, intent on capturing us, had begun to wade off, with fresh arrows in their bows, ready to send another flight, at the same time uttering loud cries and shouting out to us to return. They were possibly not aware that we had provided ourselves with paddles and had already got into deep water.

Rushing forward until the water was up to their waists, they again sent their arrows whistling towards us, several actually striking the raft, though not with sufficient force to stick into it. When they saw that we were really beyond their reach, they vented their disappointment in fearful yells.

“Shriek away, ye redskin savages,” cried Tim; “your noise doesn’t hurt us. If you don’t look out for yourselves, you’ll have some of the ’gators snapping off your legs presently.”

The cries of the Indians, however, had the effect of keeping the creatures at a distance, and several swam past us, evidently alarmed at the unusual sounds.

We were now all paddling away with might and main, two on each side, the black steering and sculling with his paddle at the same time. Fortunately, the weather remained fine, and the wind, which was light, was in our favour. What we had to dread most was a strong wind springing up from the eastward, which might have driven us back and placed us at the mercy of the savages. We were still uncertain whether we should altogether escape them. They might build a raft and pursue us; or might be acquainted with some path leading along the northern end of the lake, by which, light-footed as they were, they might get round to meet us when we landed, or to follow up our trail.

We found paddling a raft harder work than we had expected, and our arms soon began to ache. Stopping for an instant, I tried the depth of water. It was still too great to enable us to use our poles with advantage. At length, however, the breeze increased, and I proposed that the masts should be stepped, as they were all ready, and that we should hoist our blankets for sails.

This we at once did; but they did not hold enough wind to help us as much as we expected, and we still had to keep the paddles going. Looking back, we could see the Indians on the shore; which was satisfactory, as it made us hope that they did not intend to follow us by land.

“It will take them some time to build a raft,” observed Carlos. “If they do, we shall then encounter them on equal terms, for we could pick them off with our rifles before they could get near enough to shoot their arrows at us.”

We continued our course to the opposite shore, which appeared as far off as ever. We had, however, reason to be satisfied that we had decided on crossing the lake on a raft; for had we attempted to go round by land, we should inevitably have been overtaken by the Indians.

Chapter Eight.

Crossing the lake—Safely landed—Lost in the forest—A spectre—The Mantis tribe—Chasing a wounded deer—In a dilemma—Wolves—Up a tree—A weary night—The siege raised—Search after my companions—Sufferings from thirst—Water discovered—Overcome by fatigue—Found by Caesar—Meeting with Tim Flanagan—One way to make a blaze—Signals for our friends—The deserted hut—Proofs of an Indian tragedy—Plans for continuing our journey.

We had been paddling on for some time, not making more than two miles an hour. At length the eastern shore of the lake began to grow nearer. It was low, with no trees of any size growing on its bank. We feared that on landing we

should have to wade through a swamp infested by snakes, and probably by alligators, before we could reach dry ground. We could see the northern shore, which appeared to be of the same character; and this made us hope that the Indians would not have attempted to go round and intercept us. The western shore was still discernible, but too far off to enable us to see whether the Indians were still there.

“I wonder where those fellows were going?” observed Carlos; “they evidently did not belong to this part of the country, or they would have found us out before.”

“Me tink dey go norf on war-trail to join de great chief Oceola,” observed Jup. “Dey say ’fore long de red men kill all de Palefaces in de country, an’ agin have it for demselves.”

“Not very likely they will make such a mad attempt,” observed Carlos with a laugh. “The Palefaces would clear them off the face of the earth were they to play a trick of that sort.”

Jup shrugged his shoulders. “Me only tell massa what oders say,” he answered.

At last, beginning to grow hungry, we agreed to stop paddling and take some food, while Jup steered. The meat we had cooked was already rather high. We had only some small flour-cakes, and some baked roots to eat with it. Hunger, however, prevented us from being fastidious, and we had plenty of water alongside to wash it down.

As I was dipping my tin mug into the lake, a huge snout suddenly rose, and very nearly caught my hand, as well as the mug. Tim gave the monster a whack with his paddle, which made it quickly sink again. It was a lesson to us to be careful how we put our hands into the water. The wind now dropped, and the sun beat down with intense force on our heads; but we had to endure it and paddle on, for it was important to get on dry ground before darkness should overtake us.

“Hurrah!” I exclaimed, as I put my pole into the water; “I can touch the bottom. We shall soon be making better progress than hitherto.”

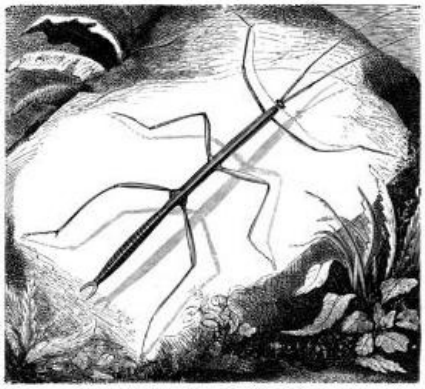
I was right. The water shoaled rapidly. By shoving along with our poles, we made the raft move twice as fast as before. At length a line of tall reeds rose before us. The sight was not encouraging, for we could neither force the raft onwards, nor make our own way through them on foot. We therefore turned southward, hoping to find some dry ground at no great distance from the water. On and on we went, but still we could see only reeds and swamp. At last we caught sight of some pines; most welcome they were, as they betokened a dry and sandy soil. We now came to a bay. Although lined with a narrow belt of reeds, we hoped to force our way through them. We accordingly ran our raft onwards as far as it would move, then wishing it farewell, with many thanks for the service it had rendered us, we plunged into the reeds—Tim, as the strongest of the party, leading the way, and holding his gun over his head in case he should unexpectedly fall into an unseen hole. Sometimes we were up to our waists in water. Still we worked our way forward. At last Tim gave a shout of satisfaction as he landed on dry ground. We all quickly followed, poor Caesar panting and blowing with his exertions as he made his way after us. Clouds of mosquitoes and other stinging insects had been attacking us in our progress, but we were by this time too well inured to them to think much about the matter. We agreed, at all hazards, to push on to the pine-ridge which we saw before us, that we might encamp there for the night.

As soon as we gained a spot of sufficient height to overlook the lake, we turned anxiously round to ascertain whether the Indians were following us, but we could see them nowhere on the water. We were still, however, uncertain whether or not they would pursue us by land, and Jup and I again climbed to the top of a high tree, to try and obtain a look-out over the country to the northward. To our relief nothing moving was seen; so descending, we made our way with our companions to the ridge.

It was hopeless to seek for any place of concealment in the hollows; besides the dangers from animals, we were certain to be attacked by innumerable stinging insects, and to run the risk of being bitten by poisonous snakes. We therefore lighted our fire on the top of the ridge.

Lejoillie, Carlos, and I went off with our guns in search of game, as we had exhausted our stock of provisions. We had gone on farther than we intended, when on looking round we could nowhere see the smoke of our fire; while a bank of clouds which had risen in the west, and gradually spread over the sky prevented us, as we had expected to be able to do, from making the sun our guide.

Lejoillie had shot a turkey; but as this was insufficient for our party, we were anxious to kill some larger game. We were still pursuing our search, and not far apart, when Carlos exclaimed, “See here! I have found a creature which will show us our way. Come here quickly and try it.”



YELLOW AND BLACK SPECTRE.

We hastened to the spot, where we saw, seated on a large leaf, a creature with a thin body like a walking-stick, with long legs, and antennae stretched out. “It is a yellow and black spectre,” said Lejoillie, drawing one of his cases from his pocket; “a magnificent specimen. I must secure it ere it escapes.”

“Oh, don’t do that!” cried Carlos; “I have heard it said that if we ask it the way, it will stretch out one of its arms in the right direction; and we shall have no difficulty in making our way back to camp.”

Lejoillie laughed. “From whom did you hear that?” he asked.

“The Indians believe that it has that power; and, of course, as they are better acquainted with the creatures of this country than any one else, they must know.”

“Bah!” exclaimed Lejoillie; “I thought, Carlos, you had too much good sense to be influenced by so foolish a superstition.”

“Look at it!” cried Carlos; “it is lifting up its paws and praying. What else can it be doing?”

Lejoillie afterwards explained that it belonged to the Mantis family; that instead of being a praying insect, it is one of the most combative and savage in existence. “It lives upon beetles and flies of every description,” he added. “When two of the creatures of the same species meet together, they engage in a fierce combat, cutting at each other with their fore legs with such force as sometimes to sever the body of an antagonist with a single blow, when the victor generally eats up its opponent. There are many others of the same family, some resembling leaves. The Chinese in the southern part of their country keep these creatures in cages, and make them fight with each other.”

While the naturalist was giving us this lecture, he was suffocating the spectre, and pinning it down in his case. We soon after this separated for the purpose of creeping up towards a herd of deer of which we had caught sight. I had got some way to the right of Lejoillie and Carlos, when I caught sight of a buck feeding near a clump of trees. I was afraid of calling to my friends lest the animal might hear my voice. Stooping down, I crept on, concealed by some tall grass, till I got within thirty yards of the deer, when I fired. From its movements I knew that I had hit it, and expected to see it fall immediately. Instead of doing so, off it ran, leaving a trail of blood behind it. I felt assured from this that it would soon drop, and I pursued as fast as my legs could carry me, reloading as I ran. It had, however, got out of shot. Still I followed, certain that it would slacken its speed, and that I should again get it within range of my rifle. On and on I went, not having time to look behind me to ascertain if my companions were following, as I supposed they were doing.

After some time the deer began to slacken its pace, and I felt more confident than ever that I should overtake it before dark. I had scarcely observed, however, that the gloom of evening had already commenced. The form of the deer became more and more shadowy, but still keeping it in sight, I followed, until it suddenly disappeared. It must have fallen to the ground, I thought, which accounted for my not seeing it; and so on I went. I was not mistaken; before long I stumbled over the body of the animal, still living, but fast bleeding to death. With my hunting-knife I at once put an end to its sufferings. It was too large an animal to carry back whole to the camp, so I began as well as I could in the gloom of evening to skin it, and cut off the best portions of the meat,—an unpleasant operation, and one in which I had had but little experience, though I had frequently seen deer cut up by others. I prepared as much as I could carry, with part of the skin when, considering in which direction I should turn my steps to reach the camp, I felt myself utterly at a loss to decide. I had several times turned the deer about, so that I could not ascertain the position in which it had fallen. To attract the attention of my friends, I fired off my gun. I listened for a reply, but could hear none. Still, I hoped, by proceeding across the pine-barren, that I should in time see the light of their fire. I, accordingly, shouldering my load of meat, set off.

The night became unusually dark, and it was with difficulty that I avoided stumbling over fallen trunks or running against the stumps of trees. I occasionally shouted, and several times fired off my rifle. I should have fired oftener, but was unwilling to expend more of my powder. I thought I was going straight forward, and had gone on for about two hours or more, when I found my feet strike against an object on the ground. I felt it was part of an animal. A further examination convinced me it was the body of the deer I had killed; and I found, to my annoyance, that I had been going in a circle, and had reached the very spot whence I had set out. It would be useless, I felt, to make another attempt to reach the camp, and I made up my mind to remain where I was. I had my flint and steel, and so I searched about for broken branches to make up a fire. I had not forgotten the risk I ran of being bitten by a snake. I searched and searched for some time, but in the dark I could only find a few sticks, though very likely I passed by many which would have served my purpose.

I was thus employed, when I heard a howl at no great distance off. It was the voice of a wolf. It was repeated by

another and another. The sounds grew nearer and nearer, until it appeared to me that a whole pack must be collecting around me. Had I been able to make up a large fire, I should have had no fear of the savage creatures. I threw down my sticks, with a handful of leaves which I had picked up, and endeavoured to strike a light; but the leaves were damp, and would not catch the sparks I sent among them.

All this time the howling increased. The wolves were attracted, I had no doubt, by the carcass of the deer, and they might be content with that instead of attacking me; but when they had finished it—and it could not last long—I thought it probable that I should become their victim. I tried again and again to light the fire, but in vain.

The wolves now broke into loud cries and howls, and I could now distinguish their forms as they approached the spot. I shouted at the top of my voice, hoping to drive them off. They halted, apparently; but the moment I was silent they again advanced. I might have shot two or three of them, but should have expended my ammunition before I could kill the whole pack. I remembered that near at hand was a tree, with branches at a height from the ground to which I could reach. I searched about for it, and found it was close at hand. Slinging my rifle over my shoulder—for I felt the importance of not abandoning it—I caught hold of the lowest branch, and, hauling myself up, got my feet upon it. I was thus able to climb up to another, out of the reach of the wolves, which could, I knew, leap up to a considerable height, and might have attacked my feet had I remained on the lower branch.

Unless the brutes should go off in search of other prey when they had finished the deer, I should have to remain in the tree all night. It was a far from comfortable position; still it was better than being torn to pieces by the brutes. I was afraid of moving about when once I had fixed myself on the branch, lest I should fall, as my rifle and load of venison greatly impeded my movements. I managed, however, to unsling my rifle, and seat myself in a position whence I might fire at the wolves.

Scarcely was I secure in the tree, than on they came, rushing at the deer, which must quickly have been torn to pieces. I could see only their backs and tails in a thick mass surging about in the gloom. I fired and killed one, which its companions quickly devoured. I was about to fire again, when I reflected that by so doing I should only detain the horrid brutes close to me, and that they were much more likely to take their departure should they find nothing on which to feast. They must, however, have scented the venison I had, for they came round the tree, howling, and snapping, and snarling, trying to get at me. It was like a hideous dream. I shouted again and again, in the hope of driving them away; but they seemed resolved on my destruction. I may say that I never passed a more unpleasant night in my life. The only hope I had was that my friends would come to search for me in the morning, and that they might be attracted to the spot by the howling of the animals. I had no fear of going to sleep while the wolves kept up their hideous chorus.

Towards morning a drowsiness crept over me, and I had the greatest difficulty in maintaining my perilous position. I kept myself awake, however, by uttering every now and then a loud shout. At last I became conscious that the light was increasing, although I could nowhere see the bright streaks which usually usher in the dawn. Looking up, I saw that the sky was overcast, as on the previous evening; and I feared that I might still find it a very difficult matter to make my way, even should the wolves go off and allow me to descend the tree.

I was getting very hungry, and, as I had left my pack at the camp, I had only the raw venison to eat. As the light increased, I broke off some rotten branches, with which I pelted the wolves, uttering at the same time loud cries; but they only snapped at the pieces of wood, proving how they would have treated me had I fallen among them. I was greatly tempted to kill some more of them, but, remembering how they had devoured the one I had before shot, I refrained. Though almost overpowered with the desire to sleep, the dread of falling into their midst kept me awake.

Hour after hour passed by. In vain I looked out for my companions; no signs of them could I discover, though I climbed to the highest part of the tree, nor could I anywhere see the smoke of their fire. It was already past noon, when I caught sight of a solitary deer making its way across the open pine-barren. One of the wolves must have seen it too, for the brute, giving a peculiar cry, set off, followed by the whole pack. The deer saw them coming, and endeavoured to increase its speed; but it was, I suspect, wounded, perhaps by one of my friends, thus giving me hopes that I might before long fall in with them.

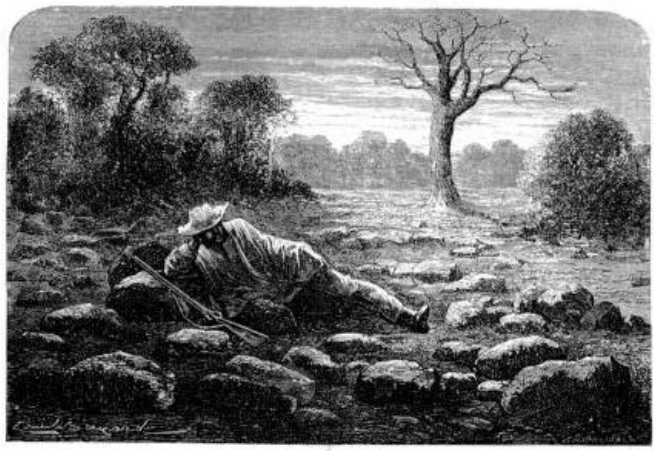
As soon as the wolves disappeared I descended the tree; and feeling desperately hungry, I lost no time in collecting sticks, which I could now easily do, and lighting a fire, aided by some rotten wood which I found in a hollow trunk near at hand. My venison was but very partially cooked when, unable to restrain my appetite, I began to eat it. After a few mouthfuls, however, the thirst which came on made me look about in search of water; but I could find none near at hand. The meat was in the meantime cooking. I ate enough to satisfy my hunger, and would have given much for a drop of pure water. Without it, I felt that I should not have strength sufficient to resume the search for my companions. I should have left the greater part of the venison behind me, as I knew that it would not keep long, but that I hoped to fall in with them before long, and guessed, in case Lejoillie and Carlos had failed to kill a deer, they would be very glad of it.

My difficulty was now how to direct my course. I looked round in every direction. The country wore so uniform an appearance that I could not determine from what point I had come. Had there been water near at hand, I should have remained where I was—the wisest thing to do under such circumstances; but water I must have, or I should perish. I accordingly set off intending to keep a straight line, and hoping to fall in with my companions, or to discover their trail should I strike the lake. I should then obtain the necessary water, and know afterwards how to direct my course. Praying that I might be successful, I took my rifle in my hand, ready for use, and marched forward. On and on I went, keeping along the pine-barrens, and avoiding two hummocks I met with. I had no longer any desire to eat, though I felt fearfully faint from thirst; but, unfortunately, I could discover no fruits with which to assuage it.

Once more evening was approaching. I scarcely expected to get through another night without water. I was almost dropping with fatigue, when I caught sight, between the trees, of what looked like a pool in a hollow. I hurried forward as fast as my strength would allow me, and discovered that it was the bed of a river. Though a large portion was dry,

there were here and there pools along its course. I did not stop to ascertain whether the water was pure or foul, or whether the pool was full of alligators; but stooping down, I eagerly dipped in my hand, and conveyed the precious liquid to my mouth.

The clouds had cleared away from the horizon, and I was thus able to ascertain the whereabouts of the west by seeing the sun setting with a fiery aspect in its full circular form. By this I knew full well that a sultry day would follow. Multitudes of insects now filled the air, buzzing round my head; hundreds of piping frogs rose from the pool at which I had drunk; the birds flew to their roosts; the squirrels ran to their nests; and I could hear the voices of several herons as they wended their way to the distant swamps. Now the night-birds broke forth with their shrill cries; but overpowering sleep oppressed me. Even the roar of an alligator or the cry of a puma could not have kept me awake. Darkness rapidly came on, and there was no moon to light me on my path. Making my way to the nearest tree, whose spreading branches afforded some shelter from the night-dews, I knelt down and prayed for that protection which I felt I so greatly needed. Then I stretched myself on the ground, and almost in an instant was asleep.



I DISCOVER TIM ASLEEP.

I awoke, conscious that some animal was near me. I felt its breath on my face, and it had taken my hand in its mouth. I expected the next moment to have its fangs fixed in my flesh; but still I could not move. Then I heard a low whimper, followed by a bark. I started up, and opening my eyes, discovered my faithful dog Caesar, who was endeavouring to arouse me to consciousness. I returned his caresses as he fawned on me, finding me not dead as he supposed. It was still dark; but I no longer dreaded having to wander about by myself; he would prove my guide and protector. He seemed by his actions to indicate that he wanted me to get up and follow him. I at once came to the conclusion that my friends were encamped not far off, and that he would lead me to them. I was about to strap on the remainder of the venison, when the horrible smell which proceeded from it showed that it was no longer fit for human food; though Caesar, who appeared to be very hungry, willingly made a substantial meal off it, when I gave him leave to take what he wanted. As I looked round, great was my satisfaction to see, by the warm tints in the sky, that day was already breaking.

Caesar, having finished his meal, once more bounded on, and then came back to ascertain that I was doing as he wished. I followed him, eagerly running forward. He kept along the bank of the stream, which apparently, in the wet season, spread out over the rocky bottom, now perfectly dry. On either side grew oleander, acacia, laurel, paw-paw, and many flowering shrubs; while in the distance, against the sky, I could see a tall tree scathed by lightning, and leafless.

In vain I looked out for a fire, to indicate the camp of my companions, when suddenly Caesar, starting forward, gave a loud bark. Hurrying on after him, I caught sight of a man stretched on the ground, with his rifle by his side; and, to my great joy, I recognised Tim Flanagan. On hearing the dog bark, he started up and rushed towards me with outstretched arms.

“Is it you, Mr Maurice, yourself?” he exclaimed, as he eagerly took my hand. “I thought that you had been lost entirely; an’ all yesterday, an’ all this night, an’ the best part o’ last night, too, I’ve been huntin’ for ye until my legs would carry me no longer; an’ I sank down on the ground, thinkin’ if I didn’t find you I’d never show my face at Castle Kearney again. If it hadn’t been for Caesar, I never should have found ye, for not a foot farther could I have stirred without some food; an’, sure, that’s what I’ve not had since yesterday mornin’.”

My first inquiry was as to where our friends were encamped.

“Faith, Mr Maurice, that’s jist what I cannot tell,” he answered. “I set off to try an’ find ye as soon as Mounseer Jolly an’ Mr Carlos came back; an’ next mornin’, when I returned, not a sign of them could I see at the camp. Why they moved on is more than I can say, except that they thought we should follow in their trail. Maybe they imagined the Indians were comin’ afther them; or perhaps they wanted water, and went to look for it.”

I, of course, could not conjecture what could have induced Lejoillie and Carlos to proceed on their journey without waiting for Tim and me. “But how came you not to shoot some game?” I inquired.

“Faith, Mr Maurice, I had an accident, an’ lost all my powder; an’ it’s a mercy I didn’t lose my life too. I was tryin’ to light a fire, which wouldn’t blaze up, seein’ the sticks were green, when what should I do but take my powder-flask an’ begin to shake a few grains on it. On a sudden away went the flask out of my hand with a loud bang, gettin’ shivered to pieces, an’ knockin’ me over. I picked myself up, thinkin’ I was kilt entirely; but I wasn’t the worse for it,

barrin' the loss of the powder an' the duck which I had put ready to roast; an' Caesar had a little of his coat singed. The worst of the business was, that I could no longer hope to shoot any game.

"Fortunately I can spare you a few charges; and we must make our stock last as long as possible," I said. "The first thing we have to do is to shoot something for breakfast, and to look out, on our way, for any fruit which may help us to enjoy it."

While wandering alone, I had often been almost in despair of ever finding my way. With Tim as my companion my spirits rose, and I felt perfectly happy when, shortly afterwards, I brought down a fat gobbler, which Caesar routed out of a bush close to us; while Tim, the next instant, killed a duck. We lost no time in making up a fire to cook our game; and we enjoyed a hearty meal, while a neighbouring pool afforded us water to quench our thirst.

Greatly revived, we prepared to set off eastward fully expecting that before nightfall we should be with our friends. Tim said he was certain they were to the right of us. We had, however, gone on but a short distance when a thick mist came sweeping along from the eastward, completely shrouding the whole country, as well as the sun above our heads, so that we had no object by which to direct our course. In a country like Florida, where there are no mountains, and the taller trees grow in hollows, it is most difficult to find one's way, except by compass, when the sun is obscured; still we thought we knew the direction of the east, and continued on, every now and then uttering a loud shout, hoping that our friends might be within hearing. We agreed at last that, although they might not hear our voices, they might hear the report of our guns; but that we might expend our powder with some benefit to ourselves, we agreed to wait until we saw an object to fire at.

We were passing, soon afterwards, near some ponds, when we shot three or four birds, and coming near a hummock, we killed several others, which we thought would be welcome to our friends, or would, at all events, supply us and Caesar with food for the next day. We still fancied that we were going right. Shortly afterwards, we entered a pine-barren, or, rather, I might call it a pine-forest, through which we struck on a well-defined track, the grass on either side being so tall that we could scarcely see over it.

We had been going on for several hours, when we suddenly found ourselves in a more open space. On one side was a deserted hut, near a pool of fresh-water, while a number of tall trees, which had been cut down by the woodmen's axes, lay prostrate on the ground. We examined the hut. There were bed-places for three or four men; and just outside was a circle of blackened stones, with ashes in the centre, which had evidently formed the fire-place; but everything else had disappeared. While searching about, Tim exclaimed that there were marks of blood in one of the bed-places; and, on examining the spots, I agreed with him that the stains were those of blood. His opinion was, that one of the party had been surprised asleep in the hut by the Indians, but that the rest, being out at the time, had made their escape, and were afraid to venture back.

On leaving the hut, Caesar ran to a little distance from it and barked. We followed him, when great was our horror to see the body of a man stretched on the ground. The poor fellow had been scalped, clearly showing by whom he had met his death. His jacket had been carried off; his shirt was torn, as if the savages had been about to take it off him when they were interrupted. From the appearance of the body, he had, we conjectured, been dead two or three days, perhaps longer, for, as it lay in the shade, it was not so decomposed as it might otherwise have been.

"I'm afther thinkin' the sooner we get away from this place the better," said Tim, as, having hurried from the spot, we stood near the pool I have described, from which Caesar was lapping the water.

"I don't see that we run much risk while we remain here, as the Indians are not likely to come back again," I answered; "at the same time, I more than ever regret having parted from our companions, and I shall be thankful when we find them again."

The result of our consultation was, that we agreed to push forward as long as daylight lasted, and should we not find our friends in the meantime, to camp at nightfall. Had we been amply supplied with powder I should have been less anxious about our possible fate. The Indians who had murdered the poor woodcutter had, I trusted, passed by; and we earnestly hoped that we might not fall in with any other bands on their way to the north. We thought it possible that we might come upon the settlement to which the woodmen belonged; but we had, as yet, fallen on no trail which might lead to it, and as the mist still hung over the face of nature, we had nothing to guide us. Still we went on, both of us believing that our faces were directed eastward.

Chapter Nine.

Camping out—Sufferings from thirst—Napping—Heavy fogs—The phantom deer—Reduced to extremity—A tortoise guides us to water—Fight with a bear—Relief—Camp for the night—March continued—Increased sufferings—On the wrong track—Snake for breakfast—Hard training—Tim's ammunition expended—We reach a lake—My last shot—Death of Caesar—Sinking from privation—Tim procures food—Dine on frogs—Our usual bill of fare—I succumb at last—I beg Tim to proceed alone—We come upon some black settlers—Help at last—An invitation.

Again Tim and I camped without having fallen in with Lejoillie and Carlos. Although we were anxious about ourselves, we had also reason to fear that they might meet with some disaster. They had, however, plenty of powder and shot. They had also a compass to guide them, so that, notwithstanding the foggy state of the atmosphere, they might be able to keep a direct course towards the Saint John. The birds we had shot afforded us an ample meal; and by cooking them at night, we had sufficient for breakfast the next day.

Notwithstanding the heat during the day-time, at night, owing to the thick fog, we felt it chilly in the extreme. The trees dripped with moisture; and it was with difficulty we could find a dry place to camp on. Tim insisted on watching,

while I slept; but as soon as I awoke, I made him lie down, and sat up by our fire with my rifle by my side, trying to keep my eyes open by throwing on sticks so as to maintain a bright blaze which would keep wolves or pumas at a distance.

My faithful Caesar crouched by my side, every now and then opening his eyes and looking about to ascertain that no foe was near. Perhaps trusting to his vigilance, I made less strenuous efforts to keep myself from dozing; certain it is that, after a time, I sank down on the ground. When I awoke, the fire had almost gone out, and my blanket was nearly wet through. I jumped to my feet, and endeavoured to make the fire burn up again, puffing and blowing with all my might. I was unwilling to call Tim to my assistance.

While I was thus employed, day dawned. Though the light increased, the same heavy fog hung over the face of nature, and it was impossible to ascertain in what direction the sun was rising. We wrung out our wet blankets, and hung them on some sticks close to the fire to dry, while we breakfasted off some of the game we had cooked on the previous evening; but it was already high, and we knew that it would be useless to carry the remainder with us, except for the sake of Caesar, who would not object to it on that account.

“It won’t do to stay here doing nothing,” I observed; “we must look out for water, and try to kill some more game for our next meal.”

“Faith you’re right, Mr Maurice,” said Tim. “I’m mighty thirsty as it is; an’ though there is no sun, we shall find it hot enough when we begin to trudge on.”

