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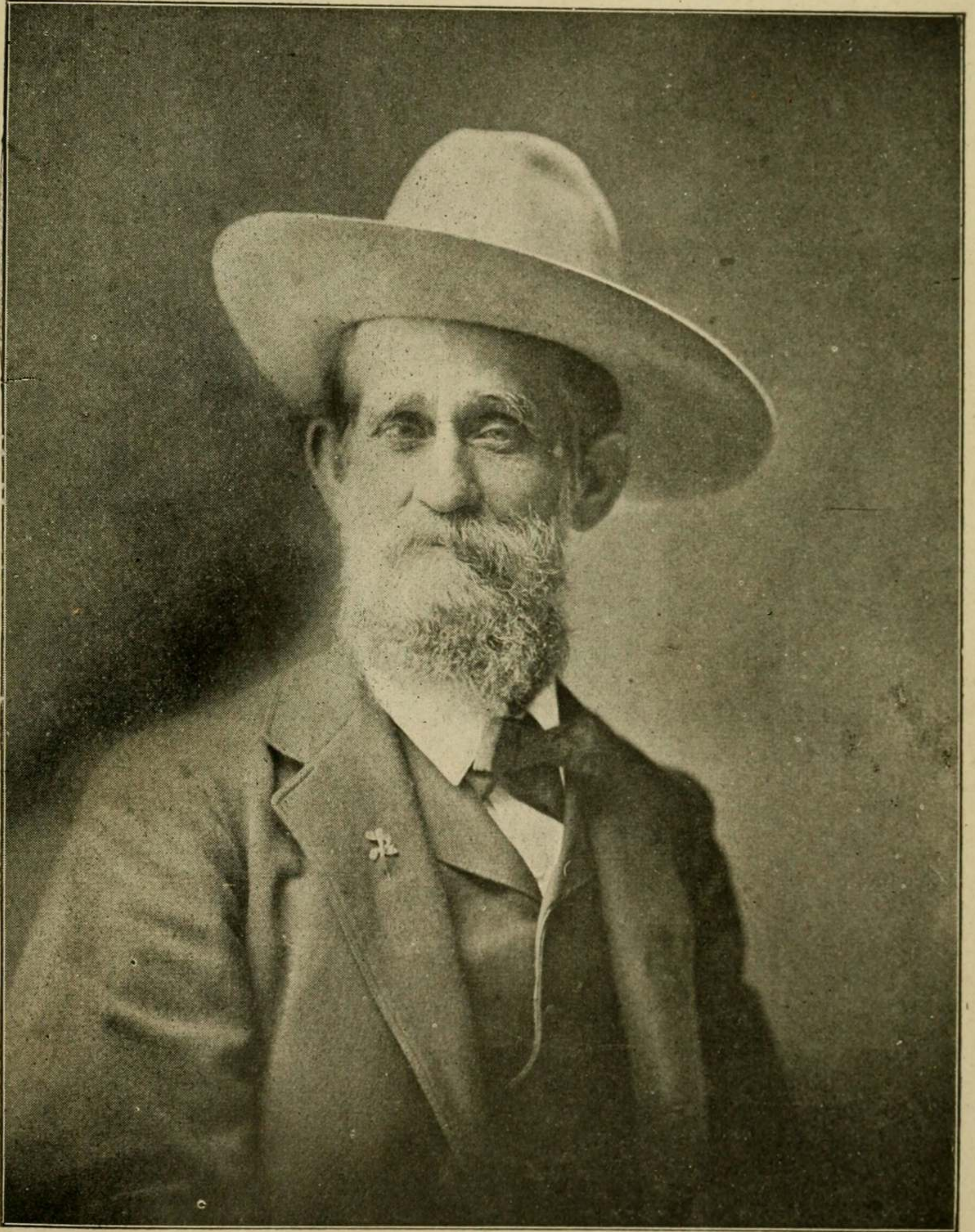

ANDREW P. CANOVA.

LIFE

AND

ADVENTURES

IN

SOUTH FLORIDA

BY

ANDREW P. CANOVA,

OF ST. PETERSBURG,

ASSISTED BY L. S. PERKINS,

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION BY

HON. ROBT. W. DAVIS.

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TO

MY COMPANIONS-IN-ARMS,

AND

OTHERS WHO FOUGHT FOR THE PEACE AND PROTECTION OF FLORIDA, THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

ANDREW P. CANOVA.

INTRODUCTION.

Most of the sketches contained in this collection were contributed by Mr. Andrew P. Canova, the author, to the Southern Sun, of Palatka, and attracted very general and favorable attention. While never intended by Mr. Canova for other than weekly newspaper articles, the suggestion of their permanent preservation in some collected form was so often made him that he finally consented to give them to the public in this little volume. It graphically deals with a phase of life in Florida which will nowhere else be found.

DeBry and Barcia and Fernandez and Sprague have written at different times of different epochs, and in several different languages, descriptive sketches and snatches of our history, while Mr. Fairbanks, in his excellent book, has taken us along with entertainment and instruction from those early days which knew Juan Ponce de Leon and Menendez, to the times of Worth and Gaines and Clinch.

But it is left to Mr. Canova to pen-paint the scenes and incidents of soldier-life and adventure during the Indian War, and to describe those hardships which the soldier experienced in morass and tangled scrub, or those pleasures he enjoyed in bivouac and camp. Hunting adventures, too—and Indian life—those fascinating realities which cover themselves with a halo of romance. The life of the early "settler," when the bear and panther roamed the wilds of a then sparcely inhabited State. These features are all touched with an unpretentious but smoothly-gliding pen, and make enchanting reading for Floridians of today—today, when immigration from North and South and East and West has filled or is rapidly filling our waste places—when the palatial steamboat plies the waters where once quietly glided the canoe, and when the scream of the locomotive is borne upon the balmy southern air where once the warwhoop of the red man resounded.

Very respectfully,

ROBT. W. DAVIS.

Palatka, Fla., Oct. 20, 1885.

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LIFE AND ADVENTURES IN SOUTH FLORIDA.

PART 1.

REMINISCENCES OF A TRIP THROUGH THE EVERGLADES AND SOUTH FLORIDA, DURING THE LAST INDIAN WAR.

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE LAST INDIAN WAR BROKE OUT.—MY FIRST ADVENTURE.

In the following pages I shall give, with all possible accuracy, my adventures during the last Indian war, and it shall be a description of personal experiences and observations, rather than a history of the war itself. In writing a strictly truthful account of the scenes through which I passed, as a private soldier, in the campaign of 1855-8, through the extreme southern portion of the State, I shall hope to give the reader a view of the subject from a new and original standpoint. In placing this series of sketches before the public, of course I must say something about the way the war started.

Since the close of the first and greatest war with the Seminoles, there had been two outbreaks—one in 1849, and the other in 1855. This last war is the one with which we now have to deal, and according to the most authentic accounts, the trouble began on the morning of

December 24, by the wounding of Lieutenant Hartsoff and his men, by Billy Bowlegs.

Lieutenant Hartsoff was a civil engineer, who had been establishing some land-lines, near the border of the Big Cypress, in Fort Simon Drum Prairie. Hartsoff and his corps of assistants were encamped near a small body of water known as Bonnet Pond. Bowlegs had a garden in the Big Cypress, about two miles away. (This Indian was a noted chief among the Seminoles, and stood at the head of the whole tribe. He was a short, powerfully built man, but his physical endowments were insignificant in comparison with those of Saffaj-eehojee, his lieutenant and "right bower." This Indian was a "show" in himself.) Among other products of this garden were some magnificent banana plants, which were the delight and solace of the chief's heart. He had reared them with parental care, until they were fully fifteen feet high, and he was jealous of his darlings.

But some of Hartsoff's men (like a good many of us) couldn't keep their hands off the beauties, and when Bowlegs came through the early mist, bathing his stalwart ankles in the dew, one morning, coming to his beloved garden, he was surprised and shocked to find the banana plants, once so tall and graceful, with leaves torn to shreds, and some of the stalks broken short off at the ground by some ruthless hand. Bowlegs knew at once where the blame lay.

Going to Hartsoff's camp, he accused the men of the outrage. They admitted it with the utmost coolness, but signified no intention of making good the loss, nor of giving any cause for their actions, other than that they wanted to see how "Old Billy would cut up." When Billy saw that remonstrance and complaint were useless, he went back and summoned his braves together. "Hyeefus! Eestahotka holiwaugus!" was the war-cry. Early

next morning Lieutenant Hartsoff and his men were fired upon, and some of them were wounded.

Hartsoff ran into the water, but began emptying his Colt's revolver at the Indians, who were soon dismayed by the strange weapon, which did not seem to require loading, but which seemed to them to be able to kill every one of them, while they were loading their rifles. It was the first revolver they had seen, and Bowlegs promised to cease firing if Hartsoff would come out and show his pistol. This ruse did not succeed, and the Indians retreated.

Hartsoff was badly wounded, but rallied his strength and wrote an account of the affair, to be used in case of his death. Meanwhile one of the men (also wounded) set out for Fort Myers, sixty miles away, to convey the news of the outbreak. In as short a time as possible a company was dispatched to the scene of the fray, and when they got there they found Hartsoff still alive, but in a critical condition. He was carried to Fort Myers together with his comrades who had been wounded, and taken care of in the hospital there.

War was then proclaimed against the Seminole Indians of Florida. Like a flash of electricity the news encircled and permeated the South, and Billy Bowlegs became the target of every pioneer's rifle. I enlisted in 1856, and did what I could for the honor and glory of my native State. But my life was rather a tame one for the first year of my service. The next year was more eventful.

In the early part of July, 1857, a boat company, consisting of forty-five men, commanded by Capt. Jacob Mickler, were mustered into the volunteer service of the United States, at Fort Brooke, now called Tampa. Nine metallic boats had been provided, for transporting the soldiers down the Kissimmee river, while hunting the Seminole Indians. I was mustered in with this company,

and cast my lot with those who were preparing to enter that great, unknown wilderness—the Everglades.

The boats were hauled on wagons to Fort Kissimmee, a distance of eighty-five miles. Nothing of importance occurred on this trip, beyond the killing of several deer and turkeys, which furnished us with an abundance of food. Striking the river at Fort Kissimmee, we encamped for the night. Strange to say, we were not annoyed in the least by mosquitoes, although it was near mid-summer. Next morning we launched our boats on the waters of the Kissimmee, and steered away into the wild passes of the river, toward the great Okeechobee lake.

Having the current in our favor, we proceeded on our way without any difficulty. I had heard of alligators—of rusty old monsters, equal to trees in size, and vicious as wolves—but I was not prepared for the sight that met my gaze, as our boats passed down the Kissimmee. To say that they were lying on the banks as thick as leaves in an autumn forest, would be scarcely an exaggeration. As to their size, I hardly wish to attempt to give you a description. They were quietly sleeping on the banks, as we went along, and as the plashing of our oars waked them, they plunged into the water ahead of us, almost capsizing our boats at times. As the report of a gun at that time would have very likely had the effect of alarming the sagacious redskins, our captain allowed no one to shoot at the alligators.

After traveling some twenty-five miles, we landed at Fort Bassinger and struck camp for the night. We had been plentifully supplied with mosquito nets, but found that we could dispense with them at this place entirely. The width of the river here was about seventy yards, and so crooked that one might travel in a boat five or six miles, land, and walk half a mile, and come to the point he started from. The land at Fort Bassinger was found to be rich hammock, covered with a heavy growth

of live oak and cabbage palm. Early in the morning we proceeded on our way and reached the lake about noon.