We accordingly rolled up our blankets, strapped on our packs, and commenced our march for the day. Our footsteps showed us the direction whence we had come, and we hoped that we had been directing our course eastward. As we marched on through the midst of a wide-extending pine-barren, eagerly looking out for water, we allayed our burning thirst by sucking some leaves which still retained the moisture precipitated on them during the night. Though the fog continued, the precious drops soon dried up, and our thirst became almost intolerable. Poor Caesar followed with his tongue out, showing that he was suffering as well as we were. No deer or other wild animals crossed our path. The fog prevented us from seeing more than a few yards off, so that it was possible we might pass close to water without discovering it. Had either of us been alone, we should most likely have sunk down in despair; but as it was, we encouraged each other, though we did not talk much, for our tongues were too dry to speak.

We were almost in despair of finding water, when Tim stopped, and whispered, “See there!” pointing on one side, where I could just make out dimly through the fog the form of a deer crossing the grass. In another instant it might disappear. We raised our rifles at the same moment, and fired. As the smoke cleared away, we expected to see the animal struggling on the ground, but it had vanished. We dashed forward, in vain looking out for it. When we reached the spot where we believed that it had been standing, we could discover no traces of blood to show that it had been wounded. We must have been deceived by the fog, for we could not suppose that we should otherwise both have missed.

Caesar rushed on, and we followed, hoping that he had got upon the trail of the deer.

“There it is! there it is!” cried Tim, after we had gone a considerable distance, and either the same deer or another rose before us, as indistinctly seen as the first. We stopped to reload our rifles, then cautiously crept forward. But the animal must have discovered us; for scarcely had we raised our rifles to our shoulders and pulled the triggers, than it vanished.

“I hit it, Tim; I’m sure I did!” I exclaimed.

But we were again doomed to disappointment; not a trace of the deer could we perceive. I cannot describe our sensations. It made us feel as if some phantom were mocking us. But it was by the fog alone we had been deceived, and we had both probably fired too high. We resolved that, should we see another deer, only one should fire at a time; and it was agreed that I should fire first, and should I miss, Tim should dash forward and try and get another shot before the animal had disappeared. In our eagerness to get up to the deer, we had not sufficiently marked the direction we had come, and we had to stop and consider how we should direct our course. We both thought that we were right, and once more we went on. We were now feeling hungry as well as thirsty, and I was very faint; still, knowing that it would not do to give in, I struggled on as well as I could. Had the fog cleared away, and enabled us to see the sun,—although the heat would have been increased,—we should have been in better spirits, for we should have known whether or not we were in the right direction. Now all was uncertain. We were uncertain but that we might be retracing our steps towards the lake, going west instead of east, as we wished to do. My watch told me that the day was advancing. Should we not obtain food and water before the morning, I felt I could scarcely hold out until then.

“It will be a pity,” I heard Tim muttering; “but it must be done sooner than let the young master die.”

“What’s that you say?” I asked.

“I’m just thinkin’ that we must kill Caesar an’ eat him. If we die, he’ll die; for the wolves an’ painters, or maybe the rattlesnakes, will be puttin’ an end to his life, so that it’ll be no cruelty to kill him an’ save ourselves.”

“I should not have the heart to do that,” I said. As my hunger increased, however, I began to think it would be better to eat poor Caesar than to die of starvation. Still, watching the faithful animal as he trotted on beside me, unconscious of the subject of our conversation, I resolved that it should only be done when we were reduced to the direst extremity. “We must wait until nightfall, Tim. I think I can hold out another day. I’ll try my best, at all events,” I said.

We walked on some way further, scarcely exchanging a word, when I saw a creature moving in the grass before me. I

thought it was a snake, and was about to lift my gun to blow off its head, knowing that it would serve us for food, when I perceived that it was a tortoise.

“Hurrah!” cried Tim; “there’s something that will keep us and Caesar alive for a day at least.” And he rushed forward with his axe uplifted, intending to kill the animal.

“Stay!” I exclaimed. “See, it is evidently going steadily forward, as if making its way to water. It will lead us to it if we follow it; and when it has performed that service, we may kill it if necessary.”

I had to hold back Caesar, who would have attacked the tortoise, which went steadily on, as I expected. Afraid of getting too close, lest we might alarm it and make it conceal itself, we kept at some distance. Our impatience, however, made us wish that it would move faster than it was doing. It went on in a straight line, apparently not discovering us, as we followed behind. How we longed that it would break into a run. I remembered the fable, however, of the hare and the tortoise: “Sure and steady wins the race.” Parched with thirst as we were, it was a hard matter for us to restrain our eagerness. On went the tortoise, turning neither to the right nor to the left. It seemed to us that the ground was sloping, and that we were on the edge of a pine-barren. Perhaps it was making its way to some bottom or hummock, where we should find not only water but game. Tim and Caesar, however, became very impatient at the tortoise, which crawled on, taking no pains to hurry itself. I confess I myself had the greatest difficulty in not running on and giving it a shove with the muzzle of my rifle.

At length some palmetto-scrub appeared, and palmetto-palms and other trees which cannot exist without moisture. How thankful we felt when, just before the gloom of evening came on, a pool appeared before us. We forgot the tortoise, and dashed forward, eager to quench our thirst. While we were stooping down to do so, and Caesar was busy lapping the refreshing liquid, our slow-moving guide reached the water. I thought that it would put in its head, and drink as we were doing; instead of which, before we could catch it, the creature plunged into the pool and disappeared. However, I scarcely regretted this, as, by destroying it, we should have ill requited the valuable service it had performed to us.

The water greatly revived us, and we felt we could endure hunger for some hours longer, should no animal come in our way. As there would, however, still be some few minutes of daylight, we might be able to kill a bird or two for supper. Rising to our feet, we lost no time in looking out for game. We saw several birds,—green paroquets, woodpeckers, blue-birds, and red-birds; but we had frightened them from the spot where we had at first appeared. We accordingly made our way along the pool, Tim going in one direction, I in the other. I was very unwilling to throw away ammunition on small birds; but we had agreed to kill no more than we wanted. I soon shot a couple, and heard Tim fire twice. Just as I was reloading, I saw, through the thickening gloom, a huge brown bear descending a cabbage-palm, up which it had climbed to obtain the bunches of ripe fruit growing on the boughs. Though alone, I determined to attack it; so I dropped in a ball instead of small shot, as I was about to do. Creeping closer, I took, as I thought, a steady aim, and fired. Unfortunately, however, the bear was only wounded; and dropping to the ground faster than it had intended, it came towards me, growling furiously. I retreated slowly, reloading, and shouting to Tim to come to my assistance. The bear, however, advanced more speedily than was at all pleasant. Seeing a tree close to me, I stepped behind it, and again fired. The ball struck the bear; but the animal did not fall. It stopped, however, for a moment, and bit and scratched at its wound, giving me time to run behind another tree and again load. Tim now came running up. The bear was thus exposed to a cross-fire. Tim, supposing that the next instant the bear would be upon me, fired, forgetting that his gun was only loaded with small shot. He hit the animal, but in a way which only made it more furious. On it came, gnashing its teeth, resolved apparently to have its revenge on me. Knowing that my life depended upon the result, I took a steady aim at its chest. I fired, and over it rolled. As the bear was making desperate efforts to rise, Tim, going up to it, presented his rifle close to its head, and shot it dead.

“Hurrah!” he shouted; “we’ve got mate enough now to put strength into us for a good day’s march.”

We lost no time in cutting off as much of the bear’s flesh as we required for ourselves and Caesar. We then collected a quantity of firewood, keeping a look-out for snakes as we did so, and carried it up to a dry spot away from the pool. Losing no time in making a fire, we put on some of the meat to cook. I confess, however, that, to satisfy the cravings of our hunger, we chewed a portion of it without waiting till it was roasted. By the light of the fire we then constructed a hut of palmetto leaves, placing Caesar in front to give us warning should danger approach, for neither Tim nor I was able to watch.

After we had supped, before lying down I gave my powder-horn a shake. A very small quantity of powder remained. Tim imitated my example, and I guessed, by the blank look of his countenance, that his stock was equally reduced.

“It’s to be hoped that we’ll not be afther wantin’ it much, for I am mightily afraid that I’ve only got another charge or two remaining. We may, however, strike the Saint John to-morrow, an’ it won’t be long before we fall in with settlers,” he observed.

“We have reason to be thankful that we killed the bear, then,” I answered. “Do not let us anticipate misfortune until it overtakes us.”

We made as large a fire as the fuel we had collected would allow, and hung up our bear’s meat inside our hut for security. In spite of the howling of wolves and other noises which came across the pool, we fell asleep; and the hut sheltering us from the dews, we were far more comfortable than on previous nights. I heard Caesar give a bark two or three times, but that did not arouse me fully.

The night passed away without disturbance. At daybreak we packed up some of our bear’s flesh, which we hoped would keep good until dinner-time. Then having taken a draught of water, we continued our march, as we believed, to the east; but the fog still hung over the country, and we were left in as much doubt as before. We soon found ourselves again on the pine-barren; indeed, in spite of the prickly shrubs here and there, it afforded us better walking

than any other part of the country. On and on we went, suffering almost as much as on the previous day from want of water. We halted about one o'clock to dine. Our bear's flesh, even though roasted, was already high, and we feared that we should be unable to eat it for supper. We were able, however, to procure several wild-fruits and nuts, which, from the birds eating them, we knew to be wholesome, and these somewhat allayed our thirst.

The fog continued all day, there not being a breath of wind to blow it off. It made walking very fatiguing. Another night was approaching. We caught sight of some deer, but were afraid of expending our last charges of powder without being certain of bagging our game. We did not actually go supperless to bed, for by recooking the bear's meat, we managed to eat it; but we did not partake of a morsel more than was necessary to satisfy our hunger, though Caesar enjoyed a good meal.

The wind got up during the night, and the next morning the sun rose in a clear sky, just as we unrolled ourselves from our blankets.

"Now we shall know our way!" cried Tim, as he sprang to his feet.

I looked round to examine our trail of the previous evening. We had been tramping west instead of east, or very probably had been going round in a circle; at all events, we had gone away from the Saint John River. We had now to retrace our steps.

Steering in the direction whence the sun was rising, the bright beams dazzled our eyes. We had nothing to eat; but we hoped that before long we should be able to kill a deer or some large bird which would afford us sufficient food. We now guessed that our friends must be ahead; probably while they had been searching for us, we had been going away from them. All we had now to do was to press steadily onwards.

We were getting desperately hungry, when I saw something move in the grass a little in front of us. Hoping that it might be another tortoise, I ran forward, and found that it was a large black snake. I might have shot it; but not wishing to throw away a charge of powder, I drew my axe, and as it turned hissing towards me, with a single stroke I cut off its head. It was of a non-venomous species; but, oppressed by hunger, even had it been a rattlesnake, I would have proposed to eat it.

"Here is food, and we must not be particular," I said.

Tim hesitated. "Sure, Mr Maurice, you'll not be afther eatin' a snake," he said.

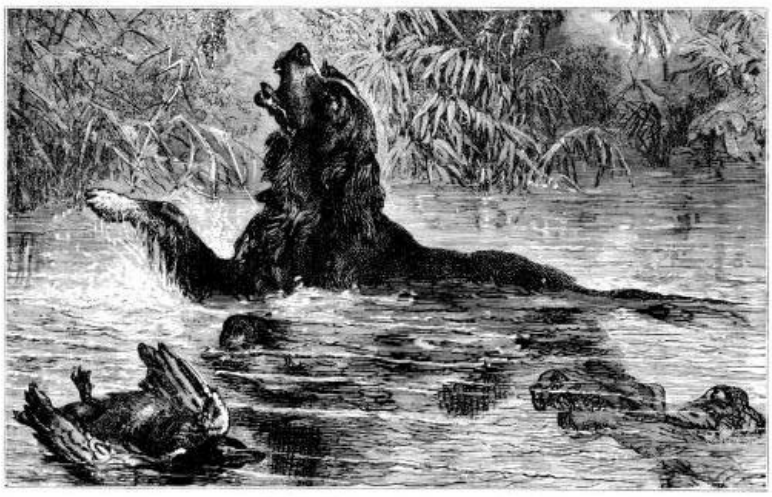
"I could eat a toad, or a potful of caterpillars," I answered; and having cut off a portion for Caesar, I slung the remainder over my shoulder. We hastened on until we came to some brushwood, where we could collect sufficient fuel to make a fire. The Indians, I knew, eat snakes of all descriptions. We soon had it skinned and roasted; and Tim was surprised to find it far more palatable than he had expected.

"We shall not starve if we keep our wits awake," I said; "but we must not be over-particular as to what we eat."

Again we pushed on. I remembered the cabbage-palm, and determined to climb the first tree of the kind we met with to obtain a cabbage. It would be a change of diet, at all events.

I must pass over many of the incidents of our dreary march. One day a gobbler got up, at which Tim too eagerly fired, and missed. His last charge was thus expended. I had still one left. We saw several deer, but even the nearest was so far off that I dared not fire.

Though we were never actually without food for more than a day, the hard life we were leading was beginning to tell on both of us. Our shoes were almost worn out, our clothes torn to shreds by the prickly shrubs; and when I looked at Tim, and observed how thin and careworn he was, I supposed that I was much in the same state.



CÆSAR SEIZED BY AN ALLIGATOR.

At last we saw the sheen of water in the distance. The sight raised our spirits. We made towards it, though it was somewhat out of our way. It might be the Saint John, or one of its affluents, or perhaps a long lake. We had had no food all day. We should be certain to find wild-fowl on its banks, whether it was a lake or a stream. On reaching it, we were still uncertain what it was. Trees and shrubs grew thickly on the bank, beyond which were reeds, and on its

surface floated water-lilies and other aquatic plants. I had my gun in my hand, when a large bird of beautiful plumage rose directly before me. I could not resist the temptation to fire. The bird did not drop immediately, though I saw that it was badly wounded. After fluttering, however, for a short time, it fell into the water. My faithful Caesar immediately plunged in and swam towards it. Forgetting for a moment the savage monsters which inhabited the streams and lakes of Florida, and eager to obtain the bird, I did not call him back. On he swam, and was just about to seize the duck, when he gave a loud cry, resembling a shriek rather than a bark, while he struggled desperately to return. The next instant, to my horror, my faithful animal disappeared beneath the surface. As he sank I caught sight, through the water, of a monstrous alligator, which was dragging him down. Had I possessed another charge of powder, I might have rescued him, or, at all events, have avenged his death; but my flask was empty.

I stood in vain expecting to see him reappear, but the monster had got him firmly in his grip. I watched and watched, and—I am not ashamed to say it—when all hope was gone, I burst into tears.

“We’ll never see him again,” said Tim, who now came up. “Those brutes keep their prey down at the bottom of the water, until they become rotten enough to suit their taste. It’s no use looking afther him any longer. If we only had a store of powder an’ bullets, we’d pay the villain off. Come along now, master dear; it’s time to be lookin’ out for some other food.”

“But we must try and get the duck,” I said, recovering myself.

“Sure you’d not be afther venturing into the water?” observed Tim.

“No; but perhaps the bird may float near the bank, and we may draw it in with a large stick.”

It appeared to me that the duck was already floating in towards the shore, when a black snout was seen above the surface, and the next instant the bird was snapped up and carried off by another alligator.

Whether the water was a stream or pool we could not ascertain,—there was no perceptible current; but still we hoped that by keeping along its bank it might lead down to the main river. We therefore got clear of the underwood, and proceeded in the direction we had before been following. Great was our disappointment to find, after going about a mile, that it came to a termination, and that it was only one of the many lakelets which are scattered over the face of the country. We saw several deer, and birds innumerable flew among the trees or rose from the bank of the lake, but none of them could we reach. We gazed at them with longing eyes.

“Maybe the river is not far off, and it will be best to push on for it,” observed Tim; “an’ when we get there, we shall fall in with settlers, or, at all events, be able to make our way either by land or in a canoe till we can borrow a fresh supply of powder and shot.”

I was not so sanguine as Tim on these points, for I knew that few if any settlers were to be found so high up the river, and that days if not weeks might pass before we could reach the habitations of civilised men. We now entered another pine-barren, stretching away to the eastward, which must be crossed before we could reach the river. Of its size I had no notion; it might extend for miles. Not a particle of food had we eaten during the day, and I was becoming so faint that I could scarcely drag one leg after the other. We talked of making traps to catch birds, but neither of us had much experience in the art of trap-making; and unless well acquainted with the habits of the birds frequenting the ground on which we might set our traps, we might starve long before one was caught. We could only therefore trudge forward, looking out for any living creature or any vegetable which might afford us food. Nothing could we see; even the snakes seemed to avoid us. We would have eaten frogs could we have found them, but not a pool in which any lived did we come across.

Another night was approaching. We should have to lie down without food or water; but to proceed during the darkness was impossible. Tim kept up his spirits.

“Sure we’ll be afther finding something or other to eat,” he exclaimed. “Sit down under this tree, Mr Maurice dear; I’ll not go far from you, so don’t be afraid of losing me.”

I followed his advice, for I felt myself utterly incapable of going further. Scarcely had he gone twenty yards, when I saw him hurl his axe towards the root of a tree; then running forward with a shout of satisfaction, he lifted up an animal, which I saw was a young racoon. His weapon had almost cut it in two. We were not long, it may be supposed, in lighting a fire and cooking the flesh, almost the whole of which we devoured between us. I sighed as I thought of poor Caesar, and wished that he had been alive to eat a portion of my share. Our hunger satisfied, we rolled ourselves in our blankets, and quickly dropped off to sleep, with our fire burning at our feet. Had a puma wandered that way, we might easily have become its prey.

It was daylight when we awoke, but another of those heavy fogs which had before bewildered us covered the face of nature. We felt much inclined to remain where we were, until the fog should lift, and we might see how to direct our course. We ate the remainder of the racoon, but soon afterwards began to suffer from thirst, so Tim advised that we should move on in the hopes of coming to a pool, if not to the river itself. He was sure that he could steer a right course. I was doubtful about that, but as my thirst increased, I was ready to run every risk for the sake of finding water. On and on we went. Noon had long passed before we reached a small water-hole in a bottom fringed with reeds. We eagerly quenched our thirst, in spite of the nauseous taste of the water. Then Tim, thinking the pool too small to contain alligators, plunged in and began catching frogs.

“Get a fire lighted, Mr Maurice; we’ll soon have some of these cooked,” he shouted out to me while thus employed.

Without much hesitation, after they had been a short time cooking, I plucked off the legs of the creatures, and eagerly ate them. They served to satisfy our hunger, if they did not do much to maintain our strength. We should have been more content had we been certain that we were approaching the river.

Without the sun by day and the stars by night to guide us, we might have been going, for all we could tell, to the right or left of our course; or, perhaps, even back again. I regretted not having more carefully studied the map. I knew that the Saint John River, in many places, consists of a chain of small lakelets, connected by a narrow stream; but of their position or extent I was very uncertain.

The next day found us wandering on across the pine-barren, as did the following, while the mist hung heavily over the country. During this time Tim killed a snake, and we fell in with another tortoise, which hunger compelled us at once to kill. Then again the mist cleared off, and we were able once more to proceed with certainty. I felt sure that during the previous days we had made but little forward progress, having gone rather towards the south or north, than on the course we wished to follow. Had either of us been alone, we should, I again felt, have sunk down and given up the struggle for life. At last we fell in with another hummock, in which were several cabbage-palm trees. Weak as I was, I managed to climb up and cut out the head of one of them, which afforded each of us a meal, though we suffered somewhat from eating it. I am afraid to say how many snakes we killed and ate. We certainly devoured between us half-a-dozen lizards, and at last learned to make frogs an ordinary article of diet. In spite of the food I have mentioned, which though varied was insufficient, we felt conscious that we were getting weaker and weaker. As I looked at Tim, I knew that he could not hold out much longer; and though he did not say what he thought of me, I believed that I was in a worse state. Often I detected him turning his eyes towards me with a sad expression. He insisted on carrying my gun and blanket, the weight of which greatly oppressed me. At last, when we had been wandering about for nearly two weeks, a sudden faintness came over me, and I sank to the ground. Tim threw himself by my side.

“Ochohone, ochohone! What will I be afther doin’, Mr Maurice dear?” he exclaimed. “Cheer up, cheer up! Sure we’ll be gettin’ to the river before very long, and findin’ some food which will give you strength.”

As, however, I still felt unable to proceed, I proposed that he should push forward alone, as I was sure we could not be very far from the river. He might thus, at all events, have a chance of saving his own life, although I might not recover. I urged him not to lose time, but to try and find some food, hoping that a good meal would give me strength to proceed. As I insisted on his doing this, he begged that he might first carry me to a tree, at the foot of which he made up a bed with our blankets; and leaving our guns by my side, he hurried across the hummock. It appeared to me, however, that he was a long time absent. I began to be afraid that some accident had happened to him, when I saw him coming back, holding up a big racoon. This, though I could eat but little of it, enabled me once more to proceed. Another evening was approaching, and as yet no signs of the river appeared. The country, however, improved in appearance. We were now making our way through a fertile tract of open savanna, here and there covered with fresh green grass, and bordered by small hummocks full of trees, brilliant with orchids and other flowers. There were birds of sweet song and beautiful plumage—ivory-bills, red-birds, and mocking-birds, green paroquets, and many others of the woodpecker tribe—filling the forest with their various notes.

We now felt sure that we were approaching the river; but again a faintness came over me, and I doubted very much whether I should reach it. Suddenly Tim exclaimed, “Hurrah! I see a hut, and people moving about it. Even the Redskins would not refuse to help us; but I’m afther thinkin’ they’re either white men or blacks.”

Mustering my failing strength, I hurried on, helped by Tim. As we drew nearer, we saw two black men, and a woman seated on the ground, with a child near her. One of the blacks advanced, while the other stood gazing at us with no very friendly expression. I suspected that they were runaways, and that they fancied we had come in search of them. When, however, they saw our forlorn and tattered condition, and heard Tim exclaim, stretching out his hand, “I’m sure you’ll be afther givin’ assistance to your white brothers in distress,” the expression on their countenances changed.

“Who are you? Whar you come from?” asked the man who had approached us.

WE FALL IN WITH A NEGRO FAMILY.

Tim explained that we were English travellers who had lost our companions, and that we were making our way across the country to the Saint John River.

They seemed perfectly satisfied with the account we gave of ourselves, as we judged by their changed manner. The black woman, getting up at once, made preparations for cooking some food, and afterwards suggested that Tim and I should lie down in the shade of the hut and rest. We gladly followed her advice; even Tim, poor fellow, now that his

chief anxiety about me was over, appeared scarcely able to support himself on his feet. After we had thrown ourselves on the ground, the black woman, who had gone out, brought us each a bowl of goat's milk, with which I felt wonderfully refreshed. Almost directly afterwards we fell asleep.

It was already evening when the blacks awoke us, and placed before us a mess of rice, pork, and bananas.

We slept soundly all night; and next morning, when I awoke, I felt quite a different creature to what I had been the day before. We thought it best not to inquire too minutely who our good hosts were, though we had little doubt that they were, as we at first supposed, runaway slaves. The first question we put was whether they had seen anything of our friends; to which they replied in the negative, and told us that we were still nearly a day's journey from the river. One of them undertook to guide us to a part where he thought we might possibly find a canoe. If not, he advised that we should descend the stream on a raft, until we reached some settlers' huts, which he told us we should come to in a few hours. He begged us, however, not to mention, on any account, having met with him and his companions. This we willingly promised. The blacks, unfortunately, could not supply us with powder and shot, the small quantity they possessed being barely sufficient for their own wants; but they offered to give us enough of food to last us for a couple of days.

As we found ourselves utterly unable to travel, we were thankful to accept of their invitation to remain with them until we had recovered our strength.

Chapter Ten.

We set off for the river—Appearance of the country—Arrival at the bank of the Saint John—A canoe discovered—Stopping leaks—A suggestion—Disturbed night—Our voyage commenced—River scenery—Provisions falling short—Fishing—Journey continued—Doubtful eggs—Ruined homestead—We secure some fruit—A supply of poultry—Deserted settlement—Sad effects of indian warfare—A dismal swamp—The Indian scout—A proof of hostility—Long rest—Our evening meal—Paddling on.

I had fortunately a few dollars, with which I was able to recompense our negro hosts, who seemed, however, to expect no reward. With the one who had undertaken to be our guide we set off at daybreak, in the hope of reaching the River Saint John before dark. Though we were both, as Tim said, "as thin as whipping-posts," we felt sufficiently strong to undertake the journey, and the fatigues we were likely to encounter, until we could fall in with some craft to convey us down the river to Castle Kearney.

The forest through which we passed consisted chiefly of cabbage-palms and pines on the higher ground; but we saw marshes extending on either side, which our guide told us reached to the river. Had we possessed ammunition, we could have shot deer, for numerous herds crossed our path. We saw also a few wild-fowl. Our guide said that in the winter the marshes were full of them, and that any quantity might be shot in an hour. We caught sight also of a number of wild cattle; but they kept at a distance, as did the deer, both being equally afraid of man. Vegetation became more dense as, towards evening, we approached the long-looked-for river, so that we had some difficulty in making our way through the thickly-growing cabbage-palms, live-oak, and water-oak, hung with crimson and white air-plants, trumpet-flowers, wild-vines, and innumerable other parasites. Our guide, however, soon discovered a narrow path, by which he led us, or otherwise our progress would have been altogether stopped, and we should have had to turn back and make our way by a longer route. At length we saw an expanse of water glittering brightly between the trees.

"Dere is de riber, sah!" exclaimed our guide. "Now we see if we find canoe; him here not long ago."

We hurried eagerly forward, until we stood on the margin of the river, as near to the water as the tall grass would allow us to get. Our guide searched up and down the stream, looking amid the grass and under every thick bush as a dog hunts for game. At length he shouted out, "Hurrah! me thought to find canoe."

We made towards him. There, sure enough, carefully concealed among the brushwood, was a canoe capable of holding three or four persons, with several paddles inside it.

"But it may belong to others," I observed, "and it may be of serious consequence to them on returning not to find it."

"Sure we have a right to it, now it's deserted by its owners," observed Tim; "maybe they'll never come back."

"What do you say?" I asked of our guide.

"Take him, massa," he answered; "me t'ink dose who come up in him neber go back."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because de Redskins take dem scalps, an' dey all dead."

"That settles the question," said I. "But now let's look at the canoe."

On examining it, we found several ugly-looking cracks, which, had we launched it, would have admitted the water in an inconvenient manner. With other articles in the canoe, we discovered a small iron pot, which had evidently been used for boiling pitch. We were not long in tapping a pine-tree, and obtaining as much pitch as we required, with some gum the black collected.

We made up a fire on a mud-bank, left dry by the falling waters, from which we disturbed half-a-dozen alligators who had been taking their siesta on it. It required our united strength to get the canoe up to the spot, when, turning it up,

we stopped the leaks in the best way we could. Having done so, we launched it, and found that it floated very well. The black suggested that we should supply ourselves with a quantity of pitch-pine-torches, which we would find useful should we wish to proceed by night, or to assist in keeping alligators and wild beasts at a distance. He and Tim soon procured an ample supply. As it was by this time almost dark, and too late to start, we agreed to sleep in the canoe alongside the bank. We proposed to have a fire burning all night, to keep the alligators at bay. The black declared there was no risk; but Tim and I, not being so confident on that point, resolved to keep watch, rather than trust to our black friend. As soon as supper was served, he threw himself down in the bottom of the canoe, and was soon fast asleep. It was providential that we did keep watch; for scarcely an hour had passed when a "'gator," as Tim called it, swimming down the stream, was attracted by the smell of the remains of our supper, and, in spite of the fire, landed on the opposite side of the bank to which we were secured. Had we been all asleep, he would very likely have snapped up one of us. We shouted at the top of our voices, and threw fire-brands at his ugly face, which compelled him to retreat to his native element. He and his relatives kept up a horrible roar for several hours. We could hear their jaws clashing together as they snapped at their prey. Our shouts awoke the black, who, jumping up, very nearly tumbled overboard before he knew where he was.

"De 'gators no come here," he said, when we told him what had made us cry out.

"Don't they, my boy!" exclaimed Tim; "see! what's that?"

At this moment a huge alligator shoved his snout above the surface, eyeing the canoe as if he should like to snap up it and us together. The black after this did not sleep as soundly as before; and Tim and I agreed that if the monsters abounded all down the river as they did near its head-waters, we should have a wakeful time of it.

Morning, however, came at last. Our guide was as anxious to return home as we were to proceed on our voyage. He again charged us before parting not to mention having met with him and his companions, thus convincing us of what we had before suspected, that they were runaway slaves. We should have been very ungrateful had we not given him the required assurances, agreeing that we would merely state the fact that we had found the canoe on the bank of the river, and that as, from the time it had been there, its owners were not likely to return, we had appropriated it.

The black, having wished us good-bye, commenced his journey through the forest; while we, shoving off from the bank, began to paddle down the sluggish stream. We kept in the centre, where the current appeared strongest, resolving to paddle all day so as to lose no time. Often our progress was stopped by immense quantities of water-lilies and other aquatic plants which spread over the stream; and in many places it was so shallow that we could touch the bottom with our paddles. Here the water was of a rich brown colour, in many places with a green scum on it, which so completely concealed the alligators moving beneath the surface that we ran against several of the monsters, the whisk of whose tails sent the water flying over us, and very nearly, on more than one occasion, upset the canoe. How we longed for ammunition to kill some of the water-fowl which rose from the sedgy shores! Sometimes our course led us through immense expanses of marsh covered with saw-grass, with here and there islands formed by uprooted trees, brushwood, and reeds matted together. In other places the vegetation which clothed both sides of the river was rich and beautiful in the extreme. Sometimes we found ourselves sweeping by the edge of a cypress swamp, huge trunks, or "knees," as the distorted stems are called, projecting far into the water, and we had to keep a bright look-out not to run against them.

Though sleepy and tired enough, we agreed to paddle on all night, or as long as we could keep awake. Often the river was not fifty yards wide, sometimes much less; then it would expand into lakes two or three miles in width. I was under some apprehensions that should a storm suddenly arise while crossing them, we should be upset; but, as Tim observed, when I made a remark to this effect—

"It's no use troubling ourselves about what might not happen. We will just trust in Providence, an' do our best."

The first night we lit one of our torches, and paddled on as long as we could keep our eyes open. During the time, we passed through another cypress swamp, when the light from the torch, as we twisted in and out among the stems of the trees, made them assume weird and strange forms; while the occasional cry of some night-bird or wild beast, coming sometimes from one side of us, sometimes from the other, had a very depressing effect, and I could have fancied, had I believed in the existence of such things, that the forest was the habitation of evil spirits or satyrs. I was thankful when we got clear of it, and managed to moor the canoe to a tree which grew close to the water. Here we landed and lighted a fire, to boil some porridge in a pot we had obtained from the blacks, and to heat up some cakes; for we had no animal food except a little salt pork and some dried fish, which we kept in case of being pushed to extremities.

Hitherto we had met with no white settlers, for those who had penetrated thus far south had established themselves mostly on the sea-board, where they were less likely to be annoyed by the Indians than on the river. We were not aware of this at the time, and were constantly on the look-out, in the hopes of coming in sight of the dwelling of some white man, from whom we naturally expected to receive a hospitable welcome. Tired as we were, Tim sat up one part of the night, and I the other, to keep the fire burning, so that we might preserve ourselves from being snapped up by one of our friends the alligators. The monsters roared as loudly as usual, and we could hear their jaws snapping and their tails whisking about in the water. It was far from pleasant music, but it did not keep me awake one moment after my watch was over.

We started, by the light of our fire, before daybreak, and continuing our course, entered at sunrise a broad lake, five or six miles in length. We were afraid that, as the sun rose, a strong breeze might spring up; and we could easily suppose how heavy a sea might in a few minutes be created. The weather, however, continued calm; and by dint of hard paddling we re-entered the narrow channel of the stream, down which we continued our course.

Two more days had passed. Our supply of provisions was exhausted, and we were compelled to stop and try to catch some fish. We were less successful than we expected; either the alligators had eaten them up, or the bait we used

was not of an attractive nature. At length we caught a big fellow, which from its appearance we considered fit to eat, and soon had some slices roasting before a fire. There was no use in carrying any of it away, as a few hours afterwards it would have been unfit for food.

Some time afterwards, passing a sand-bank, Tim proposed landing to look after turtle eggs. “Hurrah! here they are by dozens,” he cried out; and he brought as many as he could carry. They looked to me unusually large for the eggs of the fresh-water turtle, but I did not wish to raise unpleasant doubts in his mind as to what they were. Hunger compelled us to cook some of them. They were certainly rather rank; but not until we had taken the edge off our appetites did I observe to him that perhaps they were crocodile eggs.

“Suppose they are,” said Tim, without being at all horrified; “I’d sooner eat them than their mother; but if I was hungry, and could get nothing else, I’d dine off her flesh with the greatest pleasure in the world.”

The banks now rose in some places several feet above the water, and were clothed with pine, live-oak, magnolia, laurel, and other trees. There were fewer marshes, and the country appeared more suitable for settlements than it did higher up. At last we came in sight, on the right bank, of a house surrounded by an orchard and a garden. No one waved to us, however, as we approached, and not a human being was to be seen. As we drew nearer we saw that the roof was gone, and that the orchard and garden were overrun with creepers and weeds. We landed and collected a supply of oranges and other fruit, which we found very refreshing. We were on the point of returning to the canoe, when I heard a cackling sound. It was that of some tame hens. We made our way to the spot from which it proceeded, where we found a hen-house and several fowls, with three nests of eggs, one of which contained eight or ten freshly laid, but on the other eggs the hens had been sitting for some time. This was indeed a godsend, for we could eat the eggs raw should we have no time to land and cook them. I secured the eggs.

“Sure it will be as well to have the birds too,” observed Tim. “They’ll keep alive, and we can kill and eat them as they’re wanted.”

Saying this, he caught four of the hens, and securing them by their legs, threw them over his shoulder, where they hung screaming and struggling.

“I am afraid these will betray us, should any Indians be near,” I observed.

“They’ll be quite aisy soon,” answered Tim. “They’ve got sense enough to know it’s of no use makin’ a fuss when they cannot help themselves.”

Fortunately Tim found some corn in an out-house, the door of which had been closed, so that the hens had been unable to get at it. We filled a basket full, to serve as food for the fowls, as well as for ourselves should we be hard pressed. The rest of the hens had, in the meantime, made their escape.

As we were unwilling longer to delay, we returned with our prizes to the canoe. Though the eggs were little more than sufficient for a single meal, the birds, if we could keep them alive, would last us for four days.

Soon after this we came to another settlement, but were again disappointed. The blackened walls of the houses alone remained. We again landed, but had not wandered far when we came upon the dead body of a man. It was too clear how he had been slain; the Indians had done the deed—he was scalped. Others lay dead within the walls, all of whom had been treated in the same manner. We shouted, but no voice replied. We hurried from the spot, filled with apprehensions. The reports we had heard were now fully corroborated. The red men had raised the standard of revolt against the pale-faced intruders, as they called the whites. We were in great doubt as to what might have been the fate of our friends. All this time we had found no traces of Carlos and Lejoillie. Still we could not but suppose that they had long ago made their way down the river, and we hoped that they had arrived at Castle Kearney long ago.

Evening was approaching. We were again passing through a cypress swamp, which extended on both sides of the river. Knotted and twisted trunks projected far into the stream; the tall stems of trees rose high above our heads; while here and there the rays of the sun, penetrating a short way into the forest, and falling on the lower parts of the trunks, the huge roots, and the enormous creepers suspended from the boughs, served to render the rest of the forest more dark and gloomy. Now and then a vulture croaked at us as we passed; and we could see huge snakes twisting and wriggling among the trunks in search of prey.

We were approaching the right bank, to cut off a bend of the river, when Tim exclaimed—

“Look there, Mr Maurice! I saw some one moving. Yes, sure enough, there’s a Redskin; and he has a rifle in his hand.”

THE INDIAN SCOUT.

I looked in the direction to which Tim pointed. There, indeed, was an Indian, in war-paint and feathers, cautiously making his way amid the tangled roots.

“Better show him our rifles, Mr Maurice,” observed Tim; “he won’t be afther suspecting that they’re not loaded, an’ it will prevent him playin’ us a scurvy trick, which he’ll do, if he can.”

I lifted up my rifle, as Tim also did his, while with a turn of my paddle I steered the canoe away from the shore. Whether he had been on the watch for us or not we could not tell. Fast as we paddled, he made his way almost as rapidly through the swamp, and it soon became evident that his object was to keep up with us. Replacing our rifles at the bottom of the canoe, we took the paddles in both hands, and thus increasing our speed, had hopes of distancing him. Should he, however, reach level ground he might soon overtake us.

Ere long we were convinced that his object was hostile, for a bullet whistled close to my head. Night was approaching, and perhaps he thought we should escape him in the darkness, and so he endeavoured to put a stop to our progress. If so, he was mistaken, for we managed to keep down the centre of the stream, paddling with might and main. We incurred the danger, we knew, of running against a floating log or a snag, or sticking fast on a shallow; but it was better to run these risks than be shot by Indians, for although we had only seen one there might be dozens of them. It became more and more evident that the red men had revolted against the whites. Perhaps the man who was following us was one of those who had murdered the settlers in the houses we had stopped at, and had seen us at a distance.

When morning broke we found that the river had greatly widened, and we had every reason to believe that we had distanced our pursuer. Still, it would probably narrow again, and should any Indians possessed of canoes perceive us they might put off in chase.

After our long paddle during the night we both required sleep, but thought it imprudent to land, lest we should be surprised. We therefore agreed that one should lie down at a time, while the other guided the canoe. The eggs and fruit we had brought supplied us with food, so that we had not to land to obtain any. Tim insisted on my lying down first; and just before I closed my eyes I saw him sitting bolt upright, and as grave as a judge, with deliberate strokes moving his paddle from one side to the other.

I was surprised to find, when I awoke, how low the sun had sunk. The faithful fellow declared that he had not the heart to awake me—that I wanted sleep more than he did. He then lay down, but insisted that I should call him at sunset, as two pair of eyes would then be required.

I waited until the last moment, when I could no longer see my way, and then I roused Tim. He instantly jumped up, and seizing his paddle, began to work away with all his might, as if he thought we had a fleet of Indian canoes astern of us. At last, feeling very hungry, I begged him to stop. Having eaten the last of our eggs and a few oranges, we paddled on, intending to continue our course throughout the night.

Chapter Eleven.

Fancy and fatigue—Toil and privation—We land—Danger of lighting a fire—A hasty meal interrupted—Alarm of Indians—Making down the stream—White men—A welcome meeting—Startling intelligence—Object of the expedition—Suspicion against Rochford—Judge Shurtleff’s opinion—Landing—Preparing to advance—Tim

receives an appointment—The march commenced—Useful allies—A trying journey—Our first halt—The hunting party—A strange meeting—“Spotted Wolf”—Movements of the Indians—Anxiety about my father—Doubts about our Indian friend—A narrow escape—Stabbed in the hummock.

I had been paddling on for some time in a half dreamy state, for fatigue was beginning to tell on me more than on Tim, and I could with difficulty at times keep my eyes open. Though I managed to move my paddle mechanically, I was more asleep than awake. All sorts of strange fancies flitted across my mind, and often I saw objects before me which had no existence in reality. Now a party of Indians, in their war-paint and feathers, would appear on the bank, a bright light making them stand out in bold relief against the forest. Now in imagination I saw a huge snake wriggling across the water; or a puma would show itself among the trees, ready to spring upon us as we passed. Often I heard strange cries and the sound of human voices; then I fancied that I saw a canoe stealing out from a dark creek, about to intercept us. I tried to exert myself, but my arms refused to obey my will.

“Arrah now, Mr Maurice dear, you’d better lie down in the bottom of the boat an’ take a quiet sleep for an hour or two,” exclaimed Tim, who discovered the condition I was in just in time to prevent me letting go my paddle, which the next instant would probably have fallen from my grasp.

His voice aroused me. “I can still paddle on,” I answered; “though my arms ache a little, to be sure.”

“No, no; just lie down, an’ I’ll keep the canoe moving,” said Tim. “I’ve been more accustomed to work than you have, Mr Maurice, and I can stand it better. You’ll be afther knockin’ yourself up altogether; an’ we have many a mile to go yet before we reach Castle Kearney.”

I felt, however, that it was food more than rest which I just then wanted. The pangs of hunger I was enduring convinced me of this. We had, however, only our live fowls remaining, with a few oranges and some grain; but the fowls could not be eaten raw, and the grain required to be pounded and made into cakes before we could swallow it. I therefore proposed that we should land on the first spot we could find clear of trees and brushwood, and cook one of the fowls and make some cakes. To this Tim agreed. Before long, projecting from below the trunk of a large tree, we discovered a bank composed of roots and driftwood, with mud washed over them. There was space enough to light a fire, so we at once landed. While I was engaged in collecting sticks for the fire, Tim wrung the neck of one of our fowls and quickly plucked it. He then cut the bird in two and stuck it up before the fire, as the quickest way of cooking it. We could not afford to be particular. Instead of making cakes, we put on some of the grain to boil in our pot, for we could not stop to bruise and bake it. We were aware that it was imprudent even to light a fire, lest it might attract the notice of any enemies prowling in the neighbourhood; but our hunger overcame all other considerations, and we hoped that as we should soon again be moving on there would be no great risk in what we were doing. I own that I ravenously ate up my share of the fowl, even before it was cooked through; but having been put on while still warm, it was less tough than might have been expected. The boiled grain was far from palatable.

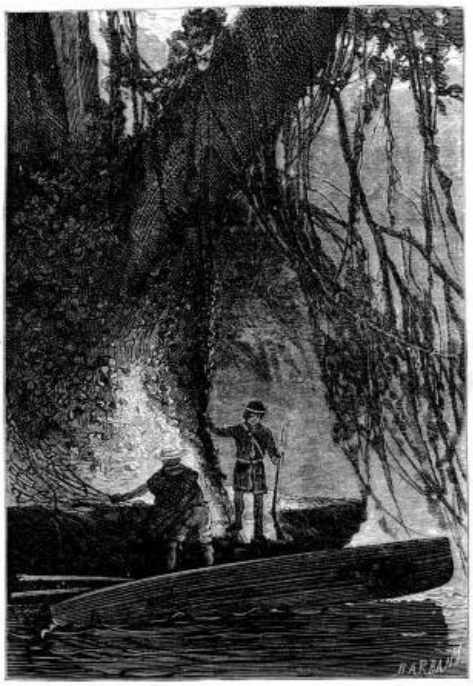
“Sure it will do to fill up any holes which the old hen has left in our stomachs, and I have a notion there are not a few of them,” observed Tim, as he began to bolt down the hot porridge.

We were thus employed, when Tim exclaimed, “Hist, Mr Maurice, did you hear a sound?”

I listened. “Yes; I should fancy that an alligator had popped his head above the surface, or a tortoise or wild-fowl had jumped into the river to take a bath.”

“Sure I thought it was paddles I heard. Listen again,” said Tim.

“Yes, it is paddles; no doubt about the matter,” he exclaimed directly afterwards; and stepping into the canoe he cast off the painter, while he held her fast to some roots with one hand, adding, “Get in, Mr Maurice, get in; the sooner we are away from this the better. The Redskins—for sure it must be them—will make towards the fire, and, if they haven’t yet seen us, they’ll be puzzled to know where we have gone to.”



A HASTY EMBARKATION.

Seizing my gun, which lay on the ground by my side, for from force of habit I had carried it with me when I had landed, I stepped carefully back into the canoe. Immediately I had taken my seat, Tim shoved her off as far out into the stream as he could, then grasping his paddle, began to ply it with might and main.

“Stop!” I whispered, after we had got a little distance. “In what direction did you fancy you heard the sounds? It appears to me that they are coming up the river instead of down.”

“Sure, you’re right, Mr Maurice,” answered Tim, who had ceased paddling. “I see the canoe too, an’ a big one she is; she’s full of savages. We may get over to the shadow of the opposite bank, an’ they’ll not perceive us. Use the paddle gently though, so as to make as little noise as possible.”

While working away as he advised, I kept my eye down the stream, looking out for the canoe, which Tim fancied he had seen. Before long I also perceived it; indeed, it looked so high out of the water that I was convinced it was of much larger size than the ordinary Indian canoes. It was being directed towards the fire which we had left only a few minutes before; those on board being naturally anxious to see who were encamped there.

We had got over by this time to the opposite shore, and, as far as I could judge, had escaped observation; so that we could easily, by keeping under the shadow of the trees, paddle down the stream. But as I again looked towards the boat, I was convinced that she was of large size, and full of white men.

Remaining perfectly quiet, before long we heard their voices. There was no doubt that they were whites; perhaps our friends coming to look for us. Tim was at length satisfied that I was right. We forthwith paddled back. To prevent any one mistaking us for Indians, and sending a chance shot at us, I hailed, “Who are you, friends?”

“Why, that must be Maurice! Hurrah! he’s not lost, then,” I heard a voice exclaim, which I recognised as that of Carlos; and directly afterwards Lejoillie shouted out—

“Glad to see you alive. Come here!”

We were soon alongside; and Tim making the canoe fast, he and I stepped on board the boat. We found that she was a long, large craft pulling ten oars, and holding between thirty and forty men, all well-armed. Among them were three blacks, two of whom I had seen at the judge’s; and I remembered the intense admiration they had shown for Rochford, when in their presence he had expressed his liberal opinions, such as they were very unlikely ever before to have heard.

The first person who grasped my hand was my father.

“Maurice, my boy, thank Heaven you have come back,” he said. “I was very anxious about you, as were all your friends; for we were afraid that you had fallen into the hands of those rascally Redskins, and that they had treated you and Tim as they have so many other white people.”

I briefly told him how I had lost my way, and was found by Tim; how we had at length reached the river, and obtaining a canoe, got down thus far homewards. I mentioned also our having seen an Indian, who had pursued us along the bank for some distance. I then, turning to Lejoillie and Carlos, inquired how they had made their escape.

Lejoillie replied that, having searched in vain for us, they had reached the stream, and fortunately discovered a canoe, as we had done. Just as they were about to push off, a band of Indians had pursued them; and this had naturally given rise to the supposition that we had been cut off by the Redskins. Having a supply of ammunition, they had been able to obtain as much food as they required; and there being three people to paddle the canoe, they had come down the river more rapidly than we had been able to do, moving on night and day, one of them only sleeping

at a time.

“Then were you coming to look for Tim and me?” I asked.

“No,” answered Carlos; “we thought you must either have made your way long ago to one of the forts, or been captured and killed by the Indians. When I got back, I found those at home in a fearful state of grief and anxiety about Juanita. She has disappeared, and been carried off by some one. Suspicion strongly turns against that fellow Rochford, who came with Lejoillie to our house. She and Rita, and two black servants, had ridden out a short distance only from Castle Kearney, when Juanita suddenly exclaimed that she would canter on ahead of them. Before they could advise her not to go, she was off, and was soon hidden from sight. They rode forward, expecting her every instant to reappear; but when they reached a more open part of the forest, she was nowhere visible. Nor could they discover any traces of her horse’s hoofs—probably because they did not look for them in the right place. I think that I should have found them had I been there. In vain they shouted and galloped about in all directions. From that day to this nothing has been heard of her. There can be no doubt, however, that she must have been carried off, as Rita is confident she would not have gone of her own accord. But whether Rochford or Indians are guilty of the deed is still a matter of doubt. I decidedly believe that Rochford has had a hand in it. I never felt very cordial towards him from the first, though you seemed to fancy him a very fine fellow, with his wild notions of getting freedom for the blacks, and giving the Redskins their rights; but I believe there’s nothing he would stick at. Uncle Michael and Captain Norton blame themselves greatly. They and my father lost no time in organising a plan for recovering my poor sister, and punishing Rochford, or any one else who may be found guilty. They took Judge Shurtleff into their counsels: he stuck out, however, to the last that Rochford was innocent; and told them that he had information that a band of Indians had been in the neighbourhood, and had retreated up the left bank of the river. He advised that one party should proceed in this direction by water, and then landing, proceed west—so as to prevent the Indians making their way farther south—to reunite with another party moving west, of which my father was to take charge. They were then to come down south, so as to be able to follow up the marauders should they turn back again, or try to escape westward.”

Carlos gave further explanations of the proposed plan of proceedings. I at once became as eager as any one to carry them out; though a short time before I had felt so wearied that I could scarcely use my paddle, I now declared that I was ready to begin the march as soon as it was settled we should land. I found that the point fixed upon was only a mile or two farther up the river. Had we been a little later we should probably have missed our friends altogether. The boat did not stop at the place where we had lighted our fire, which was allowed to continue burning, to assist in deceiving any Indians who might be in the neighbourhood. From the reports we had heard, we were well aware that those we were likely to meet with would prove unfriendly, if not open enemies, and that we should have to be cautious in our proceedings.

For some time I was kept awake by having to talk and listen to my friends; but at length my head began to nod.

“Just lean back, and make yourself comfortable,” said my father.

I followed his advice, and was soon fast asleep. I was awakened by feeling the boat run against the bank, and I found that we were about to land. Dawn had just broken, and I could see the dark outlines of the trees on the opposite side of the river against the brightening sky. A crew of four hands were left in the boat, and charged to navigate her back to Castle Kearney. They were provided with arms, and were directed to allow no Indian canoe to come alongside on any pretext whatever. I found that we now mustered thirty-six men, including Tim and myself. It was, after all, but a small party should we encounter any large band of Indians, who were not likely to attack us unless far superior to us in force. Still, we possessed good rifles and plenty of ammunition, so that we considered ourselves a match for three times our own number of natives, many of whom were likely to be armed only with bows and arrows, or should they have guns, with those of an inferior character. Twenty of our party were soldiers under Captain Norton’s command, the others were volunteers. We had a few of my uncle’s people, and the rest came from Roseville. As the Indians would probably not have expected so many white men to come up the river, we had hopes of taking them by surprise.

Captain Norton, my father, and Tim were the only old soldiers among us; for even the regulars had had no experience of warfare. Tim, therefore, found himself raised to the rank of third in command, the scouts being placed under his orders—an honourable though dangerous appointment.

We remained only sufficient time to enable the men to eat what may be called a breakfast, to strap on their knapsacks, and get themselves into marching trim, when the order to advance was given; and Tim and his scouts, six of the most active men, went ahead, having received instructions never to get beyond hailing distance of each other, or get too much in advance to be prevented from falling back quickly on the main body. After going some distance, we marched across a pine-barren, with a marsh on our left, over which Indians could scarcely make their way, while here and there on our right were hummocks, thick bottoms in which a whole army of natives might have concealed themselves. Our friends, I should have said, had brought half-a-dozen of the large blood-hounds I have before described, which were used for hunting ocelots and other fierce game, as well as for searching out runaway negroes. These were likely to prove of the greatest service in exploring the hummocks, as they would quickly give tongue on discovering any lurking enemies. We felt pretty sure, therefore, that we had no foes on our right, or that we had left any behind us. Our great object, however, was to find some Indians who could give us information either of Juanita or Rochford; whether they were together, or whether either one or the other had been seen. From what I had heard of the Indians, I had very little hope of success.

We marched on all day, frequently, however, in consequence of the nature of the ground, making but slow progress. We could carry, of course, but a small quantity of provisions, chiefly flour, coffee, pepper, and salt, so that we depended on our guns for supplying ourselves with game. It might have been better had we been able to be independent of hunting, as we ran a risk of being separated, and falling into the hands of our enemies, should any be on the watch to cut us off.

We had now to cross an extensive tract of prairie land, which covers a large portion of the interior of the country north of the Everglades. I have already described its unpleasant character. The sun struck down on our heads with intense force, there being few trees to afford us shade. Our legs were torn by the sharp teeth of the palmetto; and the only water we could obtain was from stagnant pools fringed with tall saw-grass, through which it was difficult to penetrate to get to the water, such as it was. Sometimes, after a great deal of trouble, and at the risk of being snapped up by an alligator, we found the water brackish and utterly undrinkable. Occasionally we came upon pine-islands, slight sandy elevations above the prairie covered by tall pine-trees. We here got the benefit of shade, but no water was to be obtained near them. We had one advantage, however, in crossing the prairie: no enemies in any number could find concealment to burst out suddenly upon us, as we knew they might well do where the country was thickly wooded. While crossing the prairie we saw no four-footed game, nor even any of the wild cattle which we had expected to find there. The opinion was that they had been driven off by the Indians.

We had made but slow progress; for owing to those abominable saw-palmetto roots, we could seldom march more than two miles an hour. At length, darkness approaching, we were compelled to camp on a pine-island. It was the best spot we could select, as we could hold it, should we be attacked during the night, against any number of Indians. We had, however, to content ourselves with but a short allowance of water, which we had brought from the last pool. We had, however, killed several ducks and plovers, and three large snowy herons, which the men ate in spite of their rank taste. We, of course, placed sentries on the watch, and sent out several scouts, accompanied by blood-hounds, who, we knew, would not fail to discover any Indians lurking in the neighbourhood. The most experienced backwoodsman of our party had examined the ground as we came along in search of Indian trails, but none of recent date had been perceived. We were aware, however, that the natives might, if they were so disposed, easily pass us on their way to the south, where, among the impenetrable woods of the Everglades, they might set us at defiance. Our great object, therefore, was to find an Indian who, either from a friendly disposition towards the whites, or from being ready to receive a bribe, would act as our guide, and bring us information as to where those we were in search of were to be found.

As my father, Captain Norton, Lejoillie, Carlos, and I sat round our camp-fire eating our frugal supper, we anxiously discussed the probabilities of recovering Juanita. Carlos spoke very strongly on the subject. He regretted that he had not been at home when his sister disappeared, as he would, he declared, have collected every man capable of bearing arms in the neighbourhood, and at once proceeded with a strong force in pursuit. He still adhered to the belief that Rochford had carried her off, aided by a strong band of Indians.

“We shall hear of him before long acting as Powell’s lieutenant, or perhaps raised to the chief command himself!” he exclaimed.

“I do not think that,” observed Lejoillie. “He is very enthusiastic, and considers that the Indians have been ill-treated; but I do not believe that he would wish them to resort to force to enable them to obtain their rights. He spoke of going among them only for the purpose of giving them good advice, or trying to induce them to adopt the customs of civilisation.”

I corroborated what Lejoillie said, as did my father. Captain Norton expressed the hope that we were right, though he had not had sufficient intercourse with his cousin to judge of his opinions.

I need not say I was very glad to roll myself in my blanket as soon as supper was over, and to fall fast asleep. I should, I believe, have slept on far into the next day, had I not been aroused by my father, who handed me a mug of coffee, some wild duck, and corn-cake for breakfast. Directly afterwards, the march was resumed. We were unable to obtain any game during the first part of the day, and were truly glad when, in the afternoon, we came in sight of the thickly-growing trees of an extensive hummock. As it was important to obtain food, the men were halted at some distance from its border, while my father, Lejoillie, and I, with Tim and three or four of the best shots of the party, made our way as best we could amid the dense brushwood, in the hopes of getting a shot at some deer or any other game which might be taking shelter there. Pushing on through hydrangeas and azaleas, with lofty cabbage-palms, cotton, cedar, and other trees above our heads, festooned with wild-vines, convolvuli, air-plants, and numberless other creepers, Tim and I, who were ahead, at length saw before us a small pool.

“Hist, Mr Maurice!” he whispered; “I jist caught sight of something moving. We must creep up carefully. Maybe it’s a painter, or an ocelot, or, what would be better, a deer; an’ if we can escape the creature windin’ us, we may git up near enough to have a fair shot, for it won’t be you or I that’ll be afther missin’.”

I followed his advice, eager to obtain the game, and trusting none of our party would approach incautiously. In the meantime, by creeping slowly on, we at length came close to the pool, which was almost filled up with grass and water-lilies. Lifting up our heads, to our infinite satisfaction, we saw a doe and her young one standing in the water, into which they had evidently gone to drink. At the same moment a heron, with a loud cry, rose from the sedgy banks; and the deer, as if its note had been one of warning, turned her head towards where we were.

“Fire at the mother,” I whispered to Tim; “I’ll take the fawn.”

We pulled our triggers, and almost at the same moment a third shot was heard at a distance; a bullet splashing the water close to where the deer stood, but hitting neither of the animals.

Both deer fell, however, struggling in the water. We rushed forward to secure our prey. Having put them out of suffering, I carried the fawn to a dry spot, and Tim followed with the deer, which was as much as he could well stagger under. While we were looking about for a long pole by which we might suspend the animals, so as to carry them with greater ease to the camp, we heard a rustling sound made by some person or animal approaching. We, of course, had both reloaded our rifles, but fully expected to see one of our party, attracted to the spot by our shots. Our surprise, therefore, was great to see instead, standing close to us, an Indian in the usual light hunting costume worn by his people, composed of skins embroidered in the ordinary fashion. His face, however, was painted in a way

which gave him a far from prepossessing expression.

“Who are you, Mr Redface?” asked Tim, instinctively handling his rifle ready for action.

“A friend!” answered the Indian. “You come kill my deer. What you want here?”

“Arrah, sure, do you call it your deer?” asked Tim. “A deer in this country belongs to the man who kills it, I’ve a notion; and it was not your bullet which brought either of the animals to the ground. Mr Maurice here kilt one, and I the other; an’ your bit of lead tumbled into the water, a foot away at least from either of them. Sure, if ye’ll be afther lookin’ for it, you’ll find it in the mud.”