The river, here, ran between two banks of almost impenetrable saw-grass, through which it emptied into the Okeechobee lake. As we rode out on the bosom of this inland sea, the view reminded us of the ocean, for the waters stretched away, until they were lost in the horizon beyond. Myriads of white and blue heron and water-turkeys were flying to and fro, or feeding among the rushes and lily pads.

About two miles from the mouth of the river, we found a beautiful camping spot. It was a hammock which extended to the water's edge, and was bordered by a nice, white, sandy beach. Under a canopy of overhanging oak and rubber-tree boughs, we pitched our tents and enjoyed a substantial dinner. Our men had caught some fine bass, and, with a desert of papaws and rubber-tree fruit, we fared sumptuously. The fruit of the Ficus elasticus, or rubber-tree, is somewhat similar in size and flavor to an ordinary Marseilles fig. The papaw, we found growing on a small tree, about ten feet in height, the fruit adhering closely to the trunk. The pulp has a sweet, aromatic taste, reminding one of a muskmelon.

Our headquarters were established here for the time being, and arrangements made for a week's encampment. All hands were hearty and eager for "business," now that we had entered the stronghold of the enemy.

Next morning, bright and early, Captain Mickler selected thirty men. Leaving the others to guard the camps, and taking six of the boats, our little fleet steered toward an island about four miles distant. Here, we confidently expected to capture a lot of Indians. We could not make much headway, on account of large masses of floating water-lettuce. Striking open water again, we proceeded about half a mile, and came to the mouth of a small creek, which was overhung with cypress branches,

so low that it was with difficulty that we could pass under them. Here we found unmistakable signs of Indian encampments; shells of freshly roasted water-terrapins (commonly called "cooters") were found, and many tracks were to be seen, showing that large numbers of the red savages had been in that locality a short time before.

Proceeding a little farther, we discovered a large canoe which, as we afterward learned, had been captured from a company of regulars who had been cruising on the lake. A trail led from this spot to an island in the saw-grass, about a mile distant. At this juncture our captain climbed a tree, for the purpose of taking a view of the surroundings. As his eye fell on the island, he exclaimed:

"Boys, there are Indians on that island, and no mistake, for the leaves of the oak trees over there look as though they had been blackened with smoke. We will swoop down on the rascals and 'gather them in.'"

He hastened down the tree and picked out a squad of about seven men, and ordered them to guard the boats. The rest of us then followed the trail that led to the hiding-place of the Indians. The saw-grass was much higher than our heads, and the ground very boggy; we had to step from one fern "tussock" to another in order to keep above water; and any one failing to gain a foothold, was precipitated up to his waist in the mud.

When we had advanced to within a few hundred yards of our destination, Captain Mickler ordered a halt, and, in a low voice, issued commands to one of the party to take charge of a company of ten men and proceed to the north side of the island, and to remain there until orders were given for a final charge. The man to whom this maneuver was intrusted, was a daring and fearless Southerner, named James Cook, who had given unmistakable proofs of intrepidity and courage, during the short time he had been with us. In such a foe as this, the wily sav-

CHAPTER II.

OUR FIRST CAPTURE OF INDIANS—AN UGLY CUSTOMER.

Our captain, in order to allow Cook and his men to reach their destination and get in readiness for the charge, waited a few minutes, and then ordered an advance. When we were within fifty yards of the island, the sound of an axe was heard, and a moment afterward, the keen crack of a rifle broken on our ears.

Hastening forward, we found the doughty James Cook standing guard over a half dozen squaws and "pickaninies." He had surprised and captured them, as they were preparing dinner. After hanging the venison pots over the fire, they had taken a rest, and were lounging on a rude scaffolding of poles and cabbage-palm leaves. Some of the squaws attempted to escape by hiding in the tall saw-grass, but a few shots from our rifles soon brought them to terms, and it was an easy matter to find and capture them. The women, although badly frightened, remained sullen and silent, but the "pickaninies" (children) set up a howl that would have done credit to a horde of young hyenas. The poor creatures had been fearfully cut and lacerated, by running through the tall saw-grass, and their faces were, as Jim Cook said, "a reg'lar sight."

Jim Cook seemed to be anxious to give them an adequate idea of his wrath toward them, and held his rifle in alarmingly close proximity to their heads, while he shouted:

"Jist budge a quarter of a inch, will you? Yah triflin', des-peekable low-liver critters! Open them 'are long yappin' jaws o' yourn jist one time, and I wisher may die if I don't knock ye deader'n Hec."

And a sulphurous light gleamed in his eye that meant business. The squaws, disregarding his last injunction, began jabbering a mixture of English and Seminole; one old squaw kept repeating:

"White man holiwaugus (no good); umcah, loxidok-schay—lie heap. Umcah; eesta-hotka—white man no hurt hopeta (squaw) eesta-chatta."

From this highly intelligent discourse, we inferred that the dusky ladies were trying to make negotiations for peace. The irate Jim would fain have made them feel the weight of his strong right arm, but as he was no coward, he restrained himself, and was content with the remark that, even if they were "pesky, low-down Seminole Injins," they were women, and he never could "strike a 'ummern."

Hung over the fire were some brass kettles, in which they had been cooking dinner, when we surprised them. Near by were several baskets woven of wire-grass, full of huckleberries and other wild fruit. Hanging in one of the wigwams were two chiefs' costumes, richly embroidered with beads. Some breast-plates, hammered out of silver dollars, were also found. We made a dash for these, and I was fortunate enough to secure one of these costumes. This consisted of a sort of a waistcoat, a pair of leggings and moccasins, and a sash. Each article was covered with elaborate designs, worked in beads and silk, representing birds, fishes, etc., and must have cost much time and patience.

We were again put on our guard by the sound of defiance yells, coming from the distance, and put ourselves in readiness to withstand an attack, as it was natural to suppose that the warriors, who had left this camp, were returning, and that they would be ready for battle when they came. They did not put in an appearance, however, during our stay.

This island was circular in shape, and contained about

an acre. It was suronded by a belt of timber, which completely hid its occupants from the sight of enemies approaching from the outside. Within this circle, all the timber, with the exception of a few large live oaks and cabbage-palms, had been cleared away, and the ground was in a high state of cultivation. Fine corn, beans, and pumpkins were growing underneath the live oaks; the vines had climbed the trees, and the immense pumpkins hung from the limbs, presenting a strange appearance.

Among our prisoners was a boy about twelve years of age, named E-chepko, whose duty it had been to post himself in a tall hackberry tree, and gave warning, in case of the approach of an enemy. A feeling of complete security had caused him to neglect his duty on this eventful morning, and a surprise and capture was the result.

After satisfying ourselves that the warriors were not coming, as we had expected, preparations were made to carry our prisoners to the boats. They were all easily managed, except one old squaw, who manifested a decided reluctance in accepting our escort. In the words of an old song:

"She couldn't and she wouldn't, and she shouldn't come at all."

James Cook, who took her in charge, then said, "Come on, old gal, and let's go to the boats." As she did not accept Jim's proffered arm, that worthy caught her by the shoulder, and attempted to push her forward. In vain. She set her foot firmly on the soil, and resisted all attempts to move her. As a final stroke, she laid herself flat on the ground, and, rolling her savage red eye around, scowled defiantly at Jim. He flew into a rage at this, and, whipping out his bowie-knife, he drew it lightly across her throat; then, with an oath that would have

made an alligator turn pale, he gave her to understand what would be her portion if she didn't submit.

"Don't kyarve the old critter," exclaimed a soldier, in a compassionate tone. "If ye kill 'er, we hain't agwine to git that two hundred and fifty from the Guv'ment. No; jist wait till the 'thorities gits hold of 'er; let 'er jibe if ye kin, old boy, till we can git 'er into camp. We'll help ye tote 'er ef we can't git 'er along nary nother way."

She was "taken up tenderly, lifted with care," by four men, who had been detailed to that duty. Two seized her arms, and the other two laid hold of her feet; still, it was no easy task to carry the vicious old creature. She snapped like a turtle, and grunted like an angry sow.

Just as we started back with our captives, we were startled by the report of a gun, in the direction of the men who had been left at the boats. When we arrived at that place, it was discovered that an accident had happened. One of the men was floundering around in the mud at a great rate, and groaning loudly. It appeared that one of the men had handled his rifle carelessly, and the result of it was that he had wounded the man in front of him. The man, whose name was Turnipseed, received a severe flesh-wound, which caused him much pain, but there was no danger to be apprehended. Beyond a slight halt in his gait, and an inability to rest otherwise than by lying on his side, he did not give much evidence of having been the first to fall on the battlefield. In a week he was as spry as any of us, but I believe he selected somebody else to walk behind him.

We placed our dusky prisoners in the boats, and steered for camp. Close watch was kept over them lest one should escape, for each represented two hundred and fifty dollars. We had fifteen of them, which amounted, in all, to about three thousand seven hundred dollars.

They made no demonstrations on the journey; indeed, some of the squaws became friendly and communicative,

and even smiled, at intervals. The children, however, kept up a dolorous wail the entire distance. One of the girls, about ten years of age—a half-breed of Spanish and Seminole—was really pretty. She had an intelligent appearance, an olive-brown complexion, and long chestnut hair, that would have been the pride and glory of many an English girl. When we rowed out into Okeechobee one of the squaws pointed to an island far out on the bosom of the lake, which she said was the girl's birth-place. Pinnewa (the girl) was hardly less wild and untutored than the herons and egrets that, like her, claimed the islands and marshes for a home. She had never seen white men before, and she looked long and earnestly at the fair faces and flowing beards of our soldiers, as if she thought them very agreeable, if not handsome. And as I looked on her soft, rounded cheek—almost the tint of a ripe mango—I could not wonder that the proud-souled son of Castile had deigned to call this wild bird of the marshes his daughter.

Arriving at our camp, we assigned the prisoners to their tents, and set a watch over them. The old squaw who had caused us so much trouble had quieted down so far as to allow herself to be led from the boat without making any resistance.

When dinner was served we all sat down together—white and red, and captor and captive—with appetites sharpened by the morning's exercise, partook heartily of pork and beans, hard-tack and coffee, garnished with side-dishes of cooter and soft-shell turtle, finished up with a dessert of papaws and rubber-tree fruit.

CHAPTER III.

A DISAGREEABLE JOURNEY, AND AN ENCAMPMENT AMONG THE ALLIGATORS.

We passed that afternoon fishing and hunting. One of the men, a half-breed named Andrew Wiggins, had quite a reputation among the soldiers as a hunter. He never failed to bring in a deer, when once he got out on the war-path. In hunting this game, he had a way of uttering a peculiar call, which would decoy the unsuspecting buck within easy range of his rifle. Other of the soldiers spent the time trading rings, ear-bobs and other trinkets with squaws, for beads and moccasins The children had fully recovered from their fright, and were rolling and tumbling in the waters of the lake.

From the squaws we learned that the warriors belonging to their camp were on a scouting expedition to Pease Creek, about a hundred miles distant, and that they would return within two moons. Next morning, Captain Mickler ordered preparations for departure. The boats, which were none too commodious at first, were loaded to the gunwales. To add to our discomfiture, a heavy wind arose, when we were five miles out. The great "white caps" appeared on the water, and I never saw larger waves on the ocean than those were on Lake Okeechobee. The boats rolled and pitched around in an alarming manner, and nearly every Indian was writhing in the bottom of the boats, suffering the agonies of sea-sickness. At last we were compelled to run into the saw-grass to save ourselves.