“Ugh!” ejaculated the Indian, who saw that he was not likely to get much change out of Tim, and knew from the distance he had fired that his aim was uncertain. “Where are your people?”

“Come along, and you shall see,” said Tim; “they’ll be glad to have a talk with you about some matters, and you’ll find it to your advantage to tell them what you know.”

The Indian understood probably only a part of what Tim said, but nodding, he said, “Spotted Wolf will go with you.”

“Oh, is that your name? Come along, then, Mr Spotted Wolf; we’ll take care no harm happens to you.”

The Indian laughed scornfully, as if he considered that he could take very good care of himself; and as by this time we had hung the deer to the pole, Tim told him we were ready to move. “I’ll trouble ye, however, Mr Spotted Wolf, to lead on ahead; you know the way out of this hummock, maybe, better than we do. An’ see that you lead us right, if ye please.”

He then turned to me, and in a lower voice said,—“It’s as well to keep this sort of gentleman in front, or maybe he’ll be afther shootin’ one of us, an’ stickin’ his scalping-knife into the other.”

The Indian, no ways displeased by the evident want of confidence placed in him, led the way, and managed to pick out a path with fewer obstructions than the one by which we had entered the hummock. As we came in sight of the camp he hesitated for a moment, perhaps surprised at seeing many more people than he might have expected. It is possible that he would have been welcomed by half-a-dozen rifle shots had we not appeared close behind him. Our friends were highly pleased at seeing the game which we brought. Just then Lejoillie arrived, bringing three fat gobblers, some smaller birds, and a racoon, which he and the men attending him had shot. My father, who had only one companion, had not yet returned. I could not help fearing that he might have fallen in with some other Indians, who might not have behaved in so pacific a manner as Spotted Wolf. I at once took the Indian up to Captain Norton, who rose to receive him, and being well accustomed to the habits of the Redskins, desired him to be seated on the ground near the camp-fire. The fact that Spotted Wolf spoke English showed that he had had frequent intercourse with the white men.

Captain Norton at once began questioning him as to whether he was alone, or had few or many companions.

He declared that he was alone; that he had separated from his countrymen, as he did not approve of their making war on the Palefaces, who, he knew, must conquer at last. At the same time, while making this acknowledgment, he described the army of Oceola as very large, consisting of numerous warriors, well-armed, and with abundance of ammunition.

Captain Norton inquired if he knew where they were. He replied that they were now some distance away to the west, waiting for reinforcements from the Cherokees and Creeks. Whether Spotted Wolf was giving a true account or not, it was impossible to ascertain. He was consistent in all he said, and maintained a calm and unembarrassed manner. I was little accustomed to the countenances of Indians, who looked to me very nearly all alike, but I certainly did not admire the expression of that of Spotted Wolf; and I found that Carlos had formed a bad opinion of him. He sat on in the ordinary inelegant position which Indians maintain round a council fire, deliberately smoking a pipe of tobacco which the captain had presented to him.

Captain Norton had hitherto said nothing about Juanita or Rochford. He hoped apparently that, should the Indian know anything of them, he would himself introduce the subject. At last he was obliged to ask Spotted Wolf whether he had seen a Paleface girl and a young man in company with the Indians, either together, or separately, or had heard of them.

“I have not seen any Palefaces such as you describe, nor have I heard of them,” answered Spotted Wolf positively; or, at all events, he gave us to understand as much, for I cannot exactly describe the language in which he spoke.

“Can you, however, serve us by learning whether such persons as I mention are in this part of the country?” asked Captain Norton. “Though you may not have heard of them, your friends may, and you can bring us the information we require.”

The Indian, resting his chin on his hand, appeared to consider what had been said. He then replied that he would, if it were the wish of his Paleface brother, endeavour to gain tidings of the girl, although, as there were many of his people who looked upon him as an enemy, he might have great difficulty in accomplishing his object.

“Spotted Wolf will do his best, and look for his reward,” answered Captain Norton; “we can expect no more.”

The Indian gave the usual “Ugh,” signifying that he fully understood what was required of him.

I had been all the time on the look-out for the return of my father. The sun had just set, and darkness was rapidly coming on. I went outside the camp in the direction whence I thought he would appear. Nowhere was he to be seen. I

resolved, therefore, to go in search of him. Carlos and Lejoillie agreed to go also, and several others volunteered to accompany us. Captain Norton said that he would be glad to go, but he could not venture to leave the camp. He told me that although Spotted Wolf might be a very honest fellow, he would have a strict watch kept upon him; and, in case any other Indians should appear, he would not allow them to enter the camp.

On this occasion we took two of the dogs, which had been kept tied up until now, lest they should disturb the game in the hummock. They ran on before us with their noses to the ground, clearly understanding what was required of them. They were well acquainted with my father, and the man who had accompanied him, so that we had no fear of their attacking them. On they went towards the western end of the hummock. Instead of rushing into it, as we expected, they kept along the edge. Presently we heard them give tongue, and hurrying forward, we saw a person issuing from the thick brushwood, accompanied by the two dogs. On getting nearer to him, I discovered, to my joy, that he was my father. He seemed more than usually agitated, and when I inquired the cause, he told me that he had been separated from his companion, whom, after some time, he had found dead on the ground, stabbed apparently, but not scalped, so that he was in doubt whether an Indian had done the deed. Anxious, however, about his own safety, he was endeavouring to make his way out of the hummock, when he caught sight, in the distance, of several figures moving among the trees, which, though indistinctly seen, he was convinced were those of Indians. He concealed himself at once, and had reason to believe that he was not detected, but had been unable to make his way out, until the hounds had found him, not being aware how close he was to the edge of the hummock. How he had escaped from the Redskins it was difficult to say. Some of the party proposed at once to go in search of the body of the murdered man; but though we might possibly have found it, with the assistance of the dogs, in daylight, it would have been almost impossible to do so in the dark. We therefore agreed to return to the camp, and made the best of our way back, where the news we brought created no little sensation. Some suspected that Spotted Wolf was not altogether unacquainted with the circumstance. Carlos declared that he should not be surprised had the Indian himself killed the man; but on comparing the time we had met him with that when my father believed the murder to have been committed, we decided that Spotted Wolf must be acquitted of the charge.

In consequence of what had occurred, a double watch was set, and all sentinels were charged to keep wide awake, so that during the night we might not be taken by surprise.

Chapter Twelve.

Deserters—Carlos's opinion of Spotted Wolf—The march continued—Halt—The hunting party—Decoying deer—Runaway horses—A capture—Proofs of an Indian battle—Scene of a massacre—Our plans altered—Scouting—The survivors—Details of the tragedy—Forward—The abandoned fort—We garrison the block-house—Strengthening our position—Reports of the scouts—Scarcity of provisions—An expedition to obtain relief—A disappointment—The strange hunter—A surprise—An angry meeting—The explanation—In the wrong—Preparing for the attack.

The night passed quietly away, notwithstanding the very natural apprehension we had entertained that the Indians my father had seen would attack us. One circumstance, however, caused us considerable astonishment and anxiety. In spite of the vigilant watch supposed to have been kept, two of our black companions had disappeared; and we could find no trail to indicate in what direction they had gone, nor how they could have managed to get out of the camp without being observed. No one, however, recollected exactly when they were last seen; and it was generally believed they had gone off in the evening, when the party had set out to search for my father. Could they have had any communication with the Redskins hovering about our camp? This was not considered probable. It occurred to me, however, that they might have known of the blacks who had treated us so hospitably, and that they had gone off under the idea that they could reach them, or some other party of negro runaways, several of whom had long been living among the impenetrable jungles of the south. It was generally supposed, however, that the Indians, knowing the strength of our party, would not dare to interfere with us, and that we might be able to recover the body of the poor fellow who had been murdered. Captain Norton, however, would not allow search to be made for it, as the risk, he considered, would be far greater than any advantage to be gained. We therefore marched forward, as on the previous day.

"There's one of our number gone," observed Carlos gloomily; "how many more will be lost before we return home?"

We had grave suspicions of Spotted Wolf. When asked whether he knew anything of the Indians who had been seen by my father in the hummock, he declared that they must have been some who had followed him when he was making his escape, but that he was not aware that they had reached the hummock.

"That may or may not be the case," observed Carlos; "but I would advise Captain Norton to keep a look-out on the fellow's movements. I suspect his object is rather to betray us than to render us assistance."

The Indian, however, seemed perfectly at ease, and as far as his knowledge of English would allow, conversed freely with every one. He was asked if he knew whereabouts Oceola was to be found. He replied that he was ignorant of that chief's movements, but he acknowledged that he might possibly not be far off. Though our scouts ranged on every side, as well as ahead, and sometimes dropped behind, they failed to catch sight of the Indians, who, however, we knew, would, in all probability, keep near us, waiting for an opportunity to attack us, should they find us off our guard. It was not altogether a pleasant feeling to know that at any moment we might be assailed by a band of savages eager to take our scalps; but by degrees we got accustomed to the feeling, and there was nothing we so much desired as to catch sight of our supposed enemies, being certain that we should beat them off, however numerous they might be.

I have already so fully described the country, that I need not draw any further pictures of it. Our course led us sometimes over the prairie, covered with low saw-palmetto and grass; sometimes over the pine-lands, by the side of

ponds; occasionally along the edges of the belts of forest, chiefly composed of pines and cabbage-palms; and then near hummocks, which, as they were mostly impenetrable jungles, we carefully avoided, except when it became necessary to halt to obtain food for our party. We then sent in the dogs, to ascertain if an enemy were concealed in the jungle. Spotted Wolf, who invariably marched ahead with the captain, kept his eyes ranging over the ground in search of any trail which might serve to point out in what direction parties of his countrymen had gone. But though he did this, I saw how easily he might deceive us; for though he might see trails, he might not communicate his discovery.

We again halted for the night among a clump of pine-trees, with a stream near us, a pond on one side, and a hummock at a little distance. The hummock might conceal a foe; but as the Indians could not possibly know that we should halt in this neighbourhood, it was not likely that they would have laid an ambush there.

We had run short of provisions, and were anxious to shoot some deer; indeed, it was absolutely necessary to obtain food at all risks. We waited therefore until dark, when, the main body being encamped, with sentries on the watch, my father, Tim, and I, with four of our best shots, proceeded to the edge of the hummock. We were, each of us, supplied with pine-torches secured to sticks which could be run into the ground. We advanced cautiously to the spots we had selected, some hundred feet apart, when, having stuck our torches in the ground, and lit them, we lay down just in front, concealed either by a low bush or by some grass. Thus we remained perfectly invisible, while the light passed over our heads. Tim and I were near enough to see each other's torches. While I lay crouched down, the thought occurred to me that should by chance any Indians be hidden in the hummock, they would know exactly where to find each of us, and creeping cautiously up, would try to kill and scalp us separately. I therefore kept my ears well open and my senses fully awake, to be ready for any emergency. I had not long, however, to endure these unpleasant apprehensions, when I heard a slight rustling, and presently caught sight of two faint lights just before me. They were large and round, and I knew that they were the eyes of a deer, in which the blaze from the pine-torch was reflected. The animal stood quite still, and I had time to raise my rifle, and to aim between the lights. I fired, and a large deer bounded into the air, and fell close to me with scarcely a struggle. Almost at the same time I heard Tim fire. I at once reloaded, and jumping up extinguished the torch, and began dragging my prize into the open. While thus employed, two other shots from the farther extremities of the hummock reached my ears, and I hoped that our party had bagged three more deer at least. The animal I had shot was too heavy to carry, but I managed, notwithstanding, to drag it over the rough ground. I had not gone far when I was joined by Tim, who exclaimed—

"Arrah! sure, I thought I had kilt a deer, but it's only a beast of a grey wolf. However, it will serve to feed the dogs; and I hope your father and the rest will each have knocked over a deer."

I asked Tim to leave the wolf and assist me in carrying the deer into camp. This he did, and we got on very well. He was so vexed, however, that he declared he must have another trial, as in a short time the deer, which had been startled by our shots, would recover from their alarm, and very likely return to the spot. Telling one of the men whereabouts the wolf lay, he set off with a fresh pine-torch. In the meantime my father and his companions returned with a couple of deer. So hungry had the party become that no time was lost in kindling fires, which had not before been done, and putting on the venison to roast. The deer we had killed were not more than sufficient for a couple of meals to each man, and Tim was hailed with considerable satisfaction, when later in the night he returned with a fourth one. We had no longer any fears as to the hummock concealing Indians, as they would certainly have shown themselves long before this. A careful watch, however, was kept during the night. Some of the party proposed scouring the hummock, to obtain a larger supply of venison, or any other game we could shoot; but Captain Norton would not consent to this.

Next morning, having breakfasted on venison, with some wild duck which the keenest of our sportsmen had killed at sunrise, we recommenced our march. Spotted Wolf shortly afterwards intimated that if we would proceed farther west, he might probably obtain information regarding those of whom we were in search. There were a few lodges of his people, connected to him by ties of blood, who, being peaceably disposed, had declined to join Oceola and the other rebel chiefs. "They, of necessity," he said, "keep themselves well informed of what is going forward in other parts of the country, that they may make their escape should the rebels attempt to compel them to join their party."

Carlos doubted the truth of this statement; but Captain Norton appeared to believe it, or, at all events, allowed Spotted Wolf to think so. If Oceola had really carried off Juanita, his object, no doubt, would be to place her somewhere in safety, under the charge of the female members of his family, so that she would be unable to escape herself, or obtain the assistance of her friends. He could scarcely have expected that a force like ours would so soon have been despatched in pursuit. Carlos, however, persisted in declaring that the Indian chief had had nothing to do with the matter, and that Rochford alone had, somehow or other, obtained the means of carrying her off.

We had been marching on for some hours across a pine-barren, with the sun beating down on our heads, and were anxiously looking out for a stream or pool at which we could quench our thirst, Carlos and I being together, when an object was seen moving across the plain towards us. It was soon made out to be a horse.

"It is riderless," observed Carlos.

"Can it be a wild one?" I asked.

"Not from its movements, I am nearly sure. And see! it has a saddle on its back," he replied.

Presently another and another appeared, coming from the same direction. Carlos and I, with several of the men, rushed forward to catch the animals. Two of those which brought up the rear came on at a slower pace than the rest. They were wounded, and as we got nearer we perceived an arrow sticking in the side of one of them; a bullet had gone through the neck of another, which had also had a spear thrust into its shoulder; while three of the others had blood on their saddles, and two had their bridles cut. What had become of their riders?

Captain Norton at once recognised the animals as belonging to the United States cavalry. “Some disaster has overtaken our people, I fear,” he observed, “for these horses have been in battle, and managed to escape when their riders were overthrown. We must now be doubly on the watch. At the same time, we must hope that, although some have been killed, the rest have put the enemy to flight, or cut their way out, supposing that our troops were surprised. It is not, however, very likely!”

The arrow was extracted from the side of the horse, and the wounds of the others having been looked to, it was hoped that they would do well. Anxious to ascertain what had happened, we pushed on, while the horses were led in the rear. Every moment we expected to meet with the Indians making their escape, or with a body of American troops, who would, it was fully believed, have been victorious. Not a human being appeared in sight. We had marched a couple of miles farther, however, when we saw hovering in the air a number of birds, while others were flitting about the trees or perched on the boughs. As we drew nearer, we recognised among them numberless turkey buzzards, vultures, and other carrion fowl, while a pack of wolves were roaming about, disputing with the feathered tribe for their prey.

“It is a battle-field!” I heard my father exclaim.

A sickening sensation came over me when I saw the remains of my fellow-creatures covering the ground, and the horrible condition to which the birds of prey and the wolves had reduced them. I hung back; though several of the party went forward, that they might ascertain who they were and what number had fallen. It must have been difficult, however, to count them. Already the limbs of many had been torn off, and the countenances of all had been so disfigured that their nearest friends could not have identified them; but their uniforms told too plainly that they were soldiers of the United States. Including officers and men, there must have been nearly a hundred, mostly infantry, with a few cavalry. The latter lay scattered about outside the rest. Too probably not one of the whole force had escaped. Most of them had been scalped, showing that the Redskins had been victorious; but they had, for some reason or other, moved off before they had finished their horrible work. It was clear that the troops had been surprised and destroyed by a vastly superior force before they had had time to stand on the defensive. On either side of the space were thick woods, in which probably the Indians had lain in ambush, when some of the party, emerging from one end of the glade, and some from the other, the troops had been completely surrounded.

Captain Norton appeared deeply affected when we gathered together, after he had surveyed the battle-field. He was of opinion that the troops had come from the west coast—probably from the Bay of Tampa—and were marching to one of the forts to the northward. He acknowledged, too, that we were in a fearfully dangerous predicament, and that the fate which had overtaken the soldiers might be ours. What could our small force avail against many hundreds of fierce warriors flushed with victory? To turn back was as dangerous as to proceed. Should we be pursued, we might quickly be overwhelmed. He therefore determined on attempting to gain one of the forts, where we might hold out against Oceola’s forces.

To stop and bury the dead was impossible. The wolves and birds of prey would soon dispose of them. We had our own safety to look after. Even now the woods on either side might be full of our enemies, waiting only for a favourable opportunity to set upon us. To ascertain whether there were any foes lurking near us, the dogs, one at a time, were turned into the woods. Before long, the loud baying of the first which was let loose gave notice that he had discovered some one; and the scouts, led by Tim, were at once sent forward to ascertain what was there. We waited with our weapons ready to defend ourselves, should they be driven back by the enemy. They soon, however, reappeared, carrying a wounded man. Though severely hurt, he was able to speak, and informed Captain Norton that to his belief he was the sole survivor of a force of upwards of a hundred men, who had marched from the Bay of Tampa, intending to proceed to Fort King, which was, it had been understood, threatened by Oceola and his braves. Suddenly, when they did not believe an enemy was near, having halted and piled their arms, they were set upon by upwards of five hundred well-armed Indians, who were in their midst before they could recover their weapons. He was one of the very first wounded, and had crawled behind a bush, where he lay and witnessed the slaughter of his comrades. As evening approached, favoured by the darkness, he crawled farther into the wood, to die in peace. He heard the shouts and shrieks of the Redskins, triumphing over their victims, when suddenly they had hurried off, as he supposed, to the northward.

While we were listening to the poor fellow’s account, the dogs had been sent in to the other side of the forest, where they discovered three more soldiers, almost at the point of death. Two, indeed, died before they could give any account of what had happened; but the other corroborated the statement of the first in all particulars, adding that he had seen the savages dance round the slain; and that while thus engaged the horses had escaped, with the exception of two or three, which they had succeeded in carrying off with them. Several, indeed, lay dead on the battle-field, almost torn to pieces by the wolves. My father, who had had some experience in gunshot wounds, did his best to attend to the poor men; but the last discovered died in the course of a few minutes, and we had now only one, the sole survivor of the massacre, to carry with us. A rough litter was at once formed, as he could not bear the jolting of a horse; and he was carried forward on the shoulders of some of our people, who willingly undertook the task. As it was dangerous to remain in the exposed position in which we were, we now advanced as fast as possible, fearing that at any moment we might be attacked by a vastly superior force. Every man of the party, however, was resolved to fight to the last, and to sell his life dearly.

Spotted Wolf had appeared as much astonished as any of us at the discovery of the massacred troops. Carlos observed to me that he thought the fellow was looking out for an opportunity to escape. “If he tries to do so, I’ll shoot him,” he added. “I have mistrusted him from the first. I suspect that, in advising us to take this route, he expected to lead us up to the ambush into which our troops have fallen; and I believe that he wants to get off for the purpose of letting Oceola know how small a party we are. Probably the enemy were deceived, and, getting information of our approach, supposed that we were a large force coming to the assistance of our friends.”

I thought that Carlos was right in his conjectures, as did my father when I told him of them. Carlos also spoke to Captain Norton on the subject in a way which induced him, at all events, to be cautious in further trusting Spotted

Wolf. He also issued an order to all the men to keep an eye on Spotted Wolf, and to shoot him without ceremony should he attempt to escape.

Before long we came upon a well-defined trail made by wheeled vehicles, as also by the feet of horses and men, and we had no doubt that it led directly to the fort which we desired to reach. We pushed forward, therefore, with revived confidence, hoping before long to get within strong walls, where, with the assistance of its present garrison, we might bid defiance to all foes likely to attack us. As we approached, however, we saw that it was little more than a block-house, and that no flag waved above the stockade. Advancing nearer, we expected to be hailed. No friendly voice, however, reached our ears.

“Can it be deserted? or have the Redskins got possession of it?” I heard my father exclaim.

“We must not be taken by surprise,” observed Captain Norton. He called for two volunteers to go forward and ascertain the condition of the fort. Tim, who was always ready for anything, sprang to the front. I begged my father to let me accompany him. He hesitated; but he considered that it would be setting a bad example to the men if he refused, and he gave his consent. Tim and I immediately advanced, looking out for any hole or opening through which the muzzle of a rifle or the point of an arrow might appear. The building had lately suffered either from fire or assault. Many of the palisades had been broken down, and the buildings inside were roofless. No one was to be seen, and the gate was open. We entered, still, however, keeping our rifles ready for instant use. Not a voice was heard. We soon discovered what had taken place. The small garrison had been overpowered and slaughtered to a man. The larger number lay inside the house, into which they had evidently retreated to defend themselves. The remainder were found close under the stockade. Nearly all had been killed in a hand-to-hand fight, and few, if any, had been shot down from the outside.

“Depend upon it,” said Tim, “there was treachery here, an’ the gate was opened at night to let the enemy in. A place like this might be defended against any number of Redskins, unless the garrison ran short of ammunition.”

“That’s just what I suspect they did,” I answered, examining the pouches of two of the men who lay nearest me. They were both empty.

We had, however, no time to discuss the matter, as it was our duty to hurry back and report what we had discovered. On hearing it, Captain Norton resolved to occupy the fort. Our first business on entering was to carry out the bodies of the late garrison. It was a mournful task, as we had no means of burying them, or, at all events, no time to devote to this object. As soon as this duty was performed, we set to work to repair the fort. Most of the men had axes, which they vigorously plied, and soon cut down a sufficient number of trees for our purpose. The men laboured hard, knowing that their lives might depend on their getting the fort into a fit state to resist the enemy. Not until every breach was repaired, the gate strengthened, and the centre hut—for it was little more—roofed in with the split trunks of trees, did we cease from our toil. It was nearly morning by the time our work was accomplished. Not until then did the captain or any of the men lie down to snatch a short sleep. Fortunately, the storehouse had escaped, and in it we discovered a supply of salt provisions sufficient to last us several days, while a well dug within the stockade afforded an ample supply of water. We might thus hold out for a considerable time, without the necessity of venturing far from the fort to obtain game.

The captain was still unwilling to make it impossible for Spotted Wolf to escape, by shooting him or binding his limbs; but he charged two of the most intelligent of the men to keep a constant watch over the Indian, and not to allow him on any pretext to leave the fort. It was necessary to send out a few men to cut grass for the horses, as it was important to keep them in good condition. Those who went, however, were ordered not to venture beyond the immediate vicinity of the fort, into which they could escape should an enemy appear. We had reason to be thankful that we had not been disturbed. But we had made no progress, as far as we could judge, in the object of our expedition; neither Rochford nor Juanita had been discovered, and they might still be leagues away.

Two days passed. Captain Norton and my father were constantly talking over plans for our future proceedings. The captain even asked my father if he would take command of the block-house, while he himself with three others should make their way on horseback to one of the larger forts, where he could obtain information for his guidance. As we all knew that it would be impossible to hold the block-house during a protracted siege without a larger supply of provisions than we possessed, it became necessary, as soon as possible, to obtain game, so as to enable us to keep the salt provisions for such an emergency. Though we had little to fear from their usual style of warfare—for the red men, when they fail in an attack, generally abandon it altogether—still, it was possible that, under their bold and sagacious chief Oceola, they might adopt a new system, and attempt the destruction of one fort after another, until they had rid the country of the Palefaces, as they boastfully asserted they intended to do.

As soon as the fort was placed in an efficient state, Captain Norton sent out the scouts to ascertain if any Indians were in the neighbourhood. They returned, stating that they had seen none, and that they believed the country would be found open to Fort King, or to the eastward, and that we might therefore return to the river, should such a movement be considered desirable. None of them brought any game, asserting their belief that the Indians had driven off all the deer and wild cattle, and that, except some birds and small animals, we were not likely to obtain any. Thus we all felt that the expedition would be bootless, as we had utterly failed to obtain tidings of those of whom we were in search.

Captain Norton now determined to take two of the best horses, one for himself and the other for a companion, and push on to Fort King, trusting to their speed to escape any enemies they might fall in with. Carlos and I both volunteered to accompany him. He decided, however, to take only one of us, and fixed upon Carlos, as he knew the country better than I did. It was settled that they should set out by daybreak the next morning. The horses had been well fed, and the captain hoped that in three or four hours they might reach their destination. When the animals, however, were led out, the one Carlos intended to ride was evidently lame. Its leg was examined, but no cause could be discovered for its lameness, and none of the others were fit for the journey.

“I must then start by myself!” exclaimed the captain. “I am sorry not to have your company, Carlos; but as there is some hazard in the expedition, it may be better for you to remain in the fort.”

“I suspect that Indian fellow has had something to do with the lameness of the animal,” whispered Carlos. “Captain Norton, who still thinks him honest, would not believe me if I said so. However, I will keep my eye on him; and I will shoot him through the head if I find him playing any trick.”

I urged Carlos not to do that, at all events; though I agreed that he ought not to be allowed to go out of sight of his guards for a single moment.

While we were still examining the horses, hoping that after a little while the lameness would go off, one of the scouts called out that a stranger was approaching.

“Maybe he is one of the blacks,” I observed. But on mounting the platform placed inside the stockade, I saw that the man was a white in hunter’s garb, and that he was carrying a deer on his shoulders. He was accompanied by a handsome hound, which every now and then turned round, as if on the watch to give him timely notice of the approach of any one who might be following him. He hurried on, notwithstanding the weight of the animal and holding his rifle in his hand, looking back every now and then as if he did not feel himself secure from pursuit.

“Who comes there?” shouted the sentry.

“A friend,” was the reply. “Open the gate, and let me in. I wish to see your commanding officer.”

I hurried down to tell Captain Norton, who ordered the gate to be opened.

ROCHFORD APPROACHING THE FORT. Page 38

As the hunter advanced, what was my surprise to recognise our friend Rochford. The gate was opened, and the hunter entered. Throwing down the deer, he advanced with outstretched hand to meet Captain Norton. Though he was much disguised by his hunter’s dress, his sun-burned features, and a huge moustache, as I watched him I felt sure that I was not mistaken.

“What brings you here?” asked Captain Norton.

“I come to give you warning that you may at any moment be attacked by a strong body of Indians. Don’t you know me?” asked the hunter.

“What—Rochford!” exclaimed the captain, grasping his hand. “I am truly glad to see you. Your coming thus at once proves that you are innocent of the grave charge brought against you.”

“I am certainly innocent of any intention of acting wrongly, though I confess that I have allowed myself to be deceived in the character of those it was my honest desire to assist. I cannot, however, at present enter into particulars, nor tell you how I obtained the information I possess. It must be sufficient for you to know that I heard of your having occupied this fort, and also that you are very likely to be hard pressed for want of provisions. I therefore resolved to come and put you on your guard, and, if possible, not to appear empty-handed. I was fortunate enough to kill this deer at no great distance from the fort, as I was making my way towards it. Tell me, of what am I accused, besides having gone away to acquaint myself with the Redskin natives of the country?”

“You are accused of carrying off my sister Juanita; and I, for one, believe that you had a hand in the matter, whatever you may say to the contrary!” exclaimed Carlos, stepping forward and making a threatening gesture at Rochford.

“What is that you say?” exclaimed Rochford, with a look of unfeigned astonishment, while deep emotion was visible

in his countenance. “On my word of honour, I am guiltless of any such act; and I say so, notwithstanding the language you use, young sir. When was your sister carried off; and how came it that those who should have protected her were not more careful?”

My father, not allowing Carlos to reply, gave the particulars to Rochford.

“I was at the time far away south,” he answered. “Had I been in the neighbourhood, I should probably have heard of the occurrence from the Indians, who had treated me with courtesy and confidence. It is only since they have been guilty of many acts of atrocity that I have separated myself from them. I told them that I would remain their friend, and do my utmost to defend and advance their cause, if they would act justly, and if resolved on war, would carry it on according to the customs of the civilised nations of the earth. But when I found that they had begun to massacre the unarmed and defenceless people, and had scalped those they had slain in fight, I told them that I could no longer remain their friend. To do them justice, they replied that I was at liberty to act as I judged right; and far from attempting to injure me, they allowed me to go wherever I chose.”

“I fully believe your account, Mr Rochford; and I hope my nephew will apologise for his hasty words, or I will do so for him,” answered my father.

Carlos turned aside, muttering something which I did not overhear. Rochford, however, took no further notice of what Carlos had said, and seemed satisfied with the welcome which the rest of the party, including Lejoillie, gave him. We had, however, but little time for conversation. As a large body of the enemy was approaching the fort, it was necessary at once to make preparations for their reception. The captain addressed a few words of encouragement to the garrison, telling them what he had heard, and urging them to hold out bravely, expressing his confidence that we should drive back the Indians, however numerous they might be. Ammunition was then served out, and each man went to his station to await the attack, which, from the intelligence brought by Rochford, we believed might at any moment be commenced.

Chapter Thirteen.

The lull before the storm—Advancing to the attack—The engagement—Work for marksmen—Tim’s shot—A capture—Rochford undertakes a perilous enterprise—A hunting expedition—Our success—We go back to the fort—Spotted Wolf joins the party—Encamped for the night—Lejoillie nods during his watch—An adventure—The Indian disappears with our horse—Supplying the garrison with provisions—Carlos’s suspicions confirmed—The parting—Reduced to extremity—Preparations for retreat—The wounded soldier—Death of the trooper—The march commenced.

An unusual silence appeared to reign in the woods surrounding the fort; even the birds, whose notes were wont to be heard, were silent. The sun had already risen above the tops of the trees, and shone down with intense force into the confined space which enclosed us. Not a breath of air stirred the leaves. It seemed as if all nature had gone to sleep. The sentries paced up and down on the platforms, watching on either side, for it was impossible to say on which the Indians would make their threatened attack. I asked Rochford if he did not think, after all, that they had changed their minds, and would not venture near.

“I am very sure that they have not,” he answered. “They know that you are but ill supplied with provisions and ammunition; besides which, they have vowed that they will drive all the Palefaces into the sea, and their late success in destroying a large detachment has encouraged them to continue their efforts to liberate their country. I acknowledge that they are vain, for they are ignorant of the vast resources we possess, and fancy that the power of the whites is represented by the few hundreds of troops which they have seen. It would have been more merciful if the United States Government had sent an overwhelming force, which would have rendered resistance impossible. But even had ten times as many troops as are at present in Florida been employed, they could have proceeded but slowly in a country covered in all directions with impenetrable thickets and swamps; and unless good roads are cut, the war will not be brought to a close for many a year to come. Meantime, both white men and natives will suffer cruelly. The great object should be to show the Indians that the whites must conquer at last, and that is what I have endeavoured to do; but the Redskins declare that the country is their own, that they have right on their side, and that the Palefaces will be the first to get tired.”

While we were speaking, one of the men on guard shouted, “Here they come!”

On springing on to the platform, we could see a large body of men, some on foot, others on horseback; besides which, we could make out many more emerging from a wood to the north-west. They halted, apparently surprised at our numbers, as they saw the heads of our men appearing above the stockade; for, with the exception of the sentries, all had hurried over to the side towards which they were approaching. The enemy were deceived in another way, by supposing that we should only fire down upon them over the stockade, whereas the lower portion under the platform was well loopholed. After holding a short consultation, during which not a sound reached our ears, they again advanced, led on by their chiefs, uttering the most fearful yells and shrieks. I had often heard of the Indian war-whoop, but I little knew, until now, the extraordinary power of which the human voice is capable when excited by rage and the desire to inspire terror into the hearts of enemies. I confess that I should have been not a little alarmed had I not known what effect our bullets would soon produce on the advancing foe.

“Shout as ye like, ye yelpin’ savages,” cried Tim, who was standing near me; “it won’t make one of us wink an eye, an’ we’ll soon send ye to the rightabout when you get within range of our rifles.”

A few of the chiefs now dashed forward, flourishing their spears, but quickly retreated behind the warriors on foot, who advanced rapidly towards the fort. Captain Norton, as they approached, ordered us all to jump down from the platform and take our posts at the loopholes, whence we could pour a deadly fire on the ranks of the Indians, while

we ourselves would be under cover. No sooner was the order given to fire than we began blazing away. The enemy, little expecting the reception they met with, had fancied they could get close up to the foot of the stockade, and climb over without opposition.

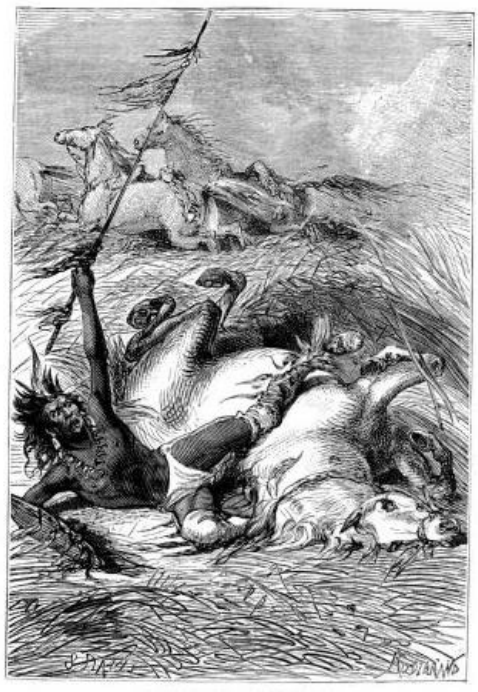
Our men had been ordered not to throw a shot away. They fully carried out their instructions. At the very first discharge fully a dozen Indians were either killed or wounded. Staggered by this warm reception they halted, when again their chiefs cried out to them to advance, which they did after discharging a shower of bullets and arrows. The former came pinging against the thick posts which formed the stockade; the latter flew over our heads and fell into the fort, without, however, injuring any one. Half of the garrison only had fired; the remainder at once took their places, while the first party reloaded. We were thus able to keep up a successive fusillade, which evidently greatly astonished our foes. Still they continued to assail us with their missiles, both from fire-arms and bows; and with remarkable courage they again rushed on to the assault. We let them approach until they were close up to the stockade, when we once more opened so withering a fire that few made the attempt to climb up, and those who did quickly dropped down, either with cloven heads or hands well-nigh chopped off. The whole force, apparently seeing that they had no chance of getting into the fort, hurriedly retreated, dragging away, as they did so, the bodies of the slain.

Our men cheered, under the belief that we had won the victory; but the Indians, though they had abandoned the assault for the moment, did not consider themselves defeated, and halting as soon as they had got beyond the range of our rifles, once more faced about. From their costumes and wild appearance Captain Norton declared that they were not Seminoles, but probably some of the allies who had, it was said, lately joined the rebels from the north. Such, certainly, were the chiefs on horseback; who now, having again arranged their men, and encouraged them to renewed exertions, dashed on towards us at full speed, waving their lances and shrieking at the top of their voices.

“Let them play that trick as long as they like,” cried the captain. “Wait until some of them get near enough, then bring down their horses. It will require a good shot to kill the riders; but if their steeds fall, we can easily capture them, and they would be of the greatest use to us. However, do not throw a shot away, and wait patiently until they come near. Perhaps they think our ammunition is exhausted; and if they find we don’t fire, they may come close up to the stockade.”

The captain’s orders were strictly obeyed. The warriors continued wheeling round and round, now advancing, now retreating, but still keeping at a respectful distance from the fort. At length they got so near, it seemed to me that we might have knocked over the whole of them. Captain Norton, however, did not allow us to fire. This, as may be expected, made them still bolder, and at length they came sweeping on at full speed, shaking their spears and shouting defiance, till they got within fifty yards of us.

“Now give it them, lads!” exclaimed Captain Norton.



FALL OF THE INDIAN CHIEF.

As we had but a limited supply of ammunition, only such men as were looked upon as the best shots had been told off to fire. Among these was Tim, near whom I was standing. He was the first to draw trigger, and so sure was his aim that he shot the horse of one of the chiefs through the head. Down came the animal on its rider, over whom it rolled, crushing his leg, and preventing him from rising. The rest of the chiefs, however, throwing themselves over the sides of their horses, so as to be completely concealed, galloped off like the wind, and as far as I could see, not a man or horse was hit.

“Now, lads, let’s get hold of that fellow before he gets on his feet,” cried Tim; and, jumping over the stockade, followed by three other men, he ran towards the prostrate chief, who in vain, flourishing his spear, called on his companions to rescue him. Finding that none of them returned, he made a desperate lunge with his spear at Tim, who, however, leaping on one side, warded it off with the butt of his rifle, and dealt the Indian a blow on the head

which rendered him incapable of further resistance. The Irishman and his companions then seized the nearly-stunned warrior by the shoulders, and dragged him to the gate of the fort. It being opened for their reception, all in another minute were safe within, and the gate again closed.

Our captive soon recovered his senses, and looked about like a wild beast when it finds itself in a cage, seeking for some means of escape. His countenance fell when he saw the strong palisades and the number of armed men by whom he was surrounded. He, however, showed no other signs of fear, and appeared to resign himself to his fate, expecting, apparently, that he would at once be put to death. Captain Norton, who spoke the language of the Seminoles with perfect ease, inquired why he and his companions had attacked the fort.

“Because the desire of the red men is to drive their enemies the Palefaces out of the country, and regain their rightful heritage,” answered the chief.

“But you and your people have signed a treaty agreeing to leave the country in possession of the United States Government, and you have broken that treaty by remaining and attacking the whites.”

“The treaty was signed by traitors, and could not be binding on the rest of the people,” answered the Indian. “We have once more dug up the war-hatchet, and have resolved to regain our own. I have spoken. You have me in your power; my life is in your hands; do as you list.”

“Do you wish to live or die?” asked Captain Norton, detecting less confidence in the Indian’s tone than his words, of which I give a very meagre translation, appeared to exhibit.

“Black Hawk has no desire to die. He has many in his lodges who would mourn his loss,” was the answer.

“Your life is in your own hands, then,” answered Captain Norton. “If you will promise to render us faithful service, you shall live, and obtain an ample reward, with which you can return to your own and gladden the hearts of your squaw and children.”

The Indian’s countenance brightened, and Captain Norton at once saw that in spite of his boastful bearing he would be easily tempted to act any part required.

“Our desire is to make the red men our friends, and we have no wish to induce you to betray your people: but we require information, and if you have the power of giving it, and will enable us to attain our object, we shall be content,” said the captain.

“What is it the white chief desires to know?” asked Black Hawk.

“One of the daughters of the Palefaces was carried off some weeks ago by your people. Is she residing anywhere in this neighbourhood; and if so, will Black Hawk undertake to restore her to those to whom she desires to return?” said Captain Norton.

The Indian, for some time, made no reply to this question. He was apparently considering how he should act. Should he be unable to assist us, or refuse to do so, he would lose his reward, and perhaps be put to death. At last he answered:—

“Black Hawk wishes to serve those who have saved his life. He cannot do so if his own people suspect that he has allied himself to their foes. The daughter of the Paleface chief is alive, and living in the lodges of our great chief Oceola, where she was brought some time back. It is said that he desires to wed the damsel, but that she has refused to become his bride, and that he is unable to compel her.”

“So far what you tell us is satisfactory,” observed Captain Norton. “Can you conduct a party to the lodges of your chief, so that the damsel, should she desire it, may return to her home?”

“The undertaking would be difficult and dangerous,” observed the Indian. “Still, if the white chief wills it, Black Hawk will go; but it would be certain destruction to all those who might form the party, should Oceola discover the attempt made to carry off his intended bride.”

Rochford had been an attentive listener to this conversation, of which I give only a few particulars as they were interpreted to me. He had been sufficiently long with the Indians to understand the greater part of the conversation.

“If Miss Kearney be held captive in the lodges of the Seminole chief, I will undertake to bear any message to her which her uncle or brother desires to send, and endeavour, should she be willing to accompany me, to escort her to her family,” he said. “I have the means of communicating with the Indians in all parts of the country; and in spite of dangers and difficulties, I am sanguine of success.”

“But should the Indians find out that you have communicated with us, they will look upon you as an enemy to their cause, and will probably detain you, if they do not take your life,” observed my father. “Anxious as I am to recover my niece, I think it right to point out to you the danger you incur.”

“I have considered all the difficulties, Captain Kearney, and I count them as nothing compared to the object to be attained,” answered Rochford. “I would set out this very day, but I think it is of importance to know whether our late assailants have taken their departure; for should I fall into their hands, they might detain me until Black Hawk was delivered up to them; or, should they think him killed, they might take my life in revenge for his in spite of Oceola’s safe-conduct. Besides, I am very sure that you require a larger supply of provisions than you now possess; and as none of your party can with prudence venture far from the fort, I propose spending a day in hunting. I have a sufficient reason for this, as I have greater hopes of being able to conduct Miss Kearney to this fort than I have to reach her father’s house; and if you are compelled to abandon the fort for want of provisions, my plan would be

defeated."

Both Captain Norton and my father agreed to Rochford's proposals, but it was a question whether the Indians could be trusted. They might prove faithful, but it was more likely that they would play him some treacherous trick. He, however, was not to be turned from his purpose. On hearing of his intended hunting expedition, Tim volunteered to accompany him; and I, after a considerable amount of persuasion, induced my father to let me go also. Rochford, having thought over the matter, consented to accept our assistance, believing that he could be answerable for our safety. It was impossible that so large a body of Indians could move through the country without leaving a well-defined trail, and we should thus be able to ascertain the direction they had taken, and to keep out of their way. Both Tim and I, having so long lived in the wilds, were well able also to take care of ourselves; and we promised not to go farther from the fort than was necessary to reach the ground where game was to be found.

Rochford promised to leave his dog behind him, as not only might its trail be discovered, but, though the animal was useful in many respects, it was not required for deer-shooting. A small party like ours was much more likely to escape observation than a large one, so that we hoped to get back to the fort without difficulty.

Taking with us an ample supply of ammunition, and some cooked food to prevent the necessity of lighting a fire, we set out a short time before daybreak, so that, should any of the Indians by chance be approaching the fort, our departure might not be discovered. Rochford led, followed by Tim and me in Indian file, we all three keeping our eyes around us, and our ears open for any sounds which might show the presence of an enemy. We had reached the thicker part of the forest by the time the bright streaks in the east announced the rising of the sun. We soon discovered a track made by the deer on their passage to a neighbouring pool. Rochford stationed Tim and me behind some thick bushes where we could lie concealed and have a good chance of shooting a couple of the animals on their passage to or from the water; while he carefully explored the country farther to the north, to ascertain whether the Indians, as he supposed was the case, had really gone in that direction. It was truly hunting under difficulties. Should any Indians be near, the sound of our shots would reach them, and it would be no easy matter to conceal ourselves from their keen eyes, which would discover the trail we could not avoid making. However, we had not waited long, when a fine stag, followed by two does, came walking leisurely along, little suspecting the fate awaiting them. Tim fired, and knocked over the stag, while I killed one of the does. The other was bounding off, when Tim brought her down with his second barrel.

Delighted at our success, we rushed out, eager to secure our prey, forgetting altogether the possibility that enemies might be in the neighbourhood. We were busily employed in clearing out the inside of the deer, so that we might the more easily carry them, when I heard a sound among the trees a little distance off. Both Tim and I, having reloaded our rifles, retreated behind the bushes from which we had emerged, and knelt down, ready to defend ourselves against any enemy who might appear. Our minds were soon relieved, however, as we saw Rochford step out from the brushwood. He looked somewhat astonished at seeing the three deer on the ground, and greeted us heartily, as we presented ourselves, on our success. He was satisfied, he told us, that we might continue our hunting, as he had discovered the Indian trail leading due north, and had no doubt that the party had been summoned by Oceola to proceed in that direction. Having packed up the venison so that we might carry it, we secured it to the boughs of a tree, and continued our search for more deer. We were fortunate enough to kill three or four others in the course of the morning.

As it was necessary to convey the venison to the fort without delay, we set off, each loaded with as much as he could carry, intending to return with a horse and a couple of men for the remainder. Our arrival was hailed with infinite satisfaction by our friends, and Lejoillie and another man volunteered at once to accompany us. Spotted Wolf, seeing us about to set off, begged that he might also go. As he had come into our camp voluntarily, it was difficult to refuse him without showing that we suspected his honesty. On perceiving that Captain Norton hesitated, he declared that he was as willing to remain as to go; but he thought that he might be of service in assisting to obtain game, and that he had another reason for offering to join the party. Notwithstanding the suspicions which had been entertained of him, somewhat to my surprise Captain Norton consented.

"We shall have to repent it, depend upon that," said Carlos. "I should like to go too, for the sake of keeping my eye on him; but Uncle Michael says he won't allow me. He has the right to permit you to run any risk, but he has to answer for my safety to my father. Still, I advise you to watch him narrowly; and do not scruple to shoot the fellow should he show any inclination to play you a treacherous trick."

I replied that I could not undertake to shoot the man, but should watch him as far as I had the power.

After Rochford, Tim, and I had taken some food and rested, we set out with our fresh companions. We were again successful. In the evening we agreed to camp out, hoping to kill the next morning as much deer as we and the horse could carry together. Lejoillie was in high spirits, his volubility contrasting with Rochford's taciturnity. We camped in the centre of a wood, so that the flames of our fire might be concealed; and we took good care to examine the neighbourhood, to ascertain that no one was concealed there. We had, of course, an abundance of venison for supper. Having finished our meal, we lay down to rest, Lejoillie volunteering to keep the first watch. I was to have the second, and Rochford and Tim the third and fourth; for we did not invite the Indian and the other men to keep guard. We lay down as close to the fire as we could, that the smoke might assist in keeping off the mosquitoes and other stinging insects. Spotted Wolf, observing that he was indifferent as to their bites, rolled himself up in a blanket which had been given him at the fort, and lay down a short distance off, at the foot of the nearest tree. I remember, as I closed my eyes, seeing Lejoillie walking up and down, his rifle in his hand, now approaching the horse, which was tethered close at hand, at a spot where the grass was abundant, now taking a look at the Indian, who appeared to be sound asleep. It seemed to me not a minute after my eyes had been shut that I heard Lejoillie's voice rousing me to keep my watch. The fire was lower than I expected to find it. I asked him why he had not kept it up.

"Better not to have more blaze than we can help," he answered. "It is just possible, too, that I may have dozed for a moment while I sat down against a tree. However, no harm is done; and I will now finish my nap." Saying this, he

threw himself on the ground in the place I had just left vacant.

“I suspect that our friends, as you also, will thank me for putting some more sticks on the fire,” I observed. “The smoke will help to drive off the mosquitoes, which have been biting abominably; and I heard them buzzing round my ears the moment you called me.”

I found by my watch that Lejoillie had allowed nearly an hour to pass since he ought to have aroused me, and that I should in consequence have but a short time to stand sentry. Taking up my rifle, I determined to be more wakeful than he had been. I stepped towards where Spotted Wolf was lying. He appeared to me to be sleeping soundly, with his head covered up in his blanket, and his feet thrust into a heap of leaves. The horse was farther off than it had been before, and I supposed that Lejoillie had shifted its tether so as to allow it to obtain more grass. I continued pacing up and down, now and then stopping to throw a few more sticks on the fire. The stars shone bright overhead, but there was no moon, and the lean-tos threw a dark shadow over the ground around, so that, except when the flames burst up, I could distinguish nothing clearly at any distance from the camp. The usual sounds which were wont to reach our ears during darkness in the forest were alone heard: the screeching of some night-bird, the croaking of frogs, the burr and buzz of insects innumerable, and occasionally a rustling among the dry palmetto leaves, which I knew was probably produced by a rattlesnake. I was thankful when I saw that it was time to call up Rochford. While I was arousing him, I thought I heard the sound of a horse moving rapidly over the ground.

“Hark!” I exclaimed, “can that be our horse which has got loose?” We both looked in the direction where we had last seen the animal, but it was nowhere visible.

“It has got loose somehow or other. We must try to catch it,” cried Rochford.

Before I followed him, I sprang forward to where I supposed the Indian was sleeping. I lifted the blanket,—a heap of leaves alone was beneath it. He was gone. There could be no doubt that he had carried off the horse. We might as well try to overtake a fleet deer as to attempt to catch him on foot. I shouted to Rochford, fearing that he might be led too far from the camp to be able to regain it.

“Spotted Wolf has escaped, and has gone off with the horse!” I cried out.

PARTING BETWEEN ROCHFORD AND CAPTAIN NORTON.

My voice aroused our sleeping companions, who sprang to their feet. Fortunately Rochford had heard me, and came back. We at once held a consultation as to what was to be done. It was the general opinion that Spotted Wolf would rejoin our late assailants, and probably bring them down upon us. We therefore agreed to load ourselves with the venison, and set off at once for the fort. Lejoillie was very much ashamed of himself, as it was evident that the Indian had made his preparations for escaping while he had been dozing. The stars served to guide us, and although we frequently stumbled over logs of wood and branches, we managed to get some distance before daylight. We then pushed on as fast as our weary legs and heavy loads would allow us.

Our friends were very much surprised at seeing us arrive without the horse.

“I thought so!” exclaimed Carlos, when we told of the Indian’s flight. “I knew that fellow was trying to play us a trick from the first; and he would have done so before now, had we not kept a watchful eye on him.”

We brought venison enough to last a couple of days, or even longer on short commons, provided we could manage to dry it in the sun or smoke it.

Rochford told me that he had resolved to set out immediately, and make his way to the lodges of Oceola. Captain Norton, on hearing of his determination, though anxious to recover my cousin, saw clearly the danger our friend would run, especially since the spy had made his escape, and coming into the hut where we were standing, spoke

earnestly to him on the subject.

“Spotted Wolf will tell the Redskins that you have been with us,” he said. “They, of course, considering that we are their enemies, will treat you very differently to what they might previously have done.”

“I am fully prepared for every danger I may have to encounter,” answered Rochford, as he took the captain’s hand; “but I have resolved, at the risk of my life, to restore Juanita to her family, if she be willing to intrust herself to my care. I have become acquainted with Oceola, and know him to be as generous as he is brave, although he may not have been able to restrain his followers from committing the cruel and sanguinary deeds of which they have been guilty. We shall meet again, I trust, ere long; and if not, those here will know that I have fallen in a righteous cause.”

Captain Norton, on receiving this reply, no longer endeavoured to dissuade Rochford from his enterprise. “I believe that your plan, from its boldness, is more likely to succeed than any I can devise,” he answered. “Go; and may success crown your efforts!”

Rochford’s dog, which stood by, looked up into its master’s face, as if asking leave to accompany him.

“Yes, my faithful Rob,” he said, patting the animal’s head, “I will not leave you behind this time. You have already saved my life, and will, I know, keep a careful watch over my solitary camp at night.”

Having bade us all farewell, and wrung his cousin’s hand for the last time, Rochford, followed by Rob, hastened from the fort, and was soon lost to sight among the trees.

We remained for the next two days, in the hope of receiving information from the commandant of Fort King; but neither of the two trusty scouts who had been despatched thither returned. At last our provisions had come so nearly to an end that Captain Norton considered, unless we could obtain a fresh supply, it would be necessary to proceed there at once. Had Spotted Wolf not deserted us, we might have sent out a hunting party in the neighbourhood; but as it was thought that he would to a certainty give information to our enemies, and that they would in all probability return and cut off any small party outside the fort, arrangements were made for recommencing the march. Our chief difficulty in a forced march, such as we intended to make, was to convey the wounded man, the sole survivor of the massacred party we had discovered. A strong litter had been prepared, and several men had volunteered to carry him. He had, however, made no progress towards recovery, and the evening before we were to start he was evidently worse.

Tim, who had assisted my father in doctoring him, entered the little room appropriated to the officers. “I am afraid, sir, that Mike Dillon is going to slip through our fingers after all,” he said. “He has asked to see you and the captain, but I fear, by the time you get to him, he’ll have little power to say anything.”

On receiving this summons, we hastened to the hut, where, on a rough pallet, lay the wounded trooper. His eyes turned towards us as we entered.

“The Indians have done for me, gentlemen; and I want to thank you for the care you have taken of a poor fellow,” he gasped out. “If any of you get back, and ever visit Philadelphia, I would ask you as a favour to visit my poor mother, Widow Dillon, and tell her how I came to my end. Give her my love, and say I died in the hope that she would forgive me for the trouble I had caused her.” His words grew fainter as he spoke.

Captain Norton promised that he would carry out his request; and in a few minutes after the young soldier breathed his last.

We buried him that night, just outside the fort, not far from where its former defenders lay. We none of us could tell how soon we might share his fate. Captain Norton, well aware of the dangers to which we should be exposed, charged the scouts to keep a vigilant look-out, so as to avoid being led into an ambush, or surprised in any other way.

Next morning, no messenger having arrived from Fort King, or from any other direction, we commenced our march.

Chapter Fourteen.

Difficulties of the journey—Discovery of wild bees—In sight of Fort King—A warm reception—The flag of truce—With friends—An explanation—A sad story—Detained by the Commandant—The black messenger—News from our friend—Juanita discovered—We set off to join Rochford—Camp—Pompey mistrusted—A negro encampment—Lost in the forests—A welcome challenge—How to act for the best—On the trail—We come up with the Redskins—A hasty deed—Fate of Spotted Wolf—Particulars of Rochford’s capture—Forward to the rescue.

Eager as we were to reach Fort King, we made but slow progress, owing to the nature of the country. The men grumbled as they found their feet torn by the short palmetto which grew everywhere over the ground, frequently inflicting very disagreeable wounds on their almost bare legs. The sun moreover beat down with intense force on our heads; while in many places, as we tramped over the sandy tract, we were surrounded by clouds of dust, which prevented us from seeing to any distance on either side. Frequently we came to swampy ponds, to avoid which we had to make a wide circuit; for though they were not deep, it would have been impossible to have waded through them. As, however, we had scouts out both ahead and on either flank, we ran but little risk, while marching through the open country, of being surprised; and whenever we approached a wood, or mass of the tall saw-grass which fringed the ponds, the dogs were sent forward to ascertain whether or not an enemy lay in ambush under their cover. We soon also felt the want of provisions. The very scanty stock we had brought with us from the block-house was

rapidly exhausted, and no large game of any description was to be met with on the prairie, the Indians having driven off or killed all the wild cattle, while the deer had retreated to the cover of the woods. We should soon have exhausted our ammunition had we continued to pop away at the wild-ducks and plovers which rose from the ponds; besides which, the captain had given strict orders that no shots should be fired, lest the sound might be heard by any of the bands of Indians prowling in the vicinity, who thus might have been induced, on discovering the smallness of our party, to attack us. Captain Norton was anxious, if possible, to avoid an encounter with the enemy; for although we might have succeeded in driving them off, it would have been almost impossible to have carried the wounded with us, and they would have had to be left behind to die of starvation, or to be scalped and killed by the Indians. We passed several ponds, but the water was so brackish that it could not be drunk, and we therefore suffered dreadfully from thirst. Our experience showed us what an army has to endure marching across a desert region.

The day wore on, and still we were a long way from our destination. The prairie was bordered on our right side by a thick forest. Besides the short palmetto, the ground in many places was covered with papaw, or custard apple, on which grew a profusion of party-coloured blossoms, while in other places numerous flowers of various hues appeared among the grass. At first I had scarcely noticed the countless bees which were feeding on them; but Black Hawk, who was marching in front, with a guard on either side keeping a strict watch over him, pointed towards an enormous pine-tree which grew somewhat in advance of a line of timber, and I saw that the bees as they rose, laden with honey, directed their course towards it. He addressed a few words to the captain, who observed—

“Our Indian friend tells me that we shall find an abundance of honey in yonder tree, if we will take the trouble to gather it. We must, however, be careful, while we are so employed, that he does not give us the slip, and that no enemies are concealed within the wood, who might rush out and surprise us.”

We, eager to satisfy our hunger, at once directed our course towards the tree. As we approached, we observed countless bees swarming around the lower branches, which were thickly studded with honeycombs. A halt was ordered, and a strict search being made in the wood to ascertain if any Indians were concealed within, we piled arms. The men were then directed to gather wood for fires, while some of the best climbers prepared to ascend the tree and gather the coveted honey. The fires being lit under the branches, the smoke rising either suffocated the bees or drove them off to a distance; when wedges being driven into the trunk, steps were formed to enable the climbers to reach the combs. They took the precaution of covering their heads with handkerchiefs, leaving only two small holes through which they could see. No one was inclined to be longer about the task than was absolutely necessary, as, in spite of their precautions, they did not escape without several stings. In a short time they descended, each man laden with combs of various sizes. Other combs were found on the branches of trees in the immediate neighbourhood, and altogether honey enough was found to feed the whole party. The comb and the honey were eaten together. While it stopped the pangs of hunger, it seemed also wonderfully nutritious. Alone, the honey might not have afforded us sufficient nourishment, but our guide told us that at a short distance off we would come upon an opening in which grew an enormous quantity of cabbage-palms. A party was sent to procure them, and before dark they returned with a sufficient supply for all hands. As the bees were likely to revenge themselves should we remain in their neighbourhood, we advanced a short distance, and encamped in a small clump of pines, from which we could see the approach of an enemy, and defend ourselves should we be attacked. No Indians, however, came near us, nor was any trail discovered in the neighbourhood; and the next day, weary and footsore, with our trousers well-nigh torn off our legs, we came in sight of Fort King. On our right were several buildings. As we got up to them, we found that the houses were roofless, shattered, and blackened, while near them were the remains of what was once a large store. It was pretty evident that the work of destruction had been performed by Indians.