The wind did not lull until night. It was then too dark to travel, and there was no land in sight; so we were

obliged to spend the night in the boats as best we could. The children set up a howl at intervals, and the squaws industriously spanked them into silence. I had always entertained the idea that the Seminoles were an uncleanly set of creatures, but when I saw the repeated dippings the children received at the hands of the squaws, I began to think differently. The pickaninnies were held over the side of the boats and soused up to their eyes at least a dozen times during the journey. The little Spartans took the treatment heroically, seeming rather to enjoy it. As the boats sped along the little fellows were let into the water and held by one hand. It might seem as though there was some danger in this proceedure, but perhaps Jim Cook arrived at a correct view of the case when he averred that "the faces of them there Injin squaws is so tarnation ugly that they'd skeer away the sassiest 'gator that ever growed." About ten o'clock next morning we arrived at the mouth of Fish-eating Creek, and found such a mass of floating "lettuce" ahead of us that we could not travel any farther by the ordinary means. It was simply impossible to propel the boats with oars, so we were compelled to fasten lines and tow them from the river bank. A man was left in each boat for the purpose of steering clear of the shore. Our tow-path was covered with about six inches of green, stagnant water. Millions of deer flies swarmed around us, and their keen bites, which we could not hinder, on account of pulling on the towline, made us envy the fortunate quadrupeds, who are furnished with tails to defend themselves from the murderous attacks of these insects.

Suddenly a sound of curses, loud and deep, broke on my ears. Some of the men were stamping around like mad, and began tearing off their boots. Soon an intolerable itching commenced on my feet, and I learned the cause of the men's strange actions. We came to a halt, and in a few moments the whole company were bare-

footed, scratching and pawing their feet as if for dear life. But the more we scratched and pawed, the more unbearable became the itching, until, at last, our feet felt as if they were on fire. We all recognized the importance of getting out of that water, and Jim Cook gave such heroic jumps that one might have supposed that he was trying to perform the trick of keeping both feet out of the water at once.

To repeat all of his remarks on this occasion would be rather out of place here. His contortions were fearful to look upon, and his face was wreathed in a fiendish grin of mingled pain and satisfaction as he rubbed and scrubbed his prurient heels. At last he yelled, "Pards, I'll be everlastin'ly dad-blamed if these 'ere * * varmints ain't eatin' me bodaciously up! Let's quit scratchin' and pole on; scratchin' don't do no good—hit only makes 'em wusser."

Jim was right; the trouble was greatly increased by scratching. Putting on our boots, we were soon out of the water, when the itching ceased. The irritation must have been caused by some poisonous substance in the water, although Jim stoutly contended that it was "varmints," and swore that he saw the little creatures swimming around in the water.

We arrived at Fort Center near sunset. Here we found a company of regulars, who welcomed us heartily, and were much surprised at our success. The Indians seemed grateful for an opportunity to stretch themselves out on the dry ground once more, and we were soon seated around the campfire, chatting of our adventures and drinking strong, black coffee, such as only soldiers can make.

Our captives were placed in comfortable quarters, and we spread our blankets near the stream, and lay down to sleep, with no other covering than the sky above us. It was midsummer, and the air was warm and sultry, but

we were not troubled with mosquitoes. A million frogs were singing, groaning and croaking around us, but they could only lull us to sleep. We had worked hard all day at the oars, and were soon snoring like good fellows.

While we were sleeping there by the side of the stream, we did not dream of the red enemy, in whose land we were encamped, nor did we imagine that the dark bodies of huge alligators were gliding around us. No; the "soldier's dream of home" brought us visions of wives and mothers, rejoicing at our return from the perilous battlefield. But the slimy monsters were creeping around us, for what purpose, I cannot say; perhaps they were trying to discover what strange being had come among them; maybe they were seeking companionship, although I never knew that the alligator possessed such an inclination for human society. The probable truth of the matter is, that the huge saurians were searching for bits of meat and bread, lying around the camp. It is said that the alligator is very fond of young Seminoles, and has been known to watch around where the pickaninnies were bathing, for the purpose of seizing and caressing the little red cherubs. One peculiar feature of that kind of business is that the little Indians are never seen any more. Where they go, nobody can tell.

Possibly we never would have known anything about the scaly rascals being in our camp, if one of the men had not made the discovery. This man, while asleep, threw his arm outward, and his hand alighted on something so rough, cold and slimy that he instantly awoke. He felt a fetid breath blowing on him, and, turning his head, he looked right into the jaws of a large alligator, whose cold gray eyes glittered in the moonlight.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER VOYAGE, AND ANOTHER DISCOVERY.

Figuratively, the soldier was frozen stiff with horror for a moment, but when he recovered, he opened his mouth to its utmost capacity, and gave such a yell that every man in camp was awakened. We all jumped to our feet and clutched our guns, for we thought the red devils were upon us. Ed. Marr, the man whose shout of terror had awakened us, endeavored to tell us what the trouble was, but some of the men were running wildly around exclaiming:

"Where are they? Where are the Indians?" and it was some time before everything was quiet again. The alligators, frightened by the noise, dropped into the stream and easily escaped.

In the morning the captain of the regulars furnished us with a wagon for the purpose of carrying our captives to Fort Myers, where the Indian agent was stationed. Fifteen men were detailed as a guard, and I was one of the number. We set out early, and camped near Fort Denaud that night. A heavy rain set in about the middle of the afternoon and continued all night. We had no tents, and were obliged to lie down and endure the pelting storm. I lay down by a pine log, covered my face with my hat, and took a rather moist nap. About two o'clock in the morning I waked up, and could not move a limb, and it was several minutes before I could turn my head. As soon as I could get up, I collected a few light-wood knots and built a fire. We were anxious to reach Fort Myers, and bent all our energies to the task of getting there that day.

At noon we camped near a scrub hammock. Andrew Wiggins, of course, had to take his gun and scour the woods in search of game. He crept softly as a tiger through the desert rosemary and slanting spruce of the scrub, and kept his eagle eye on the lookout for deer and turkey. He glided along on his hands and knees, and then stopped and listened, at intervals. Finally he heard strange sounds coming from a thicket a few hundred yards distant. Springing to his feet he ran to the spot, and as he came nearer the terrific growl of the black bear and the fierce scream of the panther broke on his ear. He saw the bear standing on his haunches, and the panther crouching near by; in an instant the panther sprang at her enemy, and a stream of blood began trickling down the bear's side. With an intermission of only a few moments the panther renewed the attack, and the bear reached out eagerly for his adversary, who was just a little too quick for him. At last the panther made a false move, and the bear clasped him in his hideous embrace. With one sweep of a paw, he disemboweled his foe, who lay gasping in the last throes of death. The bear's victory was short-lived, however, for Wiggins laid him low with a bullet form his rifle. Wiggins said that the combatants had beaten down nearly half an acre of the scrub.

The triumphant hunter skinned the bear, and dexterously severing a hind quarter, shouldered it and carried it into camp. We were pleased at the prospect of a "bait" of jerked bear, but our joy was nothing compared to that of the Indian squaws, who reared themselves up in the wagon and espied .Wiggins with the precious freight, coming in the distance. With nostrils extended, and teeth unsheathed, they scented the feast "from afar off."

"Easta-hotka, get lokasee!" was their rapturous exclamation. "Lokasee" is the Seminole word for bear, and among their pigeon-like chattering, the word was

many times repeated. "Umcah, lokasee good, ojus; cook 'em quick; eat littlum raw."

They wished us to understand that we need not wait to cook it, as far as they were concerned; that they were not so fastidious as the "easta-hotka," or white man. We set some stakes over the fire and began broiling huge slices of meat, while some of the men were sent along with Wiggins for the purpose of carrying back the remainder of the bear. After a glorious feast we continued our journey, and at noon the next day we reached Fort Myers. Here we found the agent and transferred the prisoners to him. The squaws had expected to meet the warriors at this place, and began wailing piteously when they found themselves disappointed. They bade us a tearful good-by, and shook hands with us in a very friendly manner. But they were inconsolable for the loss of their warriors. We tried to encourage and cheer them by telling them that the eesta-chattas would soon cheer them with their presence. When we left they were wandering to and fro, crying together like children.

Before long we joined our comrades at the camp on Fish-Eating creek, and together we went on another Indian chase.

This time we bent our course to the east side of Lake Okeechobee, and searched closely every hammock as we went along, for our "blood was up," and nothing but another wholesale capture of Indians would satisfy us.

We made our boats fly through the water as fast as oars and blankets (for sails) could make them go. Jim Cook commanded one of the boats, and every few minutes went ashore and examined the land for "Injin signs." Finally his keen eye fell upon tracks, in the sand of the beach. With a smothered chuckle of satisfaction, he signalled the good news to Captain Mickler, who immediately steered for the shore. Our captain, after examining the tracks, ordered the men back to the boats, and, to

Jim's disappointment, the journey was resumed. After we had gone a mile or more, we encountered something else which attracted our attention. I was lounging at the bow of the front boat, and, of course, was able to make discoveries before the others. Underneath a group of custard-apple trees, which were growing in the water near the beach, I saw a blue rag fluttering in the breeze, and called Captain Mickler's attention to it. Immediately afterward I saw a canoe tied up close to the shore. Our captain ordered the boat to be put about, and we pulled for the shore. Before we reached the land a squaw appeared and waded out to the end of the canoe above mentioned, and hung a shot-bag over the stern of the boat. This was the truce of peace, and was understood by all of us.

When we landed, all of us had our arms in readiness for battle, and some of the men were eager for the fray. The squaw was exceedingly grim and uncommunicative. She utterly refused to tell where her better half was, and perhaps things would have gone a little rough with her if it had not been for a discovery made by one of the men. While hunting in the dry grass and thickets near the water, he espied a dark form, lying half hidden in a clump of custard-apple bushes. Beckoning one of the men to him, the two crept silently upon the unsuspecting redskin.

CHAPTER V.

A FLORIDA DELICACY—NOVEL METHOD OF SECURING GAME.

The Indian, who had been sleeping "the sleep of the just," and lay wrapped in dreams while his captors were stealing upon him, was rudely awakened by an unceremonious "laying on of hands." He turned his affrighted gaze toward the men, and, seeing there was no hope of escape, a diplomatic grin overspread his features, and he rose to his feet, held out his hand, saying: "How do? How you do "

"Well, we're a-doin' first rate, and you'd better thank goodness that you're a-doin' at all. What's your name, anyhow, you dirty, half-made, sneakin' whelp!"

"My name Tommie; me Seminole, good, too much. Me not hurt eesta-hotka—me good, ojus, too much, umcah."

"Well, Tommie," said Captain Mickler, "where were you going."

"Goin' to coontee-sassahollober."

"Where are all the other Indians."

"All gone to coontee-sassahollober," he repeated, pointing in the direction of the Big Cypress. He seemed willing to give us information about his people, and did not exhibit any of that surly, taciturn disposition that was shown by the majority of the Indians. His wife, however, had quite a serious cast of countenance, and kept her little boy close by her side, occasionally speaking to him in a low voice, in Seminole. When asked about the number of Indians in the neighborhood, he

replied by shaking his head and saying, "Sookkus-chay," which is the Indian word for departing.

We noticed some pots hanging over the fire, and upon examining one, we found that it contained "cabbage permeeter." The fragrant odor that arose therefrom told us that it was a luxury never to be forgotten when once tasted. The manner of procuring the "permeeter" is as follows: A thrifty young cabbage-palm tree is selected, and with an ax, the leaf-stems are cut off. About the spot, on the trunk of the palm tree, where the leaf-stems begin to wither and die, is where the chopping must be done. If it is cut lower than this, the bitter, woody part will be included, and if higher, the tender germinal bud will be lost, or sliced up in such a manner as to be hardly fit for food. Having felled the trunk, the sheathing leaf-stems are separated, and soon the snow-white "bud" is visible. This, in a thrifty specimen, is about eighteen inches long, four inches in diameter, and cylindrical, with a bulge at the base. It is so brittle that a large piece of is can be broken up easily, with the fingers; is as smooth as glass, and whiter than ivory. .When raw, the bud resembles a green chestnut in taste. But let it once be properly cooked; stewed with ham or breakfast bacon, and served with cream and butter, with a sprinkling of pepper—oysters, green corn and pumpkin pie sing into insignificance. A lingering, "soul-filling, hunger-killing" sensation is experienced, as the gastronomist takes his first bite. I am speaking in earnest, when I say that palmetto cabbage is the raciest, most toothsome dish that ever came to my acquaintance since I was old enough to know what it was. Even as I write, I long to toss my pen aside and rush into the wild hammocks, where the coveted delicacy grows in abundance.

The other pot contained "comptie." I cannot well tell just what that is, for I don't think there is anything like it growing in the North. It is the root of a plant

that is found in immense quantities in South Florida. The roots are macerated in a mortar, and a fine quality of flour is obtained, which contains a very large percentage of starch. When cooked it resembles arrowroot in taste and character. It is used very extensively as a breadstuff among the Indians, who call it "soff-kee," after it is cooked.

We also noticed a number of large birds called "cormorants" in that region, which had been placed so as to broil over the fire. Seeing that the Indian had no lock on his gun, and of course could not use it, Captain Mickler asked him how he got the birds.

"Hannah," he answered, pointing at his wife, "go rookery; take stick—knock 'em down."

It was true. The woman, disregarding all accepted rules of sportsmanship, took a stout cypress limb, and, creeping under the trees where the birds had selected a roost, commenced such a fierce onslaught on them that but few of the luckless creatures escaped.

About this time, our captain ordered the men to chop the Indian canoe to pieces. The owner looked on with rueful countenance, but said nothing.

The myriads of custard-apple trees around us were loaded with fruit, but none of it was ripe. Captain Mickler picked one of them, and asked Tommie if it was fit to eat.

"No good, holiwaugus. Tomollow, ripe; good, too much."

He meant that next day it would ripen. The fruit is about as large as a quince. A grove of custard-apple trees, full of fruit, will perfume the air for half a mile around.

We manned our boats and left with our captives, steering our course toward the south end of Lake Okeechobee. After traveling five miles, we reached that point and began looking for an outlet into the Everglades,

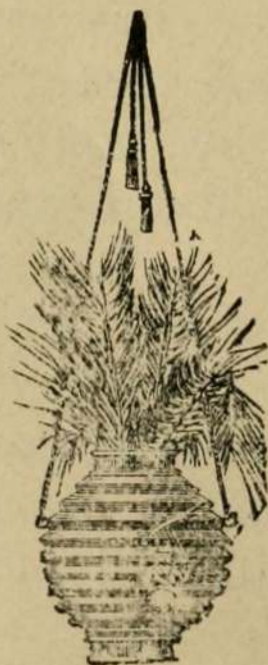
but without success. We were bounded by a high, almost impenetrable wall of saw-grass, through which the water from the lake oozed its way to the Everglades.

We went on about three miles farther, and reached an Indian town. Here we saw several palmetto huts, and the place looked as if it had been deserted for many years. In answer to a question as to who lived there, Tommie said:

"Miccosukie; no good—thief, too much."

Miccosukie was the name of a tribe who had lived apart from other tribes, plundering their neighbors and murdering women and children. Tommie told some fearful tales of their depredations.

Next day we landed on Observation Island, and in my next chapter I will tell my readers what we saw there.



CHAPTER VI.

A MAN TRIES CHICKEN-HAWK AS AN ARTICLE OF FOOD, WITHOUT SUCCESS—WE REACH THE EVERGLADES.

Observation Island is about three-fourths of a mile in length, and one-fourth of a mile wide. It has a hard, white sandy beach, and is known as a favorite resort for turtles.

On landing at the island, a curious sight met our eyes. The ground was literally paved with turtles and cooters, some of which were industriously digging in the sand, forming a place in which to deposit their eggs. The fierce, gray-eyed soft-shell, the bright, yellow-striped cooter, and his odoriferous companion, the "alligator turtle," were dwelling together in unity, but there was consternation among them as we came up; which was plain, from their frantic scrambles toward the water.

We hurried ashore, and commenced a raid on the unfortunate reptiles. I secured half a dozen without accident, and retired with my struggling, kicking captives to a shady spot, where I made them secure with a few strips of tough bark. One man, a long, lean Tar-heel, named Turnipseed, was not so fortunate. While wrestling with a giant soft-shell turtle, the vicious chelonian grabbed him by the thumb and held on like "grim death." There is a superstition prevalent among some people, to the effect that a turtle will not relax his hold "until it thunders." Perhaps Turnipseed had began to have that opinion, for the soft-shell tightened his grip, and, drawing in his head, plunged forward to suddenly that the Tar-heel was obliged to move his arm accordingly, to save his thumb. The turtle continued to plunge and rear,

but there is a limit to human endurance. Notwithstanding his peculiar name, there was nothing small about Mr. Turnipseed. He didn't swear, and tear around, nor curse, nor wish that the vicious reptile was in the country, of which they say the pepper is a native. No, he simply held up the turtle by his thumb, and waiting until its neck was sufficiently extended, made a skillful swipe of his knife, and the body fell to the ground. The head, however, remained, and Mr. T. had to practice some surgery before he finally got his thumb free.

We considered we had plenty, when two dozen of the snapping turtles were thrown into the boat. On close inspection, we failed to discover any signs of Indians, and of course our only alternative was to return to the mainland.

When we arrived at the camp, we found some little excitement among the soldiers. It appeared that one of the men had shot a chicken-hawk, and insisted upon having it for his dinner, despite the remonstrance of the men. Not long after he had finished his meal, he complained of intense pain in the stomach. When we arrived, he was almost delirious, and the physician of the camp was doing his best to alleviate the man's sufferings.

Our captive, Tommie, seemed much concerned about the man's condition, and repeatedly begged Dr. Oliver to let him try a cure. The doctor at last consented, and Tommie dispatched his squaw, Hannah, to the woods for the purpose of gathering roots and herbs. He then took the man's hands in his own, and repeated a strange jargon of unintelligible sounds, and passed his hands over the man's face. The voodoo operations had no effect, and when Hannah returned with an apron full of leaves, Tommie bruised them together in his hands, and then put them in the man's ears and mouth, at the same time repeating the gibberish of a voodoo. All to no pur-

pose. After a few struggles, the man lay still in death before us.

Tommie seemed greatly affected at the unfortunate termination of his case, and tried to explain to us that the moon's phase was unfavorable to a cure. We buried our comrade under a rubber-tree, and inscribed the name in the bark, over his head, which, no doubt, can be seen until this day, perhaps partly effaced by the growth of the tree.

Next morning, we set out on the journey to Fort Myers, and after two days of rowing on the Caloosahatchie, we arrived at our destination, and delivered Tommie, Hannah and the boy to the Indian agent.

After securing a receipt for the Indians, Captain Mickler was furnished with a guide, an old Spaniard, named Phillippi, and an Indian squaw, called Polly, a former wife of Chi-ee, a famous Seminole chief.

We again impelled our boats down the Caloosahatchie, and arrived at Punta Rassa, where the river empties into the Gulf of Mexico. At that point we entered the salt water, and cruised along the coast, southward. Mullet and pompano were our chief diet, and the men, who had grown tired of fresh-water fish, feasted on these products of the "briny deep" with unlimited zest.

Sanibel Island, off Punta Rassa, is famous for its wild hogs and deer. Before leaving for Shark river, some of the men went across to that island and began chasing the long-toothed boars. Andrew Wiggins was one of the party, and proposed to show the others just how he could lay the vicious game low. They "jumped" a herd of the swine, digging in a small pond, in search of "wampee," an aquatic plant, something on the order of Arum, or Indian turnip. Andrew Wiggins unceremoniously interrupted their meal by firing among them, and he wounded one so badly that it set up a fearful scream. One old boar became greatly enraged at this, and with a blood-curdling "gosh-gosh," and rattling grunt, trotted straight

for Wiggins, who turned and ran for a tree. It was wise for him to do so, for the angry animal was right at his heels, when he reached a small oak tree. With the agility of a squirrel he climbed the tree, and the boar, finding himself disappointed, commenced rooting at the foot of the oak. Whether the boar would ultimately have overturned the sapling, I cannot say, but as soon as Wiggins could get a firm foothold, he stopped the tunneling operations with a bullet from his rifle. We killed several fine young shoats, and carried them to the boats.

Shark river flows into the Gulf about eighty miles south of Punta Rassa, and after traveling two days, we reached the mouth of the river. Proceeding up this stream eight miles we selected a camp, amid the mangrove trees. The ground was dry, although not more than three feet above the water. Roaming around the forest that evening, I found a tree covered with grapevines, on which hung the finest grapes I ever saw. They were larger than muscadines, covered with a deep purple bloom, and so juicy and rich that they were near bursting. Neither before, nor since, have I ever seen such magnificent grapes.

Next day we entered the Everglades. Mangrove forests were behind us; and before us, as far as the eye could reach, could be seen nothing but an ocean of saw-grass, dotted with small islands, on which a few cocoa-plum and myrtle trees were growing.

Many people who have heard of the Everglades all their lives, have no idea of what the country looks like. Some imagine it to be a beautiful forest, where tropical birds fly through fruit-laden trees; others imagine that it is an El Dorado, where one is almost sure to find gold or jewels. I understand that one prominent writer, and citizen of Florida, pretending to write from experience, says that the Everglades will yet become the greatest winter resort in Florida. He speaks of "high, rolling

land, wild orange groves, and a rich soil and healthful climate, which must some day gain for it a world-wide reputation as a resort for invalids." I can scarcely conceive of a more shameless misrepresentation. In my next chapter I will give a description of the Everglades, which I am ready to substantiate in every particular.

CHAPTER VII.

A JOURNEY ACROSS THE EVERGLADES, AND A PROMISE OF AN ADVENTURE.

Standing on the edge of the Everglades, we could look each way, and discern the line of demarkation as plainly as ever was seen in a field or lake. The confines of the great morass ran in almost a straight line north and south, and melted away into the dim distance on each side of us. At our feet lay a warm, reeking mass of water and decaying vegetation, and around us stood myrtle and cocoa-plum trees, laden with fruit. An intense silence pervaded the whole scene. Far ahead of us we could see the white heron and the roseate spoonbill, expanding their wings in the warm sunlight, but they uttered no sound. A solitary flamingo spread his scarlet pinions on the air, and slowly wended his flight to the south, at last looking like a blazing red star, sinking into the hori-zon of the saw-grass and myrtle.