We were advancing in full expectation of a hearty welcome, when a bullet whistled past the captain’s ear.

“Can the Redskins have captured the fort?” he exclaimed, ordering a halt.

“It looks like it,” observed my father. “We had better ascertain how matters stand before we go nearer. We are not prepared to assault the place if the enemy hold it in force. But if you will follow the advice of an old soldier, we will beat a retreat before we lose any of our number. I will go forward with a flag of truce. I don’t know whether the Indians will respect it; but if I see anything suspicious, I will be careful not to allow them to take a steady aim at me.”

On hearing this, I begged my father to allow me to go instead, but this he refused. Tim then offered to go, but my father firmly persisted in keeping to his resolution.

Mounting one of the horses, which had hitherto been led in the rear to keep them fresh for necessary work, he fastened a flag at the end of a ramrod, and, while we halted, rode rapidly forwards, waving it over his head in a way which would distract the aim of any one firing at him.

I anxiously watched his progress, expecting to see him wheel round and gallop back to us; but presently, to our great satisfaction, the gate of the fort opened, and an officer, followed by several men, came out.

“It’s all right,” cried Captain Norton, giving the word to advance, and in a few minutes we were shaking hands with the commandant of the fort. On the captain asking why we had been fired at, he was told that the musket had been discharged by one of the sentries—of course, an Irishman!—who had mistaken us for a band of Red Indians.

“I am glad my worthy countryman was not a better shot,” said my father, “or one of the best officers in the service would have been lost to his country.”

“We have no best officers among us; we are all excellent,” observed Captain Norton, laughing; “and I hope our friend Pat won’t be punished for being a bad shot.”

The commandant had a sad account to give us. A few days before, the general commanding the forces in Florida, with several officers, had been incautiously dining at the settlement we had just passed. Not an enemy was supposed to be in the neighbourhood. The evening had been spent pleasantly, and the guests were preparing to retire to their

homes, either in the settlement or in the fort, when a loud war-whoop was heard, and a shower of bullets came rattling into their midst. Nearly the whole were shot down at once. Two or three managed to escape to the fort, aided by the darkness of night; but the Indians, springing on the remainder of the survivors, struck them to the ground, and carried off their scalps. The garrison had been afraid to fire for fear of wounding friends as well as foes. The Indians did not lose a man.

The garrison of the fort having been greatly weakened, the commandant expressed his satisfaction at our arrival, and at once informed Captain Norton that he must detain him and his men for the defence of the place. This, though a necessary measure, completely disconcerted all our plans for the discovery of my young cousin. My father, Lejoillie, Tim, and I, not being citizens, were at liberty to go if we liked. The commandant also did not insist on detaining Carlos, should he desire to return home or to continue the prosecution of our undertaking. The fort was amply supplied with provisions; and as there was a well within it, there was little fear of the garrison, even if besieged by the red men, being compelled to give in. Still, their limited numbers prevented them moving to any distance without the greatest risk of being cut off, as other parties had been.

We now much regretted that Rochford had left us, as from the knowledge he had obtained of the country, we might, under his guidance, have been enabled to recover Juanita.

We were all this time, I should have said, very anxious about my uncle and his party, for no tidings had been received of him; and being as much exposed as those who had been massacred, he ran the risk of sharing the same fate.

We had spent some days in inactivity. All this time my poor young cousin might be exposed to the greatest danger, and yet we were unable to devise a plan for rescuing her.

Finding my sleeping-place very hot, I had one morning turned out at daybreak, and was taking a turn on the gallery, or rather platform, above the stockade, when I caught sight of a person approaching the fort. I soon saw that he was a black, and that he was waving a white handkerchief at the end of a stick. The nearer he approached the more he waved, evidently not satisfied with the appearance of things. I looked round to see that none of the sentries were taking aim at the man. It struck me at once that he might be a messenger from Rochford. I hastened down to the gate to receive him. I was not mistaken.

“Me Pompey; bring message from Massa Rochford to de young white massa. You he, I guess,” he said.

“I have no doubt that Mr Rochford has sent to my father or me, as we are friends of his. I am anxious to hear what you have to say,” I replied.

“It dis,” said Pompey, trying to look very grave; “Massa Rochford found out whar de young missie is stayin’. He talk to her, an’ she ready to come. Massa Rochford say if he had ’osses he bring her ’way, but oderwise he fear dey bof get caught; so he stop in a wood not far from deir lodges, whar no Indians find him. He stay dar till de young massa and captain come wid de ’osses, den he get de white girl an’ carry her ’way all safe. Massa understand what Pompey say?”

“Very clearly; but how are we to find the place where Mr Rochford is hiding?” I asked.

“Pompey him show you, massa; him come on purpose,” said the black.

“How long will it take to get there?” I asked.

The black began to count on his fingers, with a knowing look.

“Maybe two days, maybe free, accordin’ to circumstances; maybe only one, if ’osses go quick—but den Pompey not keep up an’ show de way.”

“Come in, Pompey, and you shall explain what you have told me to Captain Norton and my father, and I have no doubt that they will agree to Mr Rochford’s proposal.”

Neither of them had turned out, but I roused them up, as there was no time to be lost. On hearing the information Pompey had brought, they at once went to the commandant and laid the matter before him. He consented to allow us to take the horses we had brought to the fort, with two or three others if we required them. I did not expect that he would give permission to Captain Norton to go; but the captain pressed him so hard that he at length consented, provided my father, who had been unwell for some days, would consent to remain. To this my father consented, fearing that if he went he might break down on the way, and be unable to proceed. It was finally arranged that Captain Norton, Carlos, Tim, and I, under the guidance of Pompey, should set out on our four best horses, with two led ones for Juanita and Rochford. The black declined mounting, declaring that he had never ridden a horse, but that he would keep the lead on foot. As soon as he had taken some food and a short rest we set out. He showed by his activity that he was well able to perform his promise. When, however, he got out of sight of the fort, he stopped and said—

“Pompey guess he might stick on de ’oss, an’ den we go faster.” Without waiting for a reply, he sprang into the saddle, and from the way in which he sat showed that he was as well accustomed to riding as any of us. Where the ground would allow he took the lead in fine style. Away we went, allowing no ordinary impediments to hinder us.

“Take care that fellow doesn’t play us a trick,” observed Captain Norton.

“I feel pretty sure he is trustworthy. He merely feels in good spirits at riding, instead of having to use his legs,” I replied.

We were obliged to stop to water the horses at a pool we had come to, for fear that there would be no water farther

on. Soon after this we reached the borders of a wood, when, darkness coming on, we were compelled to halt for the night. We kept a double watch, two of us guarding the horses, while the other two slept. We allowed Pompey to sleep the whole time, as he required rest, and we thought it as well not to put implicit trust in him.

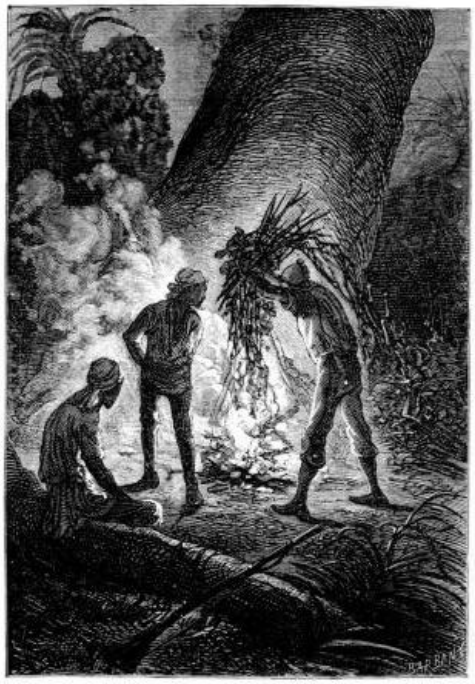
Next day our progress was slower, as we were unwilling to tire our horses, in the belief that they would be required before long to gallop as fast as their legs could carry them; besides which, the country was much more difficult to traverse than on the previous part of the journey, there being swamps, and woods, and sandy tracts, besides occasionally large pools, in our course. Pompey, who evidently knew the country well, assured us that we should reach Rochford's hiding-place by dark. Trusting to his assertion that there were no Indians in the neighbourhood, we ventured to dismount near a pool to kill a sufficient number of ducks to serve us for food. We had brought a supply of crackers with us, and a few other articles, so that we were not badly off. We had, however, once more to camp.

"Why, Pompey," I said, when we had unsaddled our horses, "I thought that we should have seen Mr Rochford before this."

"Yee, massa; he no far off, dough," he answered. "Me think you better stop here, while Pompey go on an' tell him dat you come."

"Well, then, the sooner you let him know the better, as he will not wish to lose time," I replied.

I told Captain Norton what the black had said. "Let him go at once, but it will be as well for one of us to follow him and see what he is about," he said. "I am not quite satisfied with his manner; and yet I daresay he is honest enough."



THE NEGRO ENCAMPMENT.

Captain Norton did not object to my proposal to follow the black. As soon as he set off, I started close behind him, but at such a distance that he did not hear my footsteps. After making my way through the forest—not without considerable fear of losing him—I saw a bright light some way ahead, which I knew must proceed from a fire, and observed he was directing his course towards it. I therefore followed more leisurely, and at length caught sight of the fire, with several blacks near it, some apparently collecting wood, others cutting up a deer. I looked round for Rochford, but he was nowhere to be seen. Just then Pompey made his appearance among the people, and at once asked for "the white massa."

"Him gone," answered one of the blacks. "Him not come back since yesterday; bery likely Redskin got him."

"Redskin got him! oh dat bad news!" exclaimed Pompey in a truly sorrowful voice. He then, in the peculiar jargon of the blacks, informed his companions that a party had arrived from Fort King, who would be bitterly disappointed at not finding Massa Rochford. They now held a consultation as to what should be done. Pompey finally announced his intention of returning to tell us of Rochford's absence, and to say that, should we wish it, he would accompany us farther, and, though at the risk of his life, try to find our white friend. From what I heard him say, I was now convinced of his honesty, as also of his affection for Rochford. His unwillingness to take us at once to the camp was fully accounted for. The people before me, I saw, were evidently a party of runaway blacks; two, indeed, I recognised as those who had deserted from us, and I had little doubt that Rochford had persuaded them that he would obtain their freedom. I felt very doubtful whether I should find my way back. As I had been guided by Pompey in going towards the negro camp, I had forgotten the difficulties I should experience in returning to our own. My anxiety also as to what had become of Rochford made me at first forget the risk I ran of losing my way. I might tread on a snake or encounter a panther, or tumble into a hole, or get smothered in the trunk of a rotten tree or some black pool full of noxious creatures. As long, however, as I could see the light of the blacks' fire, by occasionally looking back, I managed to make my way in the direction leading to our camp; but after that I could only guess whether I was going the right way by the momentary glimpse of a star overhead. At last, however, when trying to pass through a thick part of the forest, I was fairly bewildered. Still, as I could not contentedly remain where I was, I pushed forward. It was with an intense feeling of relief that I caught sight, far away before me, of a slight ruddy tinge on the trunks of

the trees, which, I was convinced, was produced by the camp-fire of my friends. I advanced, not without many a scratch, while my clothes were well-nigh torn to pieces. Suddenly the thought occurred to me that the distance was greater than I had come, and that the fire might possibly be that of an Indian camp. I stopped to listen, but no sound reached me. Then again I went forward. The glow increased, and I was sure I was approaching a camp. Still I could hear no one speaking. Suddenly, however, a hail reached my ears—

“Arrah! who goes there?” and, to my infinite satisfaction, I recognised Tim’s voice.

“It’s Maurice; don’t be after shooting me,” I cried out; and I was soon in the midst of my friends.

The information I brought caused them considerable anxiety; still they hoped that Rochford might after all return. They resolved, however, to wait until Pompey made his appearance before deciding on what to do. He at last arrived, looking very crestfallen. We, of course, did not tell him that we already possessed most of the information he had to give. He told us, in addition to what we already knew, that a party of Indians had been seen following up Rochford’s trail. Fears were entertained, therefore, that he had been overtaken, especially as one of the Indians was on horseback.

“Then it must be that rascal Spotted Wolf!” exclaimed Carlos. “I guessed from the first that he was plotting some mischief, and I wish that he had been shot at once.”

Cross-questioning the black, we found that the Redskins had been seen on the previous day, so that should they have fallen in with Rochford, they could not as yet have got very far away. Pompey offered to bring another black, who had caught sight of them, and who, knowing the country well, would assist in guiding us.

I could not sleep when off my watch for thinking of the work we should have to do on the following day. Perhaps we should find Rochford killed and scalped.

As may be supposed, we kept a very vigilant watch; for Indians being close at hand, we might should they for a moment find us off our guard, be attacked and murdered. Captain Norton, though not exactly despising them, was of the opinion that their successes had arisen from the carelessness of the whites, who, had they not been taken completely by surprise, could with ease have driven off their Redskin foes.

The night passed away, and at the earliest dawn Pompey getting up, gave himself a shake, and offered to go and obtain the assistance of one of his companions, should Rochford, in the meantime, not have arrived. He was evidently anxious that none of us should accompany him, as we might suspect that his friends were runaway blacks. Of course, he was not aware that I was very well assured of that fact. We had barely time to take a hurried breakfast when he returned, accompanied by another negro, who undertook to put us on the Indians’ trail. As there was not a moment to be lost, we immediately mounted, and, led by the two blacks, pushed on as fast as they could run. At last they stopped and pointed to the north-west.

“Dis nigger say dat way dey go,” said Pompey.

That he spoke the truth we had no doubt, as the trail was sufficiently distinct even for us to distinguish. There were numerous footprints, as well as the marks of a horse’s hoofs.

“You find Massa Rochford, come back to de wood, we stay dar free days, in case you want us,” he added.

We thanked him for the assistance he had given us. He neither asked for, nor evidently did he expect any, reward; indeed, had he done so, we had nothing to give him.

He and his companion hurried away, anxious to escape the risk of encountering any of the Indians, although the blacks were generally treated kindly by the natives; and we pushed on at a much faster rate than before.

At length we came to a spot where it was evident, from a still smouldering fire, that the Indians had encamped during the previous night, and had probably only lately left. The trail, which led off to the right, showed that there were not more men than we could easily cope with. We pushed on, therefore, in the hope of soon coming up with them, and ascertaining whether Rochford was among them, and if so, whether he was a prisoner or at liberty.

In a shorter time than we expected we caught sight of a party of Redskins—there might have been about a dozen—with a man on horseback in their midst. They did not appear to have discovered us, as the turf over which we were galloping was soft, and prevented the sound of our horses’ hoofs being heard. As we got nearer, to my surprise I saw that there were two men instead of one on the horse. The hindermost looked round for a moment and caught a glimpse of us. His dress showed that he was not an Indian, though he was at too great a distance to enable me to distinguish his countenance. Suddenly the horse started off from among the Indians on foot, and galloped forward at right angles to the course they had been pursuing.

“Why, that is Rochford,” cried Carlos; “and the Indian is that rascal Spotted Wolf.”

Scarcely had he spoken than we saw the Indians bend their bows; but they apparently dared not shoot for fear of killing Spotted Wolf as well as Rochford,—thus enabling the horse to carry both the Indian and his prisoner to a considerable distance from them. We immediately pursued them, regardless of the party on foot; but Tim having charge of one of the led horses, and I of the other, we dropped somewhat behind Captain Norton and Carlos. I could see that Rochford was struggling violently with the Indian, when presently he managed to free his arms from the rope which bound them behind his back, and pressing those of the Indian close to his side, he seized the reins, and endeavoured to check the horse’s course.

DEATH OF SPOTTED WOLF.

The captain and Carlos, urging on their steeds, were in a short time almost up alongside them. I saw Rochford turn to one side, as if speaking to Captain Norton; and while he was doing so, what was my horror to see Carlos, making his horse spring forward, plunge his long knife into the Indian's breast, exclaiming, as I afterwards learned—

"Take that, you wretched spy; you'll no longer play us any of your tricks!"

He had driven his weapon right home, and as he withdrew it, the blood, which flowed in a full stream, showed the fatal nature of the wound.

Tim and I now came up. Carlos, with the greatest unconcern, handed his knife to Rochford, saying—

"Here, Rochford, take this and cut the thongs which bind you to the Indian, and tumble the body out of the saddle."

"What have you done, Carlos?" cried Rochford. "We might have kept the man as a hostage, and have made him useful."

"It is too late to think of that now; see, he is already dying!" replied Carlos.

Rochford took the knife, and cutting the cords allowed the Indian's body to fall from the horse. I was horrified and grieved at what my young cousin had done; but he, apparently considering that he had done nothing unusual, exclaimed—

"Let the savage lie where he has fallen; we must push on if we wish to save our lives."

That he was right in this respect was very certain. Rochford, who was a first-rate rider, without stopping the horse, seated himself in the saddle, and galloped on alongside Captain Norton. I made up to them, eager to learn what had happened.

Rochford, in a few words, told us that he had arranged everything for Juanita's escape; and would have carried her off the previous night had he not been captured by Spotted Wolf and his followers, who were conveying him to Oceola's camp to accuse him of treachery, when we fell in with them. He added that he had still hopes of success, as Juanita would be on the watch for him; and that, if we could manage to distance the Indians—who were not likely to hurry themselves without their leader—we might reach the Indian village, place Juanita on horseback, and reach either Fort King or some other place of safety before any pursuers could overtake us.

Wrong as it was in Carlos to kill the Indian, who was at the time virtually a prisoner, yet we gained an advantage by the act; for his followers would probably abandon the pursuit of us, as they could not carry him along with them, and they would not venture to leave him unprotected behind. We, at all events, on looking back, could see nothing of them, and therefore stopped to breathe our horses, and thus enable them to put on fresh speed should it become necessary.

Chapter Fifteen.

Rochford enters the Indian village—Waiting in the wood—Doubtful of success—An anxious half-hour—Proposed assault—Ready for action—The rescue—An angry scene—The retreat—Dangers on the way—Juanita's experience—Arrival at the Fort—Condition of my father—A fresh expedition—Rochford declines to join our party—Black Hawk to go with us—Indian trails discovered—Scouting—Carlos missing—An Indian's revenge—A forest-grave—A startling interruption—The timely reinforcements—Death of my uncle—Result of the engagement—The fate of Black Hawk.

Once more we were galloping in the direction of Oceola's lodges. The warriors of the various tribes throughout the country had been summoned round the standard of their chief, so that the district through which we passed appeared perfectly destitute of inhabitants; not a red man did we meet to interfere with us. We thus hoped that having distanced the followers of Spotted Wolf, we might get Juanita off without having to encounter an enemy. Rochford knew the country perfectly, having frequently hunted over the whole of it for several months together; and he was able unerringly to guide us in the direction we wished to go. At last Rochford pulled up on the borders of a hummock. "Remain here with the horses, ready to start at any moment," he said. "Miss Kearney will, I trust, be on the look-out for me; and if we can but elude the vigilance of the old squaws, we shall be with you very soon."

Having mounted the horse we had brought for him, he set off, and was soon lost to sight. We remained under shelter of the trees; so that, unless any one approached close to the wood, we ran but little risk of being discovered. I was very anxious to accompany Rochford; but he considered that my appearance would excite suspicion, and that it would be safer to go alone. Though he had not spoken to me of the danger he incurred, I knew that it was very great; for should he be captured in his attempt to carry off the young lady, it would be looked upon by Oceola as an act of treachery, and he would to a certainty be put to death. His intention was to enter the village as if he had just come from a hunting expedition, and offer to supply the squaws with venison; or should he be fortunate enough to shoot a deer on his way, he would carry it with him, as it would greatly facilitate his proceedings. That he would do this appeared very unlikely, as the distance was but short: still a deer might be seen in the hummock, and he was too good a shot, should he discover one, to let it escape him.

Directly he had gone, we dismounted to allow our horses to feed, and to drink from a pool which we found close inside the hummock. The time dragged slowly on; I had to look at my watch several times to satisfy myself that our friend had not been very much longer absent than we had expected. Waiting, indeed, is far more trying than when a person is actively engaged.

"Rochford ought to be here by this time," observed Captain Norton. "I fear that some accident has happened to him, or that he finds it impossible to get the young lady away. We shall have the Indians down upon us if we have to wait much longer."

"What do you say to making a dash on the village, and carrying off my sister in spite of the squaws or old men?" exclaimed Carlos.

"Sure that would be the finest thing to do, afther all," cried Tim. "We'll just keep the old Redskins employed while Mr Rochford or Mr Maurice lifts her on her horse and gallops off with her. They're not likely to have any fire-arms in the place, except maybe a few old muskets without flints in them, as the warriors will have carried off all they own to fight the whites."

I thought Tim's proposal worthy of consideration. But Captain Norton was of opinion that the risk to the young lady would be too great; for though the Indians in the village might very possibly have no fire-arms, they had bows and arrows, and a chance arrow might strike her as well as any of us. "We will wait another half-hour," he said; "and if Rochford does not then appear with Miss Kearney, we will as Carlos proposes, gallop into the village, and making directly for the chief's lodge—which we shall know by its superior size and decoration—we will carry away the lady if she be within it. We may possibly also rescue our friend, should we find that he has been made a prisoner."

Captain Norton's plan exactly suited the ideas of the party; and I regretted that we had not attempted it at first: we should have gained much time, and run less risk than we were now likely to do.

That last half-hour appeared longer than any of its predecessors. Rochford did not arrive. We tightened our saddle-girths, saw that our bits were well fitted, and threw ourselves on horseback. There were but four of us to oppose some scores of squaws, and we could not tell how many old warriors, who, although unable to fight on the battle-field, might prove no inconsiderable foes when defending their lodges. We at first advanced slowly, that we might put our horses to full speed when the time came for action. As may be supposed, we kept our swords loose in their scabbards, and our rifles ready, with fresh ammunition for reloading.

We had as yet encountered no one: it was evident that the inhabitants, for some reason or other, must be all in the village. At length the tops of the lodges appeared in sight. Our hearts beat quickly. The sooner, after we were seen, we could reach the village the better.

"Forward!" cried Captain Norton. "Yonder is the point for which we must aim."

We struck our spurs into our horses' flanks. Scarcely had we done so than a chorus of yells and shrieks, in the shrillest of tones, broke on our ears; and the next instant we saw a horse burst forth from amidst the lodges with Rochford on its back, carrying Juanita before him. Close at its heels came a whole herd of women—or rather furies they appeared, from their fearful cries and wild gestures—while just over their heads we could see several of the old warriors coming from various directions, endeavouring as they moved along to fix their arrows in their bows.

"Come with me, Carlos," cried Captain Norton. "Maurice and Tim, take the other side; and let our friends pass between us. Then wheel round, and cover them as they gallop on. We shall soon distance these old hags, who, seeing that they have no chance of overtaking us, will soon give up the pursuit."

I could not help giving way to a loud shout as Rochford, with Juanita, almost fainting, in his arms, rode up. I was joined in it by my companions; and we were all in another instant galloping along at a rate which quickly enabled us to distance our pursuers, although not to get out of earshot of their terrific cries.

Not until we had galloped for a couple of miles did we pull rein, when we halted to allow Juanita to recover herself, and to congratulate her and Rochford on their escape. Captain Norton inquired whether Juanita felt able to mount the horse we had brought. She replied that she would do as Rochford advised; but was ready to do so, if necessary.

“Jump on its back, then,” said Carlos; “we shall go all the faster. You can manage a steed as well as any of us.”

Juanita looked at Rochford, and then allowed him and her brother to help her on her horse. When once she was seated in the saddle, she appeared herself again. There was no time to make inquiries as to how Rochford had contrived to carry her off. We had not only to escape from the people in the village who might come in pursuit of us, but also to avoid Spotted Wolf’s party, who would be certain, should they discover our trail, to follow us up and try to avenge his death.

In a way we had little expected, we had thus far accomplished the object of our expedition. Still, many dangers lay before us. Had it not been necessary to return to Fort King to rejoin my father, we should have felt inclined to push across the Ocklawaha for the banks of the Saint John River, and so make our way to Castle Kearney. The distance, however, was great; and unless we could find a boat, our ammunition might fail before we could reach it, and Juanita might be exposed to more fatigue than she would be able to bear. Towards Fort King, therefore, we directed our course. Juanita declared that she could gallop the whole distance if the horses could continue going. But we had great reason to fear that they could not accomplish this task; for although they had had a long noon-day rest, they had already been galloping for several hours. Still, we determined to push forward during daylight, and to continue on at night should the nature of the ground permit us. We kept a look-out over our left shoulders in the direction in which it was possible the Indians might appear. They might also, if they suspected the route we should take, have hurried on and formed an ambush; and although they were without fire-arms, their arrows at a short distance were as dangerous as bullets. We therefore kept at a distance from any clumps of trees or shrubs which would afford them shelter. Our steeds showed abundance of mettle; and by the time night approached we had every reason to believe that we had out-distanced all pursuers.

As the sun set we saw an open prairie before us, with here and there clumps of pine. The night was clear, and the stars would serve to guide us. Rochford offered to lead the way, that he might warn us of any danger. Carlos rode on one side of Juanita, and I on the other; and the captain and Tim brought up the rear. On we went, though at a slower pace than that which we had pursued during the day-time.

“But how in the world did you allow yourself to be carried off, and give us all this trouble?” asked Carlos, who was accustomed to speak in a somewhat brusque manner to his sisters.

“Depend upon it, I could not help myself,” she answered, not apparently wishing just then to enlighten him.

He, however, again and again pressed her.

“It is a painful subject, and I would rather not think about it,” she answered. “However, if you insist upon knowing, I will tell you. You remember when we were out riding how I galloped on ahead. I did so under the belief that the others were following; when, looking round, I saw that I was alone, and to my horror directly afterwards found myself in the presence of five mounted Indians, one of whom I recognised as the chief who had come to the judge’s house while we were there. He advanced and addressed me, courteously enough, in a long speech full of flowery language, the tenor of which was that I must become his wife. I answered, with as much composure as I could command, that such a thing was impossible, and that I must beg to decline the honour he intended me. I avoided, as I thought, saying a word to annoy him; but I suppose I exhibited the indignation I felt. Suddenly seizing the bridle of my horse, and ordering his braves to follow, he set off at a gallop. I screamed out, threatening to throw myself to the ground; but I was afraid of doing so lest I should break my neck, or that the Indians would gallop over me, which from their looks I thought they would have very little scruple in doing.

“On we went for miles and miles, until we reached a large camp of several hundred warriors. Here a hut was quickly built, which the chief begged me to occupy; and I was treated with every courtesy, although there was not even a squaw to attend on me. It was impossible to escape; and although I was dreadfully frightened, I tried hard to recover my composure and presence of mind, so that I might be able to act on an emergency. The chief, who spoke very good English, said he intended to convey me to the lodges of his tribe, where the squaws would take care of me and attend to all my wishes, provided I made no attempt to escape; and that I should remain there until the white men were driven out of the country and the natives had regained their rights, when he would claim me as his bride. I thanked him for the honour he intended me, but entreated that he would in the meantime carry me back to my father and mother, who would be greatly alarmed at my disappearance. He answered that it was with regard to my safety that he had carried me off from the whites, who would ere long be exterminated; and that he could not bear to see one for whom he had so great an affection remain to share the fate prepared for them. He paid me all sorts of absurd compliments, likening me to a lily, an angel, a star, and I don’t know what else; though I scarcely listened to what he said on that subject. In vain I pleaded, notwithstanding any risk I might run, to be allowed to return home: he was deaf to all my entreaties. As I was careful, however, not to say anything to irritate him, he continued as courteous as at first.

“We set out with a strong escort, and galloped on till nightfall; but not until the end of the fourth day did we reach the chief’s lodges. He there committed me to the charge of his mother, who had, no doubt, in her younger days been very handsome. She received me very kindly, and I had no reason to complain of the way I was treated; in fact, had I been a princess of their tribe, more attention and respect could not have been paid me.