The water was less than six inches deep, and we could easily foresee that the journey would be a difficult one, for the boats would have to be drawn over the fields of saw-grass by main strength.

Captain Mickler ordered that two of the largest boats be sent back, as they were too large to be hauled along like the other boats. Accordingly, William Mickler, the captain's brother, assumed the task of taking them back, and we prepared for the journey across the Everglades. All of us entered the water with the exception of Polly, the Indian squaw, who sat in the prow of the foremost boat. Five men were assigned to each boat; one behind and two on each side, and we had all we could do to push

them along, although they contained nothing but rations, ammunition and guns. Polly, who was to act as our guide, gave her directions to Phillippi, who interpreted them to us in English. She had crossed the Everglades eighteen years before, and yet she knew the way just as well as if she had made the trip a hundred times. No mariner's compass could have guided us across this trackless waste with more precision than did this hideous old hag.

Occasionally Captain Mickler would order a halt, and go to an island; climb a cocoa-plum tree, and take a long look at the surrounding country. As far as he could see there was no variation of the monotonous scenery. On examining these islands we found that they were only a few inches above the water, and the soil seemed to consist of rotten limestone, covered with a thin, hard crust, which broke through as we walked upon it. Underneath was a whitish, calcareous, ill-smelling soil, mixed with shells. But the cocoa-plum trees which grew in such numbers on every island, were a boon to us. There are two varieties—the black and the white cocoa—and the fruit is about the size of a green-gage plum. The pulp is very sweet and good, and very refreshing. After the pulp has been eaten, the seed is cracked, and inside is found a substance that resembles chocolate very closely, both in taste and appearance. It is claimed that the seed possesses many properties of Erythroxylon coca. One thing I am sure of is, that eating the seeds seemed to enable one to do a greater amount of labor without fatigue, than was possible before.

Occasionally we crossed the little rills trickling their way sluggishly toward the south. These little streams were hardly ever more than six feet across, and contained a few species of swamp fish. The water was not more than a foot deep, and the current was scarcely discernible.

Strange to say, we saw no alligators nor snakes on

this journey, nor the slightest trace of any reptile except an occasional cooter. At sunset we were weary indeed, although we had traversed a distance of only twelve miles. Behind us lay the long, winding path made by our boats, through the saw-grass. Our course was toward the Miami, on the Atlantic coast—about east-northeast. At night we went on to an island, where the ground was a little dry, and prepared for the night. The myrtle, which grows in such abundance on these islands, is very brittle, and we had no difficulty in preparing couches of the fragrant boughs. We built a fire of the dry, dead branches, and were soon comfortably seated around a smoking supper, making ourselves just as merry as if we were at home, and not forced to roam through one of the most desolate deserts known to mortal man.

When we retired to rest on our couches of sweet myrtle boughs, sleep came to us on swift wings. Not a mosquito nor sand-fly appeared to keep us awake, and apparently, we just pressed the couches, and then opened our eyes to the rising sun. Never did I sleep more perfectly and refreshingly. I cannot say whether this was owing to the cocoa-plum seeds I had eaten, or not.

It is my honest opinion that we never could have gone a mile into the Everglades without the aid of the boats, for the soil was so soft and boggy that as soon as we relaxed our hold on the boats we sank above our knees. Nobody knows how much deeper we would have sunk. All the hardships I had ever endured were nothing compared to this. Very often we leaned over in the boats, thoroughly exhausted by our exertions. It was an almost superhuman task to shove the boats along, and when we were once out of sight of dry land, the prospect was indescribably dreary—a circle of saw-grass and little islands in every direction. I think I can safely say that no human being ever did, or can, accomplish the feat of crossing the Everglades on foot and unaided.

On the second day's journey, we observed no change in the character of the surroundings. The islands ahead of us looked as if they were high and dry, and gave impressions of an earthly paradise, with their soft verdure, colored fruits and shady trees. But when we reached them, the hallucination faded, and the stern reality was before us. Noisome weeds, growing on a low, unhealthy soil and a few cocoa-plum and custard-apple trees, covered with white-flowered vines, were all that met our disenchanted vision.

As well as I can remember, none of these islands contained more than an acre and a half of land, and eighteen inches was the greatest elevation above the water.

The weary, toiling soldiers became discouraged at the dreary prospect around them, and showed signs of dissatisfaction. Like the soldiers who accompanied Columbus on his voyage of discovery, they began to express doubts as to the reliability of the guide. They at last openly declared that Polly was misleading them, and expressed an unwillingness to let the alligators and herons wrestle with their bones, in that forsaken solitude. It must be said, right here, to the lasting credit of Jim Cook, that he was prompt and effectual in quelling the incipient mutiny among the men. His iron will and straightforward and convincing dialect had the desired effect, and equanimity was soon restored.

At night we had made about the same distance that we traveled the first day—twelve miles. As before, an island was our resting place.

In the morning we resumed the journey, and it is hardly necessary to repeat that we were much discouraged at the non-appearance of land. I say "land," for, of course, we were as much "at sea" as if we were on the ocean.

Captain Mickler climbed a tree, about twenty feet high, and looked eastward. Soon he gave an exclama-

tion of delight, and told us that we might give ourselves no uneasiness, as there was land in sight. He could discern plainly the line of timber skirting Biscayne Bay. This was about nine o'clock in the morning, and when night came, we were within eight miles of the Miami.

At last, we were going to get out of this unhallowed place. We were footsore and weary, and as we had to slake our thirst with the loathsome limewater that oozed through the grass at our feet, we were suffering from the effects of it. Some of the men declared that one hundred dollars in gold would not tempt them to make another trip through the Everglades.

It was perhaps ten o'clock in the morning of the fourth day, when we saw something ahead of us, which caused us to halt and hurriedly "call a council of war." About two miles ahead we discerned what we supposed to be an army of Indians coming toward us.

"Well, boys," said the captain, "we are pretty well worn out, but I guess we will manage to give them a warm reception."

With silent, eager movements, the men put themselves in readiness for a tussle with the savages.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE EMERGE FROM THE EVERGLADES, AND HAVE A VERY PLEASANT TIME.

With renewed energy in our sinews, we laid hold of the boats and sent them rushing through the water. It surely looked as if we ought to be rewarded for our long, wearisome struggle, and some of the men thought that a liberal number of captives would indemnify them for their trouble.

Steadily we advanced, and as steadily did the seeming enemy approach us, until they were only half a mile distant, when, to our astonishment, we discovered that we were soon to be joined by a company of regulars, instead of the human game we had been expecting. The friendliest greetings passed between our company and that of Captain Doubleday, the commander of the regulars. In replying to questions, they answered evasively, saying that our guide would probably be more reliable than theirs. It was evident that they had been lost, and were not willing to confess it. So they fell in behind and started back with us.

After traveling two miles we came to a spot where Polly commenced an excited discussion in Seminole, with Phillippi. That old worthy said that Polly pronounced the little rivulet at our feet to be the head of the Miami river. Polly piped out in her shrill, panther-like voice:

"Sookus-hechek-opko! lokasee; ojus!"

We all understood the word "lokasee," and permission was speedily obtained to follow a bear which was running across from one island to another. The chase was a short one; the bear took refuge on an island, and

was soon surrounded and killed. As we went on, the rivulet broadened and deepened so that we could launch our boats. What a relief it was! We had been forced to shove them along through the mud and grass, but now we could use the oars, and we were happy. The bear was safely lying in the bottom of the boat; the Everglades were behind us, and a prospect of rest before us. Some of the men, more sentimentally inclined, lifted their voices and sang. We were gliding over the purest, clearest water; pines, hammocks, and other familiar objects greeted our vision, and palms dipped their fern-like leaves in the crystal stream. As we rowed on, the leafy woods on each side echoed the music:

"Quickly our boats are now gliding along,
Gliding along,
Gliding along;
Swiftly we're rowing in time with our song,
Rowing in time with our song.
"Forest and meadows are passing behind,
Passing behind,
Passing behind;
Odors so sweetly are borne on the wind,
Odors are borne on the wind."

In high glee we rowed into Fort Dallas, at the mouth of the Miami river. Here we saw many nice frame houses among the cocoa palm trees. The ground was high and dry, and the sea breeze was most refreshing after our sojourn through the Everglades. No better place could have been found for a camp. We stayed here two days and recruited.

The guava bushes were full of delicious fruit, and no one can say that we did not do them ample justice. Next to a peach, I think the guava is the most delightful fruit under the sun. No—I will not say that—for the guava stands without rival; it is the queen of fruits. The man that says we didn't have plenty of cocoanuts, makes a grand mistake. We ate them, and drank the milk, until

we didn't have a good opinion of them. One man ate so many jelly-cocoanuts that he was seized with severe cramps in the stomach, and came near dying. Maybe my readers would like to know what a "jelly-cocoanut" is. It is nothing more nor less than a very young, unripe nut; at that stage the flesh has a jelly-like consistency, and the milk is indescribably delicious, but it is dangerous if eaten without moderation.

When the two days had passed away we were in fine condition for another journey. The jelly-cocoanut man had recovered, and all went merry. It did not require much time to prepare ourselves for the trip. At sunrise we set out over the waters of Biscayne Bay, toward the south. The weather was delightful, and after bidding adieu to our friends, the regulars, the cocoanut groves were left behind. Fine hammock skirted the beach; rubber, hackberry, saffron-plum, mastic, pigeon-plum and "gumbolimbo" were among the tropical trees we saw. The fruit of a mastic tree is about the size of a plum, yellow, and has a soft, juicy pulp, with a cinnamon-like odor. It is delicious eating, but the effects are unpleasant. When too many have been eaten, the mouth becomes as sore as if the person were salivated. The saffron-plum, pigeon-plum and hackberry all bear edible fruit.

The first object of interest we came to was General Harney's Punchbowl. It was about ten o'clock in the morning when we arrived at the place and landed. The bank was about twelve feet high, rocky and steep. About half way up the declivity was a spring of cold, clear water, issuing from a deep, bowl-like depression in the rock. We drank the cooling water, and ascended to the hammock, which lay beyond. (This spring was named after General Harney, the famous Indian fighter.) In the hammock we came upon a lime grove that eclipsed anything I ever saw. The ground was literally paved with the fragrant,

golden globes. We gathered several bushels and carried them to the boats. After another deep draught at General Harney's Punchbowl, we resumed the journey.

That night we camped at the south end of Biscayne Bay, and next day we passed through Upper and Lower Cards Sound, into Barnes' Sound, and through Chi-ee's Cut-off, into Sadler's Bay. Chi-ee's Cut-off is where the waters of Barnes' Sound connect with Sadler bay. The water was twenty-five feet deep, and clear as it well could be. Down near the bottom we could see enormous red snappers and groupers darting around, and they evidently had plenty to eat, for they paid no attention to bait. At sunset we were within five miles of Cape Sable, at a place named Saw-fish Hole. That night we discovered that there were mosquitoes in Florida, after all. But we had plenty of nets.

In the morning, after breakfast on mullet, pompano and grouper, we shouldered guns and attacked the deer. Foremost among the hunters was Andrew Wiggins. With an unerring hand, he caused many a deer to bite the sand that day. One hunter swore that a deer came up within a few yards of him, and never flinched, as he took aim and fired. I cannot vouch for the truth of the statement, but it seemed to me as if the deer were remarkably tame.