“I now first learned that the chief was no other than Oceola, the great leader of the Indians in the present rebellion. When he visited me I tried to persuade him to make peace with the whites, and to abandon his attempt to regain the country; trying to explain to him how hopeless it was, as, should every settler and soldier be killed, others in overwhelming numbers would ere long pour into the country and revenge their people. He replied that the red men had been victorious everywhere; that hundreds of the Palefaces had been killed; and that such would be the fate of all who should come to the country. At last he took his departure. I was very glad he was gone. I feared, however, that I had not succeeded in impressing him with the hopelessness of his cause.

“Though I saw no means of escaping, I tried to keep up my spirits, and resolved to take advantage of any opportunity that might occur. Imagine my surprise, after I had been some days in the Indian village, to see a white man dressed as a hunter enter it. I felt sure that he was your friend Rochford. Though I pretended not to notice his arrival, I resolved as soon as possible to communicate with him. He must have seen me or heard that I was there; for within an hour a note was brought me, written on a small scrap of paper, containing these words:—

“‘Trust me; I will assist you to escape.—R.’

“Tearing off the small blank piece of the note, I simply wrote ‘Yes,’ fearing lest by any chance it might fall into the hands of the chief. By some means or other, Rochford managed to throw the squaws off their guard, by bringing either venison or some other game each time he came to the village; and he managed to hold frequent communication with me. The rest you know. My great fear now is lest he should fall into the hands of the Indians, who would, on finding that he had assisted to carry me off, wreak a dreadful vengeance upon him.”

I assured Juanita that there was little danger of this; and quieted her fears as well as I could by promising to do my best to prevent our gallant friend running any unnecessary risk.

At last we found so many impediments in our course—Rochford having two or three times narrowly escaped breaking his neck—that we were compelled to halt. As well as we were able to do so in the dark, we put up a shelter for Juanita. The night passed quietly, and the next day we reached Fort King.

Nothing of importance had occurred during our absence. My father was still far from well, and very anxious about my uncle and the party who had accompanied him; for nothing had been heard of them, and it was feared that they might have been surprised by the Indians and cut off, as many other parties had been. Our great wish, therefore, was to set off to ascertain their fate. Should we discover my uncle, it would be a great relief to him to know that his daughter was in comparative safety.

Juanita’s position, however, was far from pleasant: though she had her brother, her uncle, and me, there was no female in the fort to attend on her, and the best accommodation which could be provided was rough in the extreme.

How to proceed was now the question. If she were left in the fort, either Carlos or my father must remain with her. My father was ill, and unfit for any fatigue, though he might have been able to perform an easy journey of short stages. It was therefore decided that he should remain in the fort, and that as many men as could be spared,—including Lejoillie, Carlos, and I,—under the command of Captain Norton, should set off to search for my uncle. Should we discover him, our plan was to return directly to Fort King, and from thence make our way to the Saint John River, by which we could descend to Castle Kearney. It was possible, however, that by this time my uncle had returned home, though he was not likely to have done so without having obtained tidings of his daughter. We therefore resolved, after giving the horses a day’s rest, to set out on our fresh expedition.

To my surprise, Rochford excused himself from accompanying us, although he did not intend to remain in the fort. “I have a duty,” he said, “to perform to others; and while fully alive to the dangers I shall run in passing through the country alone, it must be done.”

I asked him what it was.

“There are some who have put confidence in me, and I cannot disappoint them; besides which, I have still some hopes of inducing Oceola to sue for peace, and to endeavour to obtain by lawful means the object he desires,” he answered.

“But should he discover that you assisted to carry off Juanita, how will he treat you?”

“As he has hitherto done. He is not likely to be informed of the circumstance; and if he were, I do not fear the consequences to myself,” he replied.

Before we set out, Rochford had left the fort.

Black Hawk had hitherto remained a prisoner at large in the fort. He was narrowly watched, but he had not made the slightest attempt to escape. When he heard of the death of Spotted Wolf, and that he had been killed by Carlos, he remarked that it served him right, as he had come for the purpose of betraying us, and would have succeeded had we trusted him.

This frank avowal of Black Hawk fully satisfied the commandant and Captain Norton of his honesty; and as they considered that he would be of great service to us, they asked him whether he would join our expedition. He appeared to hesitate, observing that should any of his countrymen capture him, his death would be certain.

Captain Norton replied that we would protect him to the best of our power, and he finally accepted our offer.

Besides those I have mentioned, we had only fifteen men—a small party to venture through the country in its present state. More, however, could not be spared. We on horseback would be detained by those on foot; but they were active fellows, well inured to fatigue, and would get rapidly over the ground, and we expected to make rapid marches, absolutely necessary in an expedition of the nature we had undertaken.

Carlos was in high spirits, and seemed not to have a doubt as to his father’s safety. It was proposed to place Black Hawk on horseback, but he declined the offer, saying that he could march faster and with less fatigue than any of the Palefaces, and that he would accompany us on foot.

For the first two days we pushed on at a rapid rate, not meeting with any recent Indian trails. Black Hawk, indeed, declared his belief that the red men had retired to the north-west, and that we should not fall in with them. At length,

however, at the end of the third day, we came upon the remains of recent campfires and trails, which showed that a considerable body of Indians had lately been in that part of the country. We kept very close together, although the direction which the trails took showed that Black Hawk was right in his conjecture as to the insurgents having moved to the north-west, and we hoped therefore to avoid them. In case, however, any should have remained in the neighbourhood, we moved to the right, and chose as eligible a spot as we could find for our camp, with a thick wood to the west, which would conceal our fires, and an impassable marsh on the opposite side. To prevent the risk of a surprise, scouts were sent out to examine the country, to ascertain that no enemy was near at hand. Carlos and two men, accompanied by Black Hawk, went in one direction, Tim and I in another, intending to separate, while Lejoillie remained with Captain Norton in the camp. We were charged not to go far, and to return before darkness came on. My companion and I each made a tolerably wide circuit, examining every spot which could conceal a foe, when we again met.

“Not the shadow of an enemy,” observed Tim. “It’s my belief that the Redskins have taken themselves off as far as they can get from the whites, and won’t be eager to meet any of us.”

It was quite dark by the time we got back to the camp; but neither Carlos nor the men who had accompanied him on foot had made their appearance. We waited for some time, until we began to grow anxious. At last footsteps were heard, and two men were seen coming towards the camp. They proved to be those who had accompanied Carlos and Black Hawk. They reported that they had got separated in a wood from the young master and the Indian, and that although they had searched about everywhere, they could not find them or discover their trail.

This announcement caused considerable anxiety. Captain Norton blamed the men for their carelessness; but they declared that Carlos himself had told them the course they were to take, and that they had followed no other. We waited for some time, hoping that my young cousin would, guided by the fire, find his way to camp. The Indian would, at all events, be able to lead him right. But what if, after all, Black Hawk had proved treacherous? I was thankful when Captain Norton, after waiting for another hour, decided to send out three or four men. Tim and I begged that we might go; and Lejoillie offered to accompany us. As our horses were tolerably fresh, we should get over more ground than the men on foot, so we at once set out in the direction Carlos had taken. The moon, we knew, would shortly rise and enable us to see our way. We knew that in the immediate neighbourhood of the camp there was but little risk of our falling in with an enemy; but it was possible, should we continue on to any distance from it, that we might find ourselves unexpectedly in the presence of a band of Redskins. Lejoillie at last proposed that we should return, observing that Carlos could not intentionally have gone as far, and that if he had met with any accident, we should find him nearer the camp.

Just after he had said this, I noticed, near the edge of a wood, a light, as if from a small fire. I pointed it out to Lejoillie and Tim. We at all events were bound to examine it, and at once rode forward. As we drew nearer, we could hear the howling and yelping of wolves. Presently the moon rose beyond the far-extending prairie, and showed us a wood on one side, with a number of large birds flitting to and fro, or hovering about the fire.

CARLOS DISCOVERED DEAD.

“Some one lies there, depend upon it,” said Lejoillie. “Those birds, like the wolves, gather only to feed on the dead.”

We galloped forward. On the ground before the fire lay the body of a man, with an arrow sticking in his breast. If dead, he was only just so, for the savage brutes had not yet commenced their banquet. As we approached they retreated, still howling, to a distance. I threw myself from my horse, oppressed by a terrible dread that the body was that of my cousin. A glance at the features, on which the light of the fire fell, convinced me of the sad fact. It seemed as if only just then the breath had left his body, for it was still warm. I was joined by Lejoillie, while Tim held the horses.

“We can do nothing for him, I fear,” said my friend, feeling his pulse. “Even had there been life in him, the moment we withdrew the arrow he would have died. Let me warn you it is no safe place; the fellow who killed him may be watching to shoot us. We must be away from this, and it will be time enough to consider as we go along how he came here and met with his death. We will carry him with us to the camp, poor boy, and prevent him being torn to pieces by the wolves.”

Tim was inclined to give way to a howl of sorrow in honour of the young master, but I stopped him. He insisted, however, on carrying the body, as the last mark of respect he could show to my uncle’s son. “It would have broken my heart entirely, Mr Maurice, if it had been you. It’s bad enough, sure, as it is,” he exclaimed, as he placed the inanimate form across his saddle.

We galloped on, feeling that it was more than likely that we should have a flight of arrows whistling after us.

“Sure, as I’m a living man, it’s that villain Black Hawk did the deed!” exclaimed Tim. “I saw the look he gave when he

heard that Mr Carlos had killed Spotted Wolf. He had planned the black deed for many a day."

Lejoillie and I agreed with Tim, though how Carlos came to have been led so far away it was at first difficult to say. Perhaps Black Hawk had induced him to dismount, and then, taking his gun, had galloped off with his horse. Carlos, not being able to find his way back to the camp, had probably lighted a fire to keep off the wolves; and while seated before it, either Black Hawk or some other Indian had shot him. Such was the only way we could account for the position in which we had found him.

Captain Norton was much grieved, and blamed himself greatly for having allowed Black Hawk to accompany Carlos. We dug his grave close to our camp, and spent a portion of the night in piling up logs over it to mark the spot. Though I had before been looking forward to the satisfaction of falling in with my uncle, I now dreaded the meeting and the task I should have to perform of telling him of the death of my cousin. As no more was seen of Black Hawk, we had no doubt that he had committed the deed.

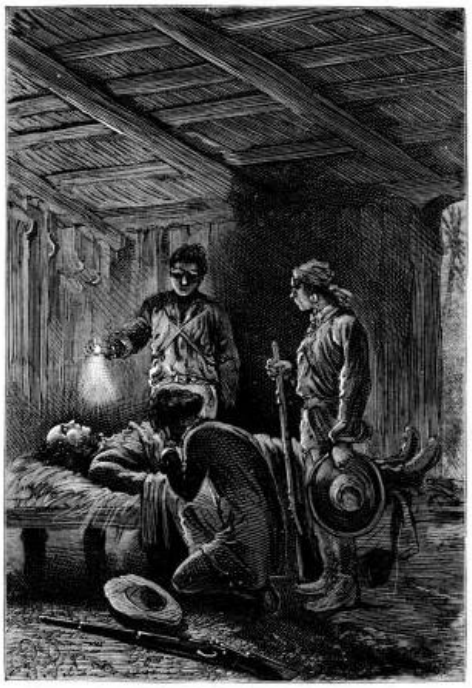
We had now reached as far north as there would be any use in going, as my uncle and his party must have come by this time fully as far south as we then were if they had not already passed us. Though the country was almost in as wild a state as in the southern parts, there were a few log-huts and other primitive buildings scattered about; but the inhabitants had fled for fear of the Indians. Both we and our horses being pretty well tired by a long day's journey, we took up our quarters in one of these huts. The men were encamped outside, with the usual sentries placed at equal distances; and we had thrown ourselves on the rough tables and benches, the only remaining furniture, when the sound of distant firing reached our ears.

"Sure there's fightin' goin' on!" cried Tim.

We started to our feet. The horses were saddled, the men fell in, and we hastened on, hoping to arrive in time to assist any whites who might be engaged, whether my uncle's party or others. We had still light enough to see our way, though the sun was near setting. At last we came within sight of another hut of some size, near which the fighting had been taking place, of which we had sad proof by seeing the bodies of three white men stretched on the ground. But their comrades were advancing, driving the enemy before them.

"They will be led into an ambush!" cried Captain Norton; and ordering Tim to halt the men a little in advance of where they then were, he dashed forward to prevent the catastrophe he feared, I was about to follow, when a black, whom I recognised as one of my uncle's servants, rushed out of the hut.

"Is dat you, Massa Maurice?" he exclaimed. "Whar Massa Carlos? we 'fraid dat his fader die an' he want bery much to see him. Come in; he in here; come in!"



DEATH OF UNCLE NICHOLAS.

Giving the reins of my horse to one of the men, I threw myself from the saddle, and hurried into the hut. My uncle lay on a low bedstead covered with straw, while one of his followers stood near him with his rifle in his hand. The black, taking a lamp, led the way to the bed. As the light fell on my uncle's countenance, I saw that his features were set, and his eyes had lost their expression. I knelt by his side and took his hand: though warm, it failed to return my pressure.

"Speak to me—speak to me, uncle!" I exclaimed, but no reply came.

The black shook his head. "Him gone, massa," he said; "no 'gain speak."

I turned to the other man for an explanation.

"He was shot, sir, leading us on against the Redskins. We brought him in here at once to look to his hurt, and when

we saw you coming we hoped that you might have a doctor with you; but the bullet had done its work, and he was dead before you entered the hut."

I was deeply grieved, for I knew how my father would feel the loss of my uncle, who was, however, thus saved the pain of hearing of his son's death.

I had no time to give way to sorrow, for the rattle of musketry showed me that the fight was still continuing; the shouts and shrieks of the Indians, which came from no greater distance than before, proving that they held their ground. It was not a time for any one with a rifle in his hand to be idle; and bidding the black remain by his master's body, I called to the other men to accompany me, and hurried out to join my companions. There was barely sufficient light to enable me to distinguish them, but the cracks from their rifles showed where they were posted. Just as I joined them, Captain Norton appeared, and ordered us to charge the enemy, who, as we advanced, broke and, fled. We fired, pouring in a couple of volleys, which brought down several of the Indians, and hastened the flight of the rest. The captain then ordered us to retire to the neighbourhood of the hut, where we could the better defend ourselves should the enemy rally. Had we not arrived, the whole of my uncle's party would probably have been destroyed; as it was, several had fallen, and we lost two, besides three wounded. We could not ascertain how many of the Indians had been killed, as their friends had carried off most of them. Two or three bodies, however, were still in the open, but at such a distance from our camp that it would have been dangerous to have approached them, for some of the Redskins might be lurking in the wood. As it was more than probable that we should be attacked during the night, one-half of our party remained under arms, while the rest slept with their rifles by their sides, ready for action at a moment's notice.

I was patrolling with Tim, the moon, high above the trees, casting a bright light over the ground where the fighting had taken place, when Tim exclaimed,—"Arrah! sure, thin, one o' them Redskins is moving." I looked in the direction he pointed to, and directly after saw one of the apparently dead Indians rise to his feet and make towards the wood. At the same instant Tim fired. The Indian dropped, and before I could stop my companion he had rushed forward, supposing, I believed, that the man was feigning to be shot, and might still make his escape. He quickly came back, dragging the body after him.

"Sure he's dead enough now, anyhow; but I thought I'd bring him along to show you who he is. See, it's Black Hawk, who killed Mr Carlos; he's got what he deserves for his treacherous murder."

I at once recognised the features of Black Hawk. That he could not do us further harm was certain; and as no attempt had been made to rescue him, we were satisfied that the enemy had retreated to a distance. Part of the night was spent in the melancholy duty of digging graves, and burying the bodies of my poor uncle and those who had fallen with him, as we could not take them with us, the wounded requiring all the men who could be spared to carry them. The Indians, we hoped, finding us too strong for them, had retreated.

The night passed quietly away, and at early dawn we commenced our march back to Fort King.

Chapter Sixteen.

Arrival at Fort King—We resolve to return to Castle Kearney—On the way to Silver Spring—Anxiety of Juanita—A welcome sound—A message for Rochford—Our voyage down stream—Arrival home—Grief of my aunt—I visit Judge Shurtleff—A party of blacks discovered—I join the Roseville Volunteers—An encounter in the forest—The meeting with Rochford—A dispute—The prisoner before the Judge—At the Castle again—Sad news—My father's words—The attack and defence of Castle Kearney—Our retreat on the river—Timely help—Reception at Roseville—Return to Ireland—Happiness of my cousins—The last of the Seminoles—Conclusion.

We had a weary march back to Fort King, not knowing at what moment we might be attacked by our persevering foes, who were constantly hovering in our rear; but from the admirable arrangements of the captain, and the vigilant watch kept at night, finding that they could not surprise us, they did not venture on an attack. No attempt during our absence had been made on the fort, although the garrison had been kept constantly on the alert. I need not describe the grief which the news of my uncle and cousin's death caused to my father and Juanita. They were, of course, now more anxious than ever to get back to Castle Kearney. As the men who had followed my uncle would form a sufficient escort, it was resolved that we should set out for the Ocklawaha River, where we hoped to find boats in which we could descend to the Saint John, and from thence to continue on to Castle Kearney. The point we aimed at was known as the "Silver Spring," a stream celebrated for the extraordinary transparency of its water, and much venerated in consequence by the Indians. It was supposed, indeed, to be the fountain of youth, of which they spoke to the Spaniards who first visited this country, and induced them to believe that its waters had the power of renovating the most aged, and restoring strength and beauty to the wrinkled and decrepit.

A landing-place, with two or more planked houses, stood on the bank of the stream, which would afford accommodation should they not have been destroyed by the Indians, though the inhabitants had long before made their escape to a less dangerous part of the country. As the whole distance could be performed in little more than a day, it was considered advisable to send forward two scouts, who would ascertain the condition of the place, and whether any Indians still remained in the intervening district.

Three days having passed, and the scouts not making their appearance, we began to fear that they had been cut off, and that we should be doomed to be shut up in the fort for an indefinite period. The commandant was anxious to get rid of us, for we, of course, consumed the stores destined for the garrison. It was with no small relief, therefore, that we saw the two men approaching the fort early on the third day. They brought the satisfactory intelligence that the Government had sent a steam-vessel up the river to the mouth of the Ocklawaha, above which she could not

proceed, but that a smaller craft had been despatched up the stream to Silver Spring with stores for the garrison.

As we were prepared for our journey, we lost no time in setting out, accompanied by Captain Norton, who led a party intended to escort back the stores. Juanita was thus even better protected than we had expected. We had been somewhat anxious on her account, lest by some chance the Indian chief should get notice of our intended journey, and make an attempt to cut us off. There was, however, not much chance of his doing so, as it was believed that he was fully occupied with fresh troops sent against him in the north-west; still so wonderful were the means of obtaining information possessed by the Redskins, and so rapid their movements, that it was impossible to say in what direction they might not appear. A road had been cut between the fort and the river, which greatly facilitated our progress; although, not having been used for some time, it was overgrown with long grass and low bushes, which it was necessary in some places to cut away.

My father and I endeavoured to cheer poor Juanita. During all that she had previously gone through, her spirits and courage had never once flagged. Now, she appeared to be sadly despondent. She told me that she had a foreboding that Castle Kearney had been destroyed by the Indians and all within it massacred. I of course tried to persuade her that such fears were without foundation, and that we should find her mother and sister well, with the house standing where we had left it.

“Can you surmise, Maurice, what has become of Mr Rochford?” she asked suddenly, showing that, at all events, she had not forgotten our friend, who had so gallantly rescued her from the Indians.

“I am constantly thinking on the subject, and wondering why he does not appear,” I answered. “My father is as puzzled as I am; but we are certain no unworthy motive keeps him away. I can only conjecture that he has either gone to try and induce Oceola to make such offers to the Government as he thinks will be accepted, or else he has returned to the black fugitives with a view of benefiting them in some way or other. Whatever he may be doing, I have no doubt that he is influenced by good motives, although his plans may not be so feasible as he supposes.”

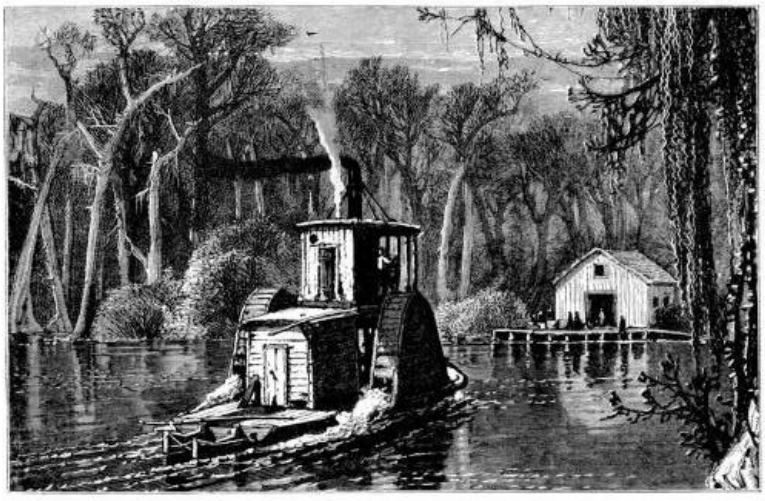
“Of that I am very sure!” exclaimed Juanita, warmly. “I did not understand your friend when he was at Castle Kearney, and I thought him very presumptuous; but I have since learned to appreciate him as he deserves.”

I thought it better to make no answer to this remark of my fair cousin. I could only say that I hoped Rochford would escape the dangers to which he was exposed, and reappear some day or other.

We camped at night in a secure position, fully one-third of our force being under arms, so that should any savages attempt to surprise us, they would be kept in check until we were ready to repel them.

It was not until nearly the end of the next day that we saw the bright waters of the “Silver Spring” glittering through the trees. On reaching the buildings, we found that, although empty, they were uninjured. The Indians, if they had visited them, had perhaps looked upon them as temples built in honour of the spirit presiding over their sacred spring. No boats, however, were there; and unless some should arrive, we should be obliged to construct rafts or canoes to carry us down the river. To stay where we were without provisions was impossible: although we might shoot birds and perhaps deer in the neighbourhood, yet we dared not exhaust our ammunition. The scouts told us that they had received the information they had brought from a canoe which had been sent up to ascertain if any Indians were in the neighbourhood, and that it had afterwards returned down the river.

Lejoillie and I offered to go down, if we could obtain a canoe, to learn what had happened; but though we searched about in every direction, none could be found. Dawn had just broken, when one of the sentries announced that he saw a thin column of smoke over the trees in the direction in which the stream ran.



ARRIVAL OF THE STEAMER.

Presently afterwards we heard a peculiar sound, which we all declared must be produced by the paddle-wheels of a steamer. A cheer rose from us when a curious craft, with high paddle-boxes, and machinery rising above her deck, hove in sight, and came gliding up the stream. She brought the greatly required stores for the fort; and the skipper undertook to convey the whole of our party down the stream to the man-of-war steamer waiting her return. He relieved poor Juanita’s fears in regard to Castle Kearney, by assuring her that the house still stood uninjured, and that it had not been attacked by the Indians.

We were very sorry to have to part with Captain Norton, who had to return to the fort. He promised to pay a visit to

Castle Kearney as soon as his duties would allow. He also assured me that he would not fail to try and induce Rochford to rejoin us.

“Should you be able to send him a message, you may hint that he will not find my cousin Juanita quite as hard-hearted as he once supposed; indeed, I suspect that she would break her heart should any harm befall him,” I whispered.

I cannot fully describe the varied beauties of the stream, bordered by picturesque woods festooned with graceful creepers, many of them producing rich blossoms of many hues. At night we proceeded, lighted by pitch-pine-torches stuck in the bows of the vessel, which cast a lurid glare on either bank, scaring the numberless alligators which ever and anon put their heads above the surface of the water. At times I fancied that I could see the figures of Indian warriors brandishing their spears, and handling their bows ready to shoot at us; but the next moment they changed into bushes or the distorted trunks of trees.

After a voyage of some miles, with the current in our favour, we found ourselves alongside the Government steamer which waited the return of the boat. As I stepped on her deck, I enjoyed a sense of security which I had not enjoyed for many months. We heard sad news, however. Fearful atrocities had been committed by the Indians in different parts of the country—farm-houses attacked, their inhabitants massacred, and whole villages destroyed. The romantic admiration with which I had been inclined to regard the red men was completely dissipated; though I was compelled to acknowledge that, barbarous as was their conduct, they had been cruelly treated, and had bitter wrongs to avenge.

The distance which had taken us so long a time when we came up the river was quickly got over, although we had to stop at several places to take persons on board who had escaped from the Indian massacres. Our party, with the remainder of my uncle’s followers, were landed at Castle Kearney. My aunt and Rita had bravely held out, notwithstanding the advice they had received to abandon the house. My father broke to them, as gently as possible, the sad intelligence we brought, as poor Juanita was utterly unable to do so.

Donna Maria, it seemed to me, would never get over it. For many days and nights her daughters, overcoming their own anxieties, were in constant attendance on her.

The poor girls, though they mourned for their father and brother, were, I knew, troubled about Rochford and Captain Norton. Lejoillie had gone on, as he said, to finish his visit to Judge Shurtleff at Roseville, that settlement being one of the very few which had escaped an attack from the Indians, owing to the due precautions taken by the inhabitants.

Several weeks passed away. Donna Maria appeared to be slowly recovering; but it was evident that she still remained in a very precarious condition. The judge and Mrs Shurtleff kindly sent up to invite one or both of my cousins and me to pay them a visit. They, however, declined the invitation, being unwilling to leave their mother. My father, guessing that I was getting somewhat weary of being shut up within the narrow boundary of the little island, advised me to return in the boat which brought the messenger, but desiring me to come back again in a few days, lest he should require my services. He had not expected to remain so long in the country, but while Donna Maria continued so ill, he was unwilling to speak about their arrangements for the future. I accordingly set off, and arriving at Roseville was received very kindly by the judge and his wife, who had heard as much of our adventures as Lejoillie was able to give them. They spoke in great admiration of the gallant way in which Rochford had rescued Juanita.

“Brave fellow! noble fellow!” exclaimed the judge. “I only wish that he had got over his somewhat wild notions of helping the Indians and negroes. He can do them no good, and will only run a great risk of getting into trouble himself.”

“He would not have gained that influence over them which enabled him to rescue my cousin, if he had not attempted to help the Indians,” I observed. “Probably no other white man in the country could have done so. I only wish that he was safe back again here or at Castle Kearney.”

I found Lejoillie very busy in obtaining specimens of natural history; but he ran a great risk, in his excursions, of being caught and scalped by any Indians who might be prowling about. The Roseville militia were, however, always on the alert.

I had nearly stayed out my time at the judge’s, when a hunter belonging to the place, who, notwithstanding the unsettled state of the country, continued the pursuit of game, often at long distances from the settlement, brought word that he had come upon the lately-deserted camp of a considerable body of Indians or blacks. He suspected, he said, from the numerous bones of deer and fowl scattered about, that they were provided with fire-arms and might have some evil intentions towards the settlement. He had followed up the trail, and found them again encamped, but had not ventured near enough to ascertain their numbers and character. He advised, therefore, that a party should be sent out to surprise and disperse them, which he was of opinion could easily be done by surrounding their camp at night. When I heard this account, I was almost convinced that the party were those blacks who had placed themselves under Rochford, and that he, of course, would not permit them to injure the settlers. I did not, however, feel sufficiently certain that Rochford was with them to allow me to express this opinion; but I begged permission to accompany the expedition, which was willingly granted me. It was not expected to last many days, and I hoped still to get back before I was wanted by my father. The Roseville Rifles, commanded by Captain Seth Nockelles, to whom I was introduced by the judge, wore as uniform broad-brimmed straw hats and shooting-jackets, with belts round their waists, in which they stuck their bowie-knives and pistols, while they carried their long rifles slung across their backs. We took with us several powerful blood-hounds, such as I have before described.

I have already given so many accounts of marches through the country, that I must not fill up my journal with a description either of the scenery or the adventures we met with. At this time a strong force of regular troops had compelled the Indians to evacuate the eastern part of the country, and had, it was supposed, driven the larger

number westward, so that we did not expect to meet the enemy in any considerable force. We therefore advanced with confidence, though we sent out scouts, as usual, to avoid the risk of being surprised. We had thus pushed on for four or five days, when one of the scouts brought word that he saw the smoke of a fire ascending apparently from the midst of a thick wood, which was, in his opinion, very likely to shelter an enemy. It was considered advisable, therefore, to enter cautiously, feeling our way as we advanced. As we got to the borders, the dogs were loosened and sent in, and we followed knowing that they would give us timely notice should they come upon an enemy. We had not got far when we heard several shots; but no bullets came near us.