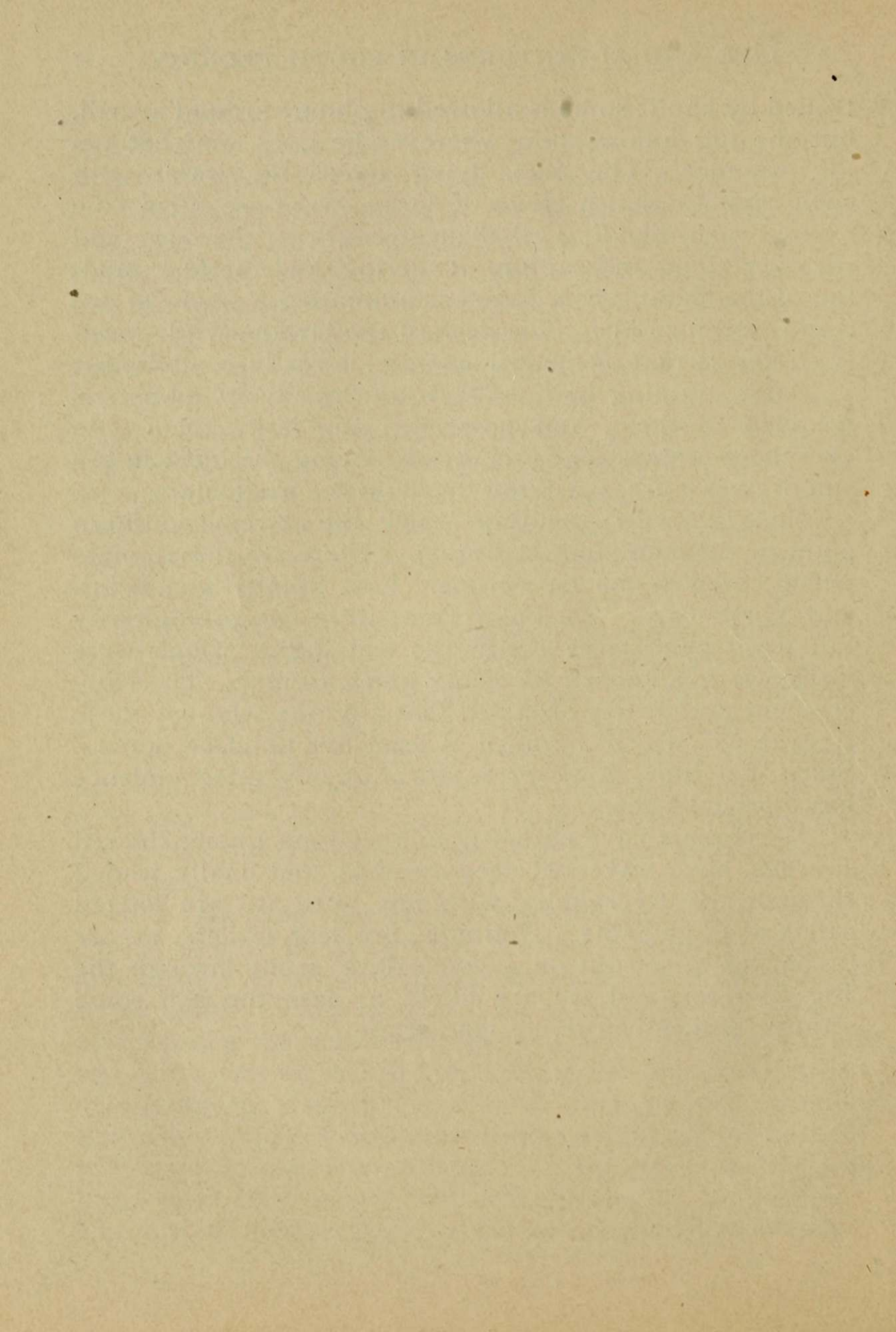
But "graining" the tarpons was the finest sport of all. The tarpon, when full grown, is about five feet in length, and clothed in bright, silvery scales, about the size of a silver dollar. They have a habit of rising to the surface and striking the water with the tail, with such force that the blow can be heard for five or six hundred yards. "Graining the tarpon" is a sport very popular around Key West, and consists in throwing a long gig, or barbed rod, into the fish, from a boat. To the rod is fastened a long, stout line, and to that a stoppered jug is attached. The tarpon, when caught, is far too powerful to be con-

trolled by hand; so he is allowed to plunge around at will, but the jug follows him wherever he goes, and betrays his presence. The jugs, flying across the water with such rapidity that a cloud of spray envelopes them; the excited men, bending all their strength to the oars, and the overtaking and capture of the jug, and the final landing of the shining fish, forms as animating a scene as one could well imagine. The flesh of the tarpon, while hardly so fine as that of the red snapper, is really good eating.

After graining half a dozen of the silvery monsters, we cleaned them, and proceeded to "jerk" them. As everybody knows that this means drying the meat in the sun or over a fire, I will not dwell on the particulars.

Next day we visited Cape Sable, the extreme southern point of the mainland of Florida. There are three points which compose the cape proper; East Point, Palm Point, and North Cape. On Palm Point were two prodigiously tall royal palm trees (fully 125 feet high), which were visible as a landmark for many miles around. The Government authorities ordained that any one who cut these trees down, was to be fined at least five hundred dollars. Since that time, however, a storm of unwonted violence has uprooted them.

My readers have patiently followed me among the red savages, have traversed deep swamps, and finally waded through the Everglades with me, until we are lodged safely at Cape Sable. And now, my dear readers, we are preparing to set out on a seven days' scout through the Big Cypress, and we are likely to pass through some strange scenes before we rest again.



CHAPTER IX.

AMONG THE TEN THOUSAND ISLANDS.

No one who enters the border of Florida and steps into the kingdom of the orange, where everything wears such a soft, unseered hue of sempiternal spring, would imagine that the southern extremity of the State presented such a desolate, gloomy appearance. The pine-covered hills and orange-scented hammocks are metamorphosed into low, oozy points, and slimy mangrove swamps. The very cranes and herons, poised on one leg, look as mournful as the sprawling frogs about to become their prey. The croak of the water-turkey is worse than a funeral dirge, and the far-reaching note of the curlew and flamingo makes one wish to be at home.

As we left Cape Sable the prospect grew brighter. The sampson-grass gave way to hammocks bordered with mangrove forests. At night we reached Pavilion Key, and selected it as a camping spot for the night. I had heard of the great clam beds at this key, and was anxious to make the trip.

What a beautiful spot it was! The setting sun was laving its heated face in the cool Gulf far to the westward; the last ruddy rays gilded the top of the lofty mangrove trees, and already a deep twilight lay in the shadowy places. The water was clear and we could see millions of clams beneath us. As we approached the key, some of the soldiers jumped overboard (it was only knee deep) and threw hundreds of the succulent bivalves into the boat. We built a fire and soon had a mammoth chowder ready, together with some cooter steak. Polly's eyes scintillated with suppressed joy, but when she tasted

the delicious mixture, her bosom heaved, her lips parted, and lifting her withered hand toward heaven, she ejaculated:

"Good—too much!"

We "fell to" with the gusto of savages, and had a glorious feast. Stories were told, jokes passed, and former griefs forgotten amid the joys of the present. But amid the hearty laughs that echoed through the twilight, there was one who maintained a deep, thoughtful silence, as if he thought the time too precious, while sitting around the chowder-pot, to waste in useless merriment. But after the feast was over, he crawled to a mangrove tree and leaned against it; throwing out his feet, and clasping his hands over his shaggy head, he gave vent to one of those laughs for which he was famous. First his mouth opened, then there was a commotion all over, and a gurgling sound arose, seemingly, from his boots, and finally the bubbling, undulating mixture of sounds poured forth, astonishing and amusing all who heard it. Truly, Andrew Wiggins was a great laugher.

But I must proceed on the journey, or we will be late. From Pavilion Key we went through Sand Fly Pass into Chocaliska Bay, where we encountered the Ten Thousand Islands. I had long wished to see and determine just what these islands were, and observed them with great interest. Our boats wound in and out among them, and once I landed with some others to examine an island. It was larger than some of the rest, being about ten acres in extent. Around the edges stood a circle of mangrove trees, and inside of that the land was dry, shell hammock, and very rich, covered with a heavy growth of mastic, gumbolimbo and other West India trees. You have often heard me speak about mangrove trees, and maybe you would like to know what they look like. The mangrove don't content itself with rising straight out of the ground like any other tree, but props

its trunk away up in the air on several small trunks, which were originally roots. Some of these trees look like a lot of large tent-poles leaning together, and a big tree growing on top. It often reaches a height of seventy feet or more; the wood is extremely heavy, and is used extensively for piers and making wharves, as it lasts a long time in water. The trees bear a long, dry seed, which drop down when ripe and stick upright in the mud, and in a short time a new mangrove is putting forth its leaves.

The islands were, on an average, not more than two or three hundred yards apart, and the smallest one I saw was only fifty feet across, with a few stunted mangrove and mastic trees growing on it. Sometimes, where the islands were close together, the tall, shady trees loomed up in leafy walls on each side of us, and formed an over-arching canopy of green, through which the echoes of the men's voices, and the sounds of the oars rang and reverberated. This was the home of the sand fly. High overhead we heard the shrill hum of untold millions of these little insects, which increased as we went on.

In this arboreal wilderness, the semi-twilight hue of the scene seems to make the little creatures' advances more bold. The whirr of their wings—so fine and shrill, that "nothing seemed to lie 'twixt it and silence"—was constantly in our ears, and the infinitesimal white spots which marked their presence on the hands and face were the cause of considerable pain and annoyance. They are not like a mosquito; they are too small for you to aim a blow at them, and they are biting you for dear life before you know it.

The water was three feet in depth, and very clear, so that we could see the oyster beds below, with great distinctness. Many of these beds contained oysters of fine size, so that we supplied ourselves liberally with the delicious things. Seated in the boats, we pryed open the

shells, and rapidly provided accommodations for the oysters contained within.

After a while we emerged from among the islands, and came to the mouth of the Chocaliska river, and journeyed up the stream for five miles, to the point where it receives the waters of the Faquahatchie. Here we found a company of soldiers who had just finished burying their commander—Captain Parkhill—who had been killed by Indians the day before, in the Royal Palm Hammock. There was the most intense excitement among the men, and their speech and actions boded no good for the Indians they were preparing to hunt next day. They had carried his body nine miles in order to find a safe resting place for their chief.

Captain Mickler ordered us to return, and when we again entered the Chocaliska bay, our course was directed northward, en route for Marco Inlet, near Cape Romano. After a journey of twenty miles, we reached the inlet, and next morning we were joined by the company before mentioned. We were, in all, about one hundred strong, and were provided with guns, ammunition and provisions. Colonel St. George Rogers took command, and, at an early hour, we set forth, ostensibly for the purpose of quelling a rebellion, but many of the men were ready to risk life and liberty for the purpose of avenging the dastardly murder of their chief, Captain Parkhill.

CHAPTER X.

INCIDENTS OF SEVEN YEARS.

In bringing to a close the first part of book, I recall several instances, which I have learned since the first edition was published, which stand out even in the dark and troublous days of Indian warfare, and which will be found of interest. One of these incidents, the murder of one Barker, occurred in 1849, and the others seven years later, in the year of Grace (or perhaps it should be called Bloodshed), 1856, five years before the hostilities with the native red men were to be forgotten in the longer and deadlier conflict between brethren of the same race, in which our fair State, no less than others, suffered through fire and sword.

The first affair of which I write, the murder of Barker, occurred on the Indian river in 1849. Barker, with his brother-in-law, Major Russell, and their families, lived on this river, as the great lagoon is called, extending almost the entire length of the East Coast—the great river which does not rise from the highlands and flow into the ocean, but rises and falls with the moon-driven tides of the Atlantic. Major Russell was an Indian trader, and among the red men bore none too good a reputation for honesty and square dealing. It was through a desire on their part for revenge against Russell, for the Indian never forgets either a kindness of an injury, that the unfortunate Barker lost his life.

One day as Major Russell and Mr. Barker were at work in their garden amongst their crop of spring vegetables, they espied two Indians, who came down to the riverside and fired their rifles, at the same time giving

the blood-curdling whoop which meant that the Seminoles were on the warpath—that some of the tribe had "smelt blood," and, like the wild beast of the jungles, could only be satisfied with more. Before the men could arrange to protect themselves the two savages were upon them in the garden, and, each taking deliberate aim, fired at his man. Barker fell to the ground, dead, and Major Russell was wounded severely. Mrs. Barker and Mrs. Russell, hearing the guns and seeing the fatal results, seized their children and hurried down to the boat at the river. There was no time for useless lamentation over the corpse of the murdered husband, father and brother; immediate action was all that could save the lives of Russell, the unfortunate woman, and the innocent children of the two households.

Rushing into the house as fast as his wounded condition would permit, Major Russell secured his gun and fired back at the attacking party, who disappeared amid the trees at once. He then hurried down to the river, growing weaker and fainter with loss of blood every minute, and joined his family. They rowed across the Indian river and walked up the beach to Cape Canaveral, forty miles away. The women gave Major Russell such attention as they could, and his wound did not result fatally. After walking for three days, enduring all the pangs of hunger and the agonies of thirst, for they were without food, and the only water in sight—the briny ocean on the east,—only served to accentuate their sufferings, so that they might well have exclaimed with the Ancient Mariner:

"Water! water! everywhere,
But not a drop to drink!!

At the end of this time they reached Cape Canaveral, where they found Captain Burnham and a detachment of troops under his command. The latter relieved their

wants, and Captain Burnham conveyed them to St. Augustine. Lieutenant Ripley was then stationed at the oldest city in America, and was ordered by the War Department immediately to proceed to Fort Capron, on the Indian river, near the scene of the Barker murder, and protect the few settlers that were still there.

This prompt action on the part of the United States authorities put an end to the depredations for the time, but not, sad to relate, until the same Indians who had murdered Barker made their way across the country to Pease creek, killing on the way a man named Paine, a respected white settler who was unfortunate enough to be in their line of march.

BATTLE OF PEASE CREEK.

Peace reigned until the spring of 1858, when the seven years of peace treaty were to be succeeded by a season of war and ruin. The Indians were in a hostile mood, and as a result of their depredations through the country the white settlers, what few there were, had gathered together at the different forts for protection, especially at Fort Mead. Amongst others in the community was a family named Tillis, who lived about two miles from the Fort. Mr. Tillis had two grown sons, and all being armed, felt secure from an attack by the savages. One morning, at dawn, Mrs. Tillis, accompanied by one of her youngest children, went to the cow pen to milk, as usual. On arriving she noticed that the cows appeared frightened, giving warning as clearly as the instinct of an animal can, of serious danger, and looking as only dumb animals can look when frightened, at a pile of rails behind the fence of the cow pen.

Looking in the same direction, Mrs. Tillis saw a number of Indians prostrate upon the ground. She started to the house at once, calling to her child to follow. At

this the Indians commenced firing on the woman and child, but they arrived safely in the house, where they were given the protection of the husband and sons. The Indians, determined to commit mischief before leaving, then began a fusillade against the house, but the latter was as secure against the bullets of the savages, being built in the pioneer manner of pine logs, as were the palmetto logs of Fort Moutrie safe against the cannon balls of the British in the War of the Revolution. There was no Sargent Jasper here to spring upon the ramparts with the battle flag of the Fort, but in the sacred precincts of their pinelog cabin, the Tillis family fought for their lives and their home.

The walls of the cabin, useless to relate, were not plastered or ceiled, as such "trimmings" as these were unknown in the pioneer days of Florida, and for once the cracks between the logs stood the inmates of the cabin in good stead. Safely barricaded behind the walls, the defenders of the cabin fired their rifles through the cracks, and thus kept the enemy at bay. In the meantime the sound of the rifles had been heard at Fort Meade by a party of South Florida cowboys who had been left to guard the women and children at the Fort. "Boys, there's work for us over in the woods," said their leader, and mounting their horses they dashed at full speed to the scene of the battle.

Hearing the sound of the approaching volunteer cavalry, the Indians withdrew from the attack on the Tillis homestead, and lay in wait in a thicket of pine saplings. The cowboys dismounted and charged them, driving them back from the thicket in which they had sought refuge. One of the cowboys, McCullough by named, disarmed an Indian and threw him to the ground, then called to a comrade to come and help him, that they might get the reward of $500 offered by the government for the capture of a warrior. At that very instant the

comrade was shot down, and McCullough found himself in the same position of the Irish trooper in the Crimean war who "caught a Tartar." There was but one thing for McCullough to do when no aid came to him; the Indian was making a desperate struggle to slay his captor, having again secured possession of his arms, and McCullough, to save his own life, jerked out his knife and cut the red man's throat.

Ocshan, the chief of the Indian war party, was killed, but his men were too numerous for the cowboys to count their triumph a final one, so they withdrew in good order from the skirmish, with very little loss.

Next day a party of eighteen cowboys started out in pursuit of the Indians, who were not strong enough to risk an attack on the Fort, and withdrew from the fight at Tillis' place as soon almost as the coyboys did. After going some distance down Pease creek the pursuing party found very fresh signs of the Indians, and in a few minutes afterwards discovered an Indian on watch some distance from the Indian encampment. Eli Whiddon, who was in the lead, gave chase, and ran the sentry back to his camp. The Indians opened fire, the cowboys returned it, and in a few seconds the battle was at its height. It was short and decisive. When the fight was thickest and fiercest, the chief stood to one side of his warriors and sang the war song of the Seminoles, to cheer them on to the fray. One of the white men, an old fellow named Brooker, had discharged his gun and was reloading it, when he heard his name called, "Brooker! Brooker!" and saw an Indian advancing on him, at the same time shouting his name. "For God's sake, Langford," he called to one of his men, "kill that Indian or he will get me!" Langford fired, the Indian fell, and old man Brooker's life was saved. The last victim of the battle was a negro, a runaway slave, who had joined the Indians. The negro ran to the river and attempted to

swim it, when John Mansfield let drive a load into his back, and the negro sank to the bottom. After the battle was over, the whites counted six dead Indians lying behind one log, the rest having been carried away by their comrades in the retreat down the creek. This was the last formidable engagement, if such it may be called, and may be said to have practically been the last trouble on an organized basis between the whites and red men of this state.

CAPT. STEVENS' EXPEDITION IN BIG CYPRESS

In the early part of 1857, Capt. Winston Stevens was ordered from Tampa to Fort Myers, and from there up to Fort Denan on the Caloosahatchee river. After a short stay at the latter, he received further orders to proceed to Fort Drum, and almost immediately from that point to take ten days' rations and make a circuit around Lake Okeechobee. He followed out the commands given him, but found no Indians, and then was ordered to Camp Rogers.

While at Camp Rogers, the day after arrival, we heard a peculiar noise, like cows bellowing, and we were ordered into the Big Cypress to investigate it. Proceeding some distance, we found an Indian trail and followed it to a large Indian village, where we found the natives had just left. We took the trail and followed them, going about three miles, when the enemy began coming together. Two of our men fell sick and we had to leave them behind. The trailer took two men and followed the Indian path, soon finding the track of a pickaninny, made to decoy our men.

While in the thickest of the woods, the Indians opened fire on the party, firing about seventy shots. One of the white men was killed, and another had his gun stock cut by a bullet. The balance of the command, hearing

the shots, ran to the assistance of the trailer and his living companion, pursuing the Indians for some distance. They were unable, however, to overtake them, and the whole cypress, during the affray, resounded with the defiant warwhoops of the savages. Finding pursuit useless, our men then fell back to where we had left our knapsacks, and buried the man who was killed in the early part of the conflict. Intending the decoy the Indians on our way back to camp, we lay in ambush in a little hammock for about two hours. Then two Indians came along, talking together as they walked along the trail. We shot them both down in their tracks from our ambush, and waited for fresh victims. Two or three hours later a party of eighteen red men came along the same route, and as they came to where their two companions were lying dead, one of the warriors exclaimed, in broken English profanity,—

"Damn then, we will get some of them yet!"

Believing that they would surround the hammock that night and charge it at daybreak, we fell back to our camp. Returning to the Cypress the following day, we surprised the Indians and killed nineteen of them, besides capturing nineteen in their camp. The following week we spent in the edge of the Cypress, at Fort Rogers, and we put our horses in Bowlegs' garden to graze. The Indians made an attack on our guards, ran them back into camp, and captured and killed thirty-six of the horses, which seriously crippled our forces for the time being. A few days later two of Captain Stewart's men went into the Cypress to cut some cabbage palmetto buds, when two Indians fired on them, killing one and running the other into camp. They followed closely, cutting at him with a knife as he ran for safety.

After numerous other affrays with the Indians on the part of our command and others, the Indians were defeated and most of them captured. Major Dodier was

detailed to carry them to Fort Myers, where they staid about ten days, when the steamer Gray Cloud arrived to transport them to Egmont Key, at the mouth of Tampa Bay, the point at which they were concentrated prior to being sent out to their reservation in Indian Territory.

Amongst other captives was Tiger Tail. He was determined not to leave Florida alive, and committed suicide while at Myers, in a horrible manner. The morning they were to leave, he procured a quantity of glass, which he pounded fine, and swallowed in a glass of water. While the guards were taking him down to the dock where the steamer lay waiting, he told Sampson, the negro interpreter, that he was going to die. At the same time he asked the guards to let him lie down, which they permitted him to do. Spreading his pallet upon the ground, he laid himself on it, and in a few minutes, with the Indian's stoical indifference to the pain he suffered, and to the approach of death, he died. His daughter was with him, and when he breathed his last she threw herself upon his dead body, wailing so piteously that the bystanders, men used as they were to death and sorrow, could not keep back their tears.

Tiger Tail was buried at Fort Myers, in the land he loved better than his own life. Whatever his faults were, he was a brave chief, and valiantly defended the land in which he was born, and which he felt was his birthright, and it was fitting that he should find his last resting place in its bosom, where all, red men and white, are the same when they sleep the sleep that knows no waking in this world.

ATTACK ON BRADEN CASTLE.

Corrallated with the history of South Florida stands the present town of Manatee—the oldest town on the

peninsula south of Tampa. Its settlement dates back to the fall of 1841, when it became the first and only frontier town of that section, its settlement coming shortly after the close of the long five years' war with the Seminoles.