“The dogs must have shown themselves, and, depend upon it, those shots were aimed at them,” observed our leader. “Come on, lads! or the rebels will be making their escape by the other side of the wood, and we shall have no chance of meeting them.”

We accordingly pushed on through the dense foliage, Captain Nockelles, a hardy backwoodsman, leading. Soon I caught sight of a couple of blacks, and a white man with a pistol in his hand standing before them, while two of the blood-hounds lay dead at his feet. The blacks held their rifles ready for action. On seeing the white man, our captain, refraining from firing as I thought he would do, shouted out—

“Who are you?”

ENCOUNTER WITH ROCHFORD IN THE FOREST.

“A friend!” answered the stranger, stepping forward, when what was my surprise to recognise Rochford, though no longer in hunter’s guise, but dressed as he was when staying at Roseville. The blacks had in the meantime lowered their weapons, but showed no inclination to follow their leader.

“What brought you here, my fine fellow?” exclaimed the militia captain, looking hard at Rochford.

“I was on my way to Roseville, with my two attendants; and if you mean to return there soon, I shall be very glad to accompany you,” answered Rochford.

“You cannot expect us to believe that story,” cried the captain; “but whether you do or do not, you and your black fellows must go back with us to Roseville, and we shall then find out who you and they are. My idea is that they are runaway slaves, and that you are the Britisher who, it is said, has been encouraging them.”

As he said this, he turned round and ordered some of his men to arrest the blacks, who suddenly sprung back, and disappeared behind a thicket.

“Tell those fellows to stop,” cried the captain to Rochford.

“They are free agents, and I cannot interfere with their movements,” answered the latter.

“What should you say if we were to hang you on the next tree for refusing?” exclaimed the captain. “Call them back, I say, or take the consequences.”

“Even though I wished to do so, I have no right to exercise any influence over them. If you hang me you will be guilty of murder. I am perfectly ready to go with you, and will give you my word of honour that I will do so without attempting to escape,” replied our friend calmly.

The captain, notwithstanding what Rochford had said, became more violent; and fearing that he would proceed to extremities, I thought it time to interfere, so stepping forward, I said—

“I know this gentleman, and I am very sure that he has no intention of committing any illegal act. Judge Shurtleff is also well acquainted with him; as is Captain Norton, to whom he is related.”

“All very fine, Mr Kearney; but people don’t go about the country with a troop of blacks at their heels without intending mischief. If he won’t order those negroes to give themselves up, we must try and catch them. If we can’t do so, it will have a very ugly look for him.”

But the blacks were active and cunning, and knew the country, which was more than their pursuers did. The latter, after a long chase, came back declaring that not a nigger could they find, and swearing at the trouble which had been given them.

So angry were they with Rochford, that had I not energetically interfered, it would have gone hard with him. I at length, however, persuaded the captain to carry him before Judge Shurtleff. The party indeed were anxious to get out of the wood as soon as possible, for we had already gone further in pursuit of the supposed rebels than was intended; and as no other camp could be found in the neighbourhood besides the small one lately formed by Rochford and his attendants, our leader was pretty well satisfied that it would be useless to continue the search. In spite of my representations, he treated Rochford as a prisoner, making him march between two armed men, who were ordered to shoot him should he attempt to run away. When we halted at night, greatly to my indignation, they lashed his arms behind him, so that he could neither sit nor lie down with any comfort.

Rochford bore this ill-treatment without complaint. “Thus end all my schemes for the amelioration of the red and black races of this hapless country,” he said to me, as I was sitting near him, which I was allowed to do. “I found them very different, I confess, to what I expected. With some noble qualities, the Indians are savage in the extreme; and the blacks must be educated before they are fit to take care of themselves. I have, however, more hope of them than I have of the Indians.”

I was not sorry to hear Rochford say this, as I trusted that he would now be induced to abandon his wild schemes, and turn his attention to a more profitable employment of his time.

Captain Nockelles, who was exceedingly vexed at the escape of the blacks, refused, notwithstanding my representations, to set my friend at liberty. I undertook to be answerable for his making no attempt to escape; but all I could say had no effect, and Rochford was kept with his arms pinioned, unless when two men were standing by him with loaded rifles in their hands. Our journey was therefore a far from pleasant one. Rochford found it very disagreeable; and I felt greatly annoyed at the way he was treated; but as I should have been accused of mutiny had I made any further attempt to get him released, I was obliged, as he was, to submit. He begged me not to make myself unhappy about him.

“It will be over in a few days,” he remarked; “and I trust I shall be able to exonerate myself from the absurd charges which may be brought against me. The very fact that I had assumed a civilised costume, proves that I was about to return to the settlement. Had I been captured dressed as a hunter, at the head of a party of blacks or Indians, my conduct might have been open to suspicion.”

I was very glad when at last the buildings of Roseville appeared in sight; though somewhat annoyed when Captain Nockelles ordered me to remain with the main body, while he took his prisoner, under charge of a guard, before Judge Shurtleff. I begged to go likewise, urging that there was no possible reason why I should remain behind, when I had not even a command in the regiment. At last, not having the face longer to refuse me, he consented, and I followed the party which had gone on before.

Our old friend was seated in his judicial chair, at a small table, with pen, ink, and paper before him. I arrived just in time to hear him say, “A rebel caught in the very act. Bring him in—bring him in.” And Rochford, with Captain Nockelles on one side, and a guard armed with a brace of pistols on the other advanced towards the table.

“What! a white man having the audacity to induce blacks to rebel against the authority of the State!” exclaimed the judge not recognising him. “What have you to say to this accusation?”

Rochford seemed to have an idea that the judge intended to ignore any former acquaintance with him, and replied—

“It has not been proved that I am a rebel; and I certainly had no intention of committing any act contrary to the laws of the United States.”

“Bless my heart! are you my friend Rochford?” exclaimed the judge, jumping up, almost overturning the table in his eagerness to shake hands. “Gentlemen, there is some mistake here. Mr Rochford came out with me from England, and I know him to be a thoroughly honest and excellent young man. He cannot possibly be guilty of the crime of which you charge him. Set him at liberty immediately. These ropes must make him feel very uncomfortable.” And the judge commenced pulling away at the knots, not thereby expediting his object; which Captain Nockelles, finding he had made a mistake, very quickly accomplished. The judge then shook Rochford warmly by the hand. “I am very sure that our friend here will be able to give a satisfactory account of himself, although he might not have been inclined to explain matters when he found himself treated as he has been. You’ll come and dine with me, Captain Nockelles, and I will hear all about it. You will meet the great naturalist Lejoillie, who knows Mr Rochford as well as I do, and who will, I am sure, answer for his being a person of high character, and not at all likely to commit any act unworthy of a man of honour.—Oh! there’s my friend Kearney. Glad to see you back, my boy. You’ll join us. I must then send you to Castle Kearney, as your father is anxious to have you back to assist in looking after your young cousins, who, poor girls, will not only have to mourn the loss of their father and brother, but of their mother also, of whose life, I fear, there is but little hope.”

I was very sorry to receive this latter piece of information, though it did not prevent me joining the party at the judge’s dinner-table, where Rochford was seated as an honoured guest, instead of being, as his captors expected, sent off to the State prison. Little Paul was brought in after dinner, and the company were informed of the gallant way in which Rochford had saved his life at the hazard of his own.

My friend gave us an account of his adventures among the Indians and blacks, which fully satisfied the patriotic militia captain that he had no hostile intentions towards the Government of the United States.

After dinner, I found that a boat was in readiness to carry me to Castle Kearney.

“Our friend Rochford will, I suspect, be happy to accompany you,” said the judge. “It will be as well for him to get out of this place, in case any disagreeable gentlemen should take it into their heads that he has been too leniently dealt with. And, in truth, the sooner he leaves the country, perhaps, the better; though we shall be delighted to see him back again when affairs are more settled, and this Seminole war has been brought to a close.”

I was not exactly surprised to find that Rochford was very willing to follow the judge’s advice.

Wishing the judge, his wife, and their friends good-bye, we embarked shortly before sunset, and were able to continue our journey at night without difficulty. As we approached Castle Kearney, we were hailed by a voice which I recognised as that of Tim Flanagan, who was keeping watch on the castle walls. On hearing my reply, he quickly descended to the little postern-gate to admit us.

“Sure, I’m glad to see you back, Mr Maurice, and you, Mr Rochford, though I’ve bad news to welcome you with about the misthress. She’s gone, sir, she’s gone. An’ the young ladies are in a sad way; so that the captain finds it a hard matter to comfort them, an’ he’ll be glad to have you to help him.”

On ascending to the upper floor, we met my father, who gave a cordial welcome to Rochford. My aunt, he told us, had died that morning, never having recovered from the loss of her husband and son. The young ladies bore up as well as could be expected, and he hoped that we should be able to assist in consoling them. Notwithstanding the report that the Indians had been driven westward, he considered it prudent to maintain a strict watch in the castle, lest another attempt might be made by her Indian admirer to carry off Juanita.

“I congratulate myself on having come to assist you, sir,” said Rochford. “Although, when I first came to the country, my wish was to benefit the natives, I would treat them as my worst enemies should they make so audacious an attempt.”

“I will trust you, Mr Rochford,” said my father, smiling.

Our friend insisted on taking his turn as one of the sentries, and I felt very sure that the castle would not be surprised during his watch.

Early in the morning after our arrival my poor aunt was interred in the centre of the garden, as there was no grave-yard near to which she could be carried.

My father was now very anxious to return home as soon as possible, and he invited my two cousins, according to their father’s wish, to accompany him. Juanita was willing enough to go, but Rita showed much disinclination to leave Florida, though, at the same time, she had no wish to be separated from her sister. My father explained that by his brother’s will he had no choice in the matter. He must either take them with him, or remain with them in the country. The property, however, could only be disposed of at a great loss while the troubles with the Indians continued. He proposed, therefore, returning in the course of two or three years to settle their affairs. This arrangement somewhat satisfied Rita, though she still implored me to try and persuade my father to remain. I, as may be supposed, was very willing to do so, as I liked the country, and hoped to meet with more adventures. Rochford was quite ready to remain, for he had every reason to believe that he had won Juanita’s affections. How my father might ultimately have acted I cannot say, for matters were settled in a way we little expected. The sun had set, and we were seated at supper—the pleasantest meal of the day in that hot climate. My cousins had somewhat recovered their spirits, and Rochford was doing his utmost to make himself agreeable, when Tim walked into the room, rifle in hand, with his usual military air, and making a salute, said—

“Capt’n, if ye please, step up to the gallery on the west side an’ take a look-out. I was peering over the drawbridge, when I caught sight of some creatures moving among the plantations; either they’re wolves or Injins.”

“Indians!” we exclaimed in chorus, my father, Rochford, and I jumping up.

“Do not allow honest Tim’s report to alarm you,” said Rochford to my cousins; “he has very likely mistaken a few stray cattle for an army of Indians. At all events, let me entreat you to remain quietly here until we ascertain the true state of the case.”

I repeated what Rochford said, and then hurried up to the gallery, where I found my father and Tim, with three or four of the other men. They were crouching down so as not to expose themselves to the view of those below. Rochford and I, doing the same, looked through the loopholes left for the purpose. Though the night was somewhat dark, by watching attentively we could distinguish a number of figures darting here and there among the trees, making their way towards us, evidently endeavouring, if possible, to keep themselves concealed as much as possible from sight.

“That these are Indians I have no doubt, and also that they have come here with hostile intent; so we must be prepared for them,” whispered my father.—“Rochford, I leave you in charge of the gallery; do not fire, however, until the enemy show an intention of attacking the house.—Maurice, I must leave you and Tim, with two hands, to work the guns above the entrance. I will station the other men where they can best defend the approaches.”

All these arrangements were quickly made. It was pretty evident that the Indians fancied that they were undiscovered. We lay down under cover of the balustrade, which was of a thickness impenetrable to bullets. We could distinguish the figures of the Indians, as they emerged from the wood in the distance, stealing nearer and nearer the water which separated us from the mainland. It was very evident that they were in strong force, and fully

expected to surprise the castle. We waited for my father's word to open fire. As yet, indeed, none of those near had shown themselves, being concealed by the shrubs which grew on the farther shore, and which, we were thus shown, ought long ago to have been cut down.

There had been no light on the west side of our house, the windows of the sitting-room opening in the opposite direction, so that probably the Indians supposed we were all fast asleep. We kept a profound silence. The time seemed very long; and had I not been assured that I had seen human beings moving about, I should have fancied that we must have been mistaken.

I was waiting, ready to fire, when I heard the door leading to the platform open. Looking round, I saw my two cousins.

"What is happening?" exclaimed Juanita.

Rita asked a similar question.

"Go back! go back!" I cried out, louder than I ought to have spoken; "the enemy are close at hand."

Scarcely were the words out of my mouth than an arrow whistled through the air. For a moment the dreadful thought seized me that one of them had been struck; but the missile was quivering in the woodwork above their heads. They quickly retreated, and I heard the door closed behind them. I calculated the spot from which the arrow had been shot, and with the help of my companions, training my gun towards it, fired.

Before the sound had died away, the most fearful yells and shrieks rose from the brushwood before us. Showers of arrows, mingled with bullets, came pinging against the walls, the bright flashes from the Indians' muskets lighting up the whole shore. Tim was not slow to follow my example; and at the same moment the rest of the garrison began blazing away at our enemies, although it was difficult to distinguish them among the brushwood, behind which they took good care to conceal themselves. We were well sheltered; but this sort of work might continue until the whole of our ammunition was exhausted. Though we had every reason to believe that some of our bullets took effect, it was impossible to ascertain what number of the enemy were killed; their fire, however, did not appear to diminish. They probably calculated on our having no large amount of ammunition, and intended to make their assault when they found our fire slackening. It occurred to me, while I was working away at my gun, that we ought to ascertain what quantity of ammunition we possessed. I asked Tim if he knew.

"Sure there was enough to defend the place for a whole day or more, when we first came here; but I don't know how much your uncle and his party carried away with them, or whether any has been used since. It is to be hoped the Redskins won't be any better off than we are in this respect, and will soon get tired of blazing away to no purpose," he answered.

I was not satisfied, however, and was anxious to go and ascertain, that we might, at all events, reserve some for an emergency.

We had been exchanging fire with the enemy for nearly an hour, when I observed some bright flashes of light circling over our heads.

"Arrah! now, they haven't got rockets with them?" cried Tim.

"No, these are more dangerous even than rockets," I answered. "They are sending fiery arrows on to the roof. Should any fall where they cannot be got at, they may set the place in a blaze. I must go and let my father know, as he may not have observed them."

Making my way to the door so as not to expose myself, I opened it and sprang in. Hurrying down to where my father was directing the men in the lower part of the building, I told him what was taking place. I mentioned also my apprehensions in regard to the limited amount of ammunition we possessed.

"I am afraid you are right, Maurice. We must hope to drive the Indians away before the whole is exhausted," he answered. "Come with me; we must try to prevent these fire-brands doing any damage."

We were ascending to the top of the building, when we met my cousins in the passage.

"O uncle! what is happening? Cannot we help you in some way?" exclaimed Juanita.

"Not without more risk than I would desire you to run," answered my father. "I don't wish to alarm you, but I would advise you to collect the valuables you possess, so that you may preserve them should it be necessary to leave the house, which the Indians are trying their best to set fire to. They may not succeed; but if they do, it will become untenable. Now, brave girls, do as I bid you, and wait in the room next the garden, so that we may run out quickly if necessary."

I should have mentioned that there was on the north side of the house a little dock or harbour, in which the boats belonging to the estate were kept. The largest had that very morning been got ready to carry us and our baggage to Roseville, in case we should determine to go; while there were three others sufficient to hold all the people on the island. We had thus, should we be reduced to extremity, the means of escaping.

My father and I now hurried up to the top of the house. While he examined one side, I looked to the other. What was my dismay, as I passed close under the roof, to find our worst fears realised. Already sparks in thick showers were falling down on the north side of the building. Through a small hole I could see the flames flickering up, while the fire was running along the planks with which the roof was lined. I hurried over to tell my father.

"The fire has burst out on the other side also!" he exclaimed; "and I have no hope of extinguishing the flames. No

water which we could bring up could do it."

We had no time to exchange further words, for wreaths of thick smoke were descending, filling the place where we stood, and we had quickly to make our way down to avoid suffocation.

"Call Tim and the men from the guns; they will not be able to serve them much longer," said my father. "But we must defend the lower story as long as we can. I will prepare your cousins. We shall have but few minutes, I fear, to get away."

I hurried out to obey my father's directions, and tell Tim what had happened.

"Let me have but another shot or two at the Redskin rascals. See what they're about!" he exclaimed.

I looked down, and could distinguish a number of figures dragging forward some long trunks of trees, with which they either intended to form a bridge or float themselves across. Tim and the other men fired, but the Indians did not appear to be disconcerted; indeed, the shot from the small cannon did little more damage than the bullets from the rifles. Had they been placed on a lower level, they would have been much more effective.

Before the guns could be again loaded, sparks in thick showers began to descend from the roof, and unhappily some fell among our cartridges. An explosion followed, severely injuring one of our men. To stay longer where we were would have been madness. We therefore retreated through the door, amidst a volley of bullets and arrows, dragging the poor wounded fellow with us. I told his companion to carry him into the garden, while Tim and I hastened downstairs to assist Rochford; for the men in the lower story were as yet not aware that the building was on fire. When I told them, some showed an inclination to escape; but urged by Rochford, Tim, and me, who set them the example, they continued firing away as before through the loopholes. We could, of course, see but little of what was going on in front of us, but we guessed, by the shouts of the Indians, that they were aware of the progress the flames were making. The hot fire we kept up, however, compelled them to remain under shelter. We were now joined by my father, who ordered me to take four of the men, that we might get the boats ready and the gates opened which enclosed them in the dock. He begged Rochford to take charge of the ladies, while he and Tim remained to the last to cover our retreat, so that the Indians might not discover that we were about to abandon the house, I lost no time in executing his orders, desiring the men to carry along with them their wounded comrade. The Indians were probably not aware that we had the means of escaping. At all events they had not, as far as we could see, succeeded in their attempt to reach the shore of the island, which they might have done on logs of wood, or by swimming across—at the risk, however, of being caught by alligators, had the saurians not been driven to a distance by the noise of the shouts and firing. Just after we had reached the dock, and were getting the oars ready for use, I saw, to my great relief, Rochford and my two cousins approaching, followed by three female servants and several other women, carrying whatever valuable property they could lay hands on.

Already the flames were bursting out from all sides in the upper part of the house. In another minute or two the whole roof would, I feared, come crashing down. I looked anxiously for my father and Tim, but the continued crack of their rifles showed that they were still at their posts.

"Oh, they will be burnt, they will be burnt!" cried my cousins, as they saw the flames rapidly encircling the building.

I was on the point of hastening back to warn them, when Rochford sprang forward.

"I will do it. Get all hands ready for a start;" and before I could answer, he was already half-way across the garden.

I had still much to do. My first care was to place my cousins and the servants in the large boat, and to distribute the women in the others, while I ordered the men on board, and got the gates of the dock opened; which required considerable exertion, as the lower parts had to be forced through the mud which had collected at the bottom. The burning house afforded us light enough for all that was required.

At length the firing ceased. As I turned my eyes towards the building, it seemed as if no one could exist within it, for now, from every story, either flames or smoke were bursting forth. Again and again I looked. Had it not been my duty to remain and protect my cousins, I should not have been able to refrain from hastening back to the house. A cry of dismay rose from my cousins and those around me, when a loud crash was heard, and flames, brighter than before, rose from the centre of the building. The roof had fallen in. I was almost giving way to despair, when I caught sight of several persons hurrying forward from among the trees. At length I recognised my father, Rochford, and Tim among them. They were carrying three wounded men, having, I found, been compelled to abandon the bodies of two others who had fallen. My father and Tim were both wounded, and several others were more or less hurt, but they said nothing.

"On board, my lads, and shove off without delay!—Maurice, do you take charge of one of the boats; and, Tim, go in the other, and tumble overboard all those things if you find that they hamper you. Now, shove off, and give way, boys," he continued, as he sprang on board the boat into which Rochford had already stepped and taken the stroke oar. I followed as closely as I could; and Tim's boat brought up the rear. The smaller boats being lighter, we were able to keep good way with the larger.

"Keep up with us, Maurice," shouted my father; "I took a look around just as I came away, and caught sight of several objects in the distance, which I feel pretty sure are canoes. The Indians have evidently brought them down."

The island had hitherto concealed us from the enemy; but the blaze of the burning house casting its glare across the water, now revealed us to their sight, as we knew by the shots which dropped into the water astern of us. But we were already too far off to be reached, and I heard Tim cry out—

"Ye'll spend your powder to no purpose, my boys; so I'd be askin' ye to reserve your fire until ye can get some one

within your reach.”

The effect, however, was to make our crews still further exert themselves.

It was melancholy to see the house, one of the largest in the country, fiercely blazing away. Our only satisfaction was that the Indians would be disappointed, not only of us, but of any booty they might have expected to obtain.

We had still the danger my father apprehended of being pursued; and at length, looking astern, I caught sight of several canoes filled with Indians, on which the bright flames of the burning house cast a ruddy glare and brought them clearly into view.

That they had intended to land on the island and take the castle in the rear I had little doubt; but finding that we had made our escape, they resolved on capturing us. Urged by numerous paddles, they made greater way through the water than we did. We had one advantage over them, however, that, should they approach near, a few bullets would send them to the bottom. They might, however, before this kill or wound many of our party, exposed as we were, crowded together in the open boat.

Our men pulled away for their lives. I told Tim to steer close to me, so that I might place our boat between the savages and that containing my cousins. Unhappily our ammunition was very low. The party who had been defending the house to the last had expended all their powder, and Tim and I, with a few other men, had only two or three rounds a-piece. My father, recollecting this, ordered us not to fire a shot until the enemy came near, and then to aim rather at the canoes than the men; for even should we not sink them, we might compel their crews to cease paddling while they stopped the holes made by our bullets. Brave as the Indians are on land, they are not willing in general to expose themselves; so I was surprised at the daring way in which our pursuers came on. They were getting, indeed, disagreeably near, and I expected every moment to hear my father order us to fire. Of course, even when they should come up to us, we might defend ourselves and beat them off, and our strongly-built boats would then give us an advantage over their light canoes. Still the struggle would be a fearful one. We were hampered by several women and the numerous articles which they had brought.

Already the Indians had begun to fire; but their bullets fell short, their powder probably being none of the best. In a few minutes, however, unless we could sink their canoes, they would be up with us. I tried the effect of one shot; but though I am sure I hit the canoe between wind and water, the Indians in her did not cease paddling; and I was afraid of throwing another shot away by making a second attempt.

I won’t say how I felt—and it was too dark to see the countenances of those in my boat—but I know that they pulled until I thought that the oars would break with the vehemence of their strokes. A few minutes more went by. The enemy were gaining on us, for a couple of shots struck the stern of my boat. In a few more minutes they would be alongside, and then the desperate struggle would begin. When we had discharged our last shots, we should have only the butts of our rifles and our knives with which to defend ourselves against the muskets and axes of the Indians. Just as I was about to despair, a shout, coming from the direction in which we were pulling, greeted our ears.

“Hurrah!” cried Tim; “none but white men could have raised that cry.”

It was repeated, and presently we saw emerging from the darkness several boats, apparently of large size, full of men. On they came, slowly. The Indians must have seen them too; for without waiting to give us a parting salute, they turned round their canoes, and paddled away up the stream as fast as they could go. In another minute we found ourselves up to three boats, each containing a dozen or more men, commanded by Captain Norton, who told us that he had received information of the intention of the Indians to attack Castle Kearney; that his party being too small to intercept them, he had resolved to come by water to our relief as the quickest mode of reaching us. He expressed his regret at not having arrived in time to preserve the house; though it was very doubtful what would have been our fate had he not followed out his idea of coming by water. I heard my cousins assuring him how grateful they were, and they seemed much disappointed when they found that he intended to continue on, and endeavour to punish the enemy for their attack on Castle Kearney. For fear, however, that the Indians might turn round and again attack us, he considered that his duty would allow him to escort us part of the way to Roseville, where he told us the militia were under arms, ready to repel any assault which might be made on the place. At length, with much regret, we saw him and his party proceed up the river, while we continued on our course to Roseville. Here we were received with much kindness and sympathy by the worthy judge and his wife. Our wounded men were looked after, and the rest kindly taken care of by the different inhabitants. We were still, however, not free from anxiety about Captain Norton and his party.

On the evening of the following day he returned, saying that on approaching Castle Kearney, although the house was still burning, he found that the enemy had fled, having evidently been warned by the Indians in the canoes of the approach of a military force. Being unable to land until daylight, he found, on getting ashore, that pursuit was useless.

We were now waiting the arrival of the steamer which was to convey us the first part of the voyage I must pass over several days. Juanita had promised, with my father’s sanction, to become the wife of Rochford soon after our arrival in Ireland; which I was very glad to hear. All doubts about making the journey were now at an end, as we had no house to live in. Rita appeared unusually sad, and although Mrs Shurtleff invited her to remain, she refused to quit her sister. Rita’s spirits, however, suddenly revived; and Juanita told me the next day that her sister had accepted an offer from Captain Norton to marry her as soon as the war was over, and he could with honour retire from the service. Meantime she would be very happy to pay a visit to the Old World and see something of its wonders. With the assistance of our friend the judge, an honest overseer was found, to whose care the estate was left.

At length we arrived safely in Ireland. Juanita fulfilled her promise, and became Mrs Rochford. But nearly three years passed by, and still the Seminoles held out, in spite of the large force brought against them. The history is a sad one,

and I would rather not touch upon it. At length we received the satisfactory intelligence from Captain Norton that the war was over; and he soon after arrived to claim Rita as his wife. And I cannot better conclude my narrative than by giving a brief account of the contest as described by him; of the way, melancholy as it was, in which a race of brave aborigines—for I will not call them savages—was finally driven from the territory:—"You remember the Indian Powell, or Oceola, as his countrymen called him. Though not a chief by birth, he was one of their bravest warriors, and was loved and respected as a chieftain. Their nominal head was Omatla. Though not esteemed as a warrior, he was sagacious and crafty. His character being known, the Government won him over, by a bribe of several thousand dollars, to put his name to a treaty which had been prepared. In vain, however, he tried to induce his subordinate chiefs to follow his example. At length a place of meeting was appointed, and Omatla, with those he had won over, appeared. The treaty was spread out on a table before him; he advanced and signed it; but scarcely had he done so than a bullet from Oceola's rifle pierced his bosom. It was the signal to the rest of the hostile chiefs to fire, and he fell, six more shots having struck him. Oceola and his warriors, springing on their steeds, fled towards the desert, leaving the parchment behind them. It was carried to Washington as a proof that the property had been legally purchased. He who kills a chief, unless forthwith slain, becomes himself leader of the tribe. All the Seminoles, immediately gathering round the standard of Oceola, hailed him as their leader. For six years did the brave chief set our troops at defiance. All sorts of stratagems were employed to capture him, but cunning as he was brave, he avoided them. It was resolved at length to make a last effort; and an officer, whose name I will not mention, undertook to capture Oceola by a stratagem which it is impossible otherwise than to condemn. The chief received notice that the Government were willing to enter into a fair and honourable treaty with him and his people. He too was anxious to terminate the unequal contest. Addressing his chiefs, he expressed his willingness to go forward alone and meet those who had so long proved his relentless foes. To this proposal his friends would not consent; but they finally agreed that he, with four of his principal chiefs and two hundred warriors as a body-guard, should meet the Government agent, Oceola advanced with a flag of truce at the end of a long spear—the only weapon among all the band. Seeing the number of troops in front, he hesitated, when the agent observing this, advanced also, holding a flag of truce. Oceola, to show his confidence in the honour of his former foes, dashed forward, his unarmed followers pressing after him. On either side were thick woods. Suddenly from among them appeared strong bodies of soldiers. Oceola and his party were surrounded. He was dragged from his horse, and he and all his attendants made prisoners. In vain he protested, as indeed did every soldier, that such treachery was unwarrantable. The prize had been obtained. The interests of the public required that Oceola and his chiefs should remain prisoners. Fetters were placed on their limbs, and they were carried off as captives. But such they did not long continue; for accustomed to roam the desert wilds and to breathe the pure air of heaven in untrammelled freedom, they pined within their prison walls. Oceola sunk first; the rest soon followed him to the grave; and with the exception of a few scattered families, the survivors of the Seminoles were compelled to follow the Creeks and Cherokees across the Mississippi."

We could not help regretting that no attempts had been made to spread the truths of Christianity among the Seminoles, and that a happier fate had not been the destiny of the brave Oceola.

The End.

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