Conspicuous in the history of Manatee were some of the exciting and tragic events of the Indian outbreaks from 1849 to 1858. During these years the Indians frequented Manatee, and at some seasons of the year they were there almost daily, visiting the town for the purpose of trading.

Knowing the suspicious and treacherous nature of the red men—how soon a conceived wrong would prompt him to revenge, the sugar planter of that section lived in nightly dread of the torch to his sugar house, and the women and children in dread of the Indian's tomahawk and scalping knife.

Prominent among the Indians' attempted depredations on the town of Manatee was their unexpected attack upon Dr. Joseph Braden in his castle home, on the banks of the Manatee river. Braden Castle is a building made of shell, lime and sand—and which stands today, a prominent mark, on the beautiful river. The construction of the building in this instance proved a shield against the torch and saved the lives of its inmates from the red men. A more cautious man than Dr. Braden never lived, and he was well protected against this attack upon his castle. To see that all of his family, together with any visitors and his servants were all in the house, doors barred and windows closed, was a duty promptly attended to at sunset of each day, as a guard against any surprise from an Indian raid.

This precaution on the part of Dr. Braden was his salvation, for in the spring of 1856, at the hour of dusk, while he and his family were seated at the supper table, a rap was heard upon the front door. A servant girl

upstairs, prompted by curiosity to see who the callers might be at that hour, cautiously peeped from an upstairs window. In the dim light she recognized the callers as Indians, judging largely from their dress and general appearance and what appeared to be guns in their hands.

Hastening down stairs, the girl met her master in the hall approaching the front door, and quietly gave him her impressions of the visitors. Dr. Braden, being amply supplied with arms, and there being two gentlemen friends stopping with him at the time—Freeman Chairs, of Tallahassee, and Rev. T. T. Sealey—he immediately went up stairs. With his gun in his hand, Dr. Braden approached the window from which the Indians had been seen by the servant, and looked out. He saw a number of forms standing on the porch and he called to them, asking who they were and what they wanted. A cautious man is always a conscientious man and not prone to act hastily, lest some sad mistake be made. He prepared to be thoroughly satisfied that his visitors on this occasion were hostile Indians before he took action, and to be sure that they understood his English when he called to them. He told them that if they did not answer him he would shoot.

The reply to this was the crack of several rifles and the thud of several bullets as they imbedded themselves in the window casing near Dr. Braden's head. During the quick retreat of the Indians from Dr. Braden's front porch he responded to them with his shotgun, wounding one of their number. Several shots were exchanged at random, mixed with a great deal of Indian profanity in English.

The Indians made their retreat through Dr. Braden's plantation. They made captives of several negroes, and stole a number of mules to carry away their captives and booty. This was an ill-conceived plan, for it ren-

dered pursuit easy, their plain trail being easy to follow.

The firing at Braden Castle was heard for some distance by the neighbors, and the people were quickly aroused and a company formed for immediate pursuit of the marauders.

This attack on Braden Castle immediately followed and was by the same band that had appeared at Sarasota, where they had killed Captain Owens and burned the house over him, they having proceeded immediately to Manatee from this depredation.

The alarm was immediately given at Sarasota, and Wm. H. Whitaker dispatched to Fort Meade for help. The pursuing party from the Manatee section was headed by Capt. John Addison, his son Lieut. Wm. Addison, Sergt. Dave Townsend, and John Whidden, the trailer. This party overhauled the Indians at Peace Creek, where the Indians were found encamped on the east side, another Indian having met them at this point. This Indian was evidently waiting for the party, as he had a barbecued beef ready for them.

The white men remained in ambush on the west side of the creek and listened to a conversation which took place between old Uncle Peter, a negro, and Billy Bowlegs' son.

"I intend to give my father one of these mules, and the other I will keep for myself," said Bowlegs to Uncle Peter.

The following day, at daybreak, the Indians broke camp and made their way to Joshua's creek, where they intended to take their dinner. While they were enjoying their repast, having no guard on duty, the cowboys charged them. Peter, the negro, heard the sound of the horses hoofs and cried out, "Cowboys!" This startled the Indians and they attempted to rise. Captain Addison charged on them and fired. One Indian said "Wau!" and fell into the creek and disappeared. Three others

ran down the creek and two went up. Lieutenant Addison dismounted, ran into the swamp and met the Indians in a ravine, killed the one in the lead and shot the other one, who jumped into a hole of water, at the same time exclaiming "Waugh! good Indian." Addison made him come out and led him to the other cowboys.

In the meantime Dave Townsend had captured an Indian pony, which he rode all through the Indian war.

After this Captain Addison reported to the governor, who gave him a commission to organize a company. Among others he recruited eight men from Leon county, one of these men being J. A. Redd, who is now located at Sarasota, in Manatee county. Mr. J. A. Redd has been a much valued and very successful Baptist preacher for thirty years. He is also interested in the mercantile and livery business in his town. I recently paid him a very pleasant visit at his hospitable home, and we spent several very pleasant hours in our Indian war reminiscences.

My next chapter will tell of how we made a trip through the weird and gloomy Big Cypress, and that will conclude the first part of the book.

CHAPTER XI.

A SEVEN DAYS' SCOUT THROUGH THE BIG CYPRESS—CLOSING SCENES.

The Everglades and Big Cypress are great problems, in themselves, which can only be solved by time and ingenuity. It would seem as if the climate—the counterpart of which is found nowhere else on the globe—were not to be enjoyed by the settler here. But those who have had the temerity to venture into these vast solitudes, have often returned with the consciousness of having had a very pleasant time, and the botanist and naturalist was never heard to complain of the scarcity of the flora and fauna of those "dim, mysterious regions." As I have said in a former chapter, I consider it a misrepresentation for any one to call the Everglades a "winter resort." The Everglades are simply immense stretches of long, low, level prairie, covered for the most part with water and saw-grass, and dotted with little islands. This region of country is some eight or ten feet above the sea, and I do not think the highest elevation can exceed fifteen feet. The great drainage scheme inaugurated by Disston is a fine idea and the solution of the problem he has undertaken is an object of unlimited discussion, and I think that a successful termination of the project would be of untold benefit to Florida and the whole South. But I think somebody ought to turn his attention to the Big Cypress. There are islands in there that, for fertility, are equal to the delta of the Nile.

You are put to a great deal of trouble in gaining access to these islands, but a visit will repay a long journey. Some of these beautiful bodies of land are elevated many

feet above the water, and the soil is something wonderful. The Indians raised very fine rice on these bodies of hammock, and that region may be termed, with propriety, the home of the banana, for frost seldom, if ever, enters the dominion of the Big Cypress. Pineapples would run riot. But little game is found, except around the borders.

One man, in walking over this soil (so says an old tradition), was so deeply impressed with its fertile appearance, that he took a tenpenny nail from his pocket and planted it near a tree, which he marked for future reference. When six months had gone by, he returned to the spot, and dug for the nail. To his surprise, he found that it had grown into a crowbar, four feet long! A wonderful result, certainly, but as I didn't see the nail planted, nor the crowbar harvested, I can't vouch for the truth of the story.

It is difficult to imagine the impressive solemnity of this mighty forest, unless one takes a trip through it. Strange, unwholesome legends are rife among the Seminole Indians (who are less inclined to superstition than many other tribes) concerning the death-dealing character of certain things to be found in the Big Cypress, and it is a brave warrior indeed, who undertakes to enter the dread "coontee-sassa-hollober" after nightfall.

But the resolute band of soldiers were preparing to prove themselves greater objects of dread to the eesta-chatta than any goblin that might have its lair in the coontee-sassa-hollober.

At an early hour we brought our boats into Marco river, and steered for the Big Cypress. Our course was to the southeast, and after we entered Palm Hammock creek, we followed that stream for nine or ten miles, and came to its head. A grassy prairie, half a mile wide, lay ahead, and after crossing that we entered the Little Royal Palm Hammock and struck camp. The land was nice and dry, and the air seemed somewhat purer. Did you ever see

the famous royal palm, or Oreodoxia regia? If you have not, a description might interest you. At this place the trees were nearly a hundred and twenty feet high, and stood fifteen or twenty feet apart. The trunks are white, as smooth as polished marble, and as straight as an arrow. Near the top the trunk is bright green, and jointed like sugar cane, surmounted by an immense crown of leaves, the stems of which are sometimes fifteen feet long. No animal not provided with wings, can climb these lofty palms. The royal palm is one of the finest trees in all the vegetable kingdom, and surely Florida can boast of nothing more uniquely grand or singularly beautiful.

Our course next day lay to the eastward, and the immense swamp lay before us and around us. The cypress trees were never more than twenty inches in diameter, and were covered with poisonous vines, whose velvety leaves we avoided as we would shun fire. Especially is a person in danger when freely perspiring; then the pores of the body are open, and the skin is peculiarly susceptible to poisoning from contact with the vines. The arboreal Rhus toxicodendron, or "devil's shoe-string," and the dreaded Rhus vernix, or "thunderwood," were pointed out to us as being worse than the terrible upas tree.

One of the men, a Spaniard, named Johnnie Ortagus (a native of St. Augustine), was the most expert climber I ever saw. And he seemed invulnerable to the poisonous vines, for he could handle them without being injured. He could take one of the vines in his hands and scale the tallest tree in a few minutes. His climbing powers were scarcely inferior to those of a squirrel. Colonel St. George Rogers directed him to climb the tallest trees and inspect the surroundings. In this way we could gain some idea of the course that lay before us. Artagus, in reply to questions from Colonel Rogers, would describe the country ahead, and we would direct

our course acordingly. (Mr. Ortagus is now a hale, vigorous old gentleman, and keeps a restaurant in Jacksonville.)

The water through which we traveled was never more than six inches deep, and was strongly impregnated with lime, but we were forced to drink it. Sometimes we came to high ridges of land, covered with stunted pines and various species of palmetto. These curious plants grew in the utmost profusion and luxuriance; the saw-palmetto, the trunk of which is usually in the form of a long, creeping rhizome, reared high in the air, almost like trees. Here we found the needle-palm, with its myriads of long, sharp spines; the cabbage palm, and the blue-stem.

After leaving these ridges (which were, as a rule, not more than half a mile across) we would generally descend into a low, lime prairie, which stretched north and south as far as the eye could reach. In the afternoon we reached the Big Royal Palm Hammock. Following the trail through the low, wet swamp, we suddenly encountered a high slope, which led us into the Big Hammock. O, what relief, and an inspiration it was, after the dreary march through the cypress! The lofty palms towered toward heaven, lifting their spreading summits far above the big live oaks and gumbolimbos. There was a large clearing here, and some of the oaks were covered with pumpkin and bean vines; many of these trees were loaded with green and ripe pumpkins, which gave rise to the fancy that they were the fruit of the tree itself. Banana plants, fifteen feet or more in height, and immense corn, were among the products of this fertile region. Without stopping to destroy what the Indians had planted, we proceeded onward in search of the planters themselves.

We then came to a deserted village, on an island three miles from Big Hammock. This was Saf-faj-eehojee's Town, and from the appearance of the log huts, with their

fallen-in palmetto roofs, we judged that the town had been deserted for a couple of years. We saw no fresh signs, and went on, and before long came to another villige, graced with the name of Emathle-ochee's Town. Farther on was Fin-halloway's metropolis, where a few logs lying in a square, told us that there was once an attempt at building a city, at this place. Here we saw plenty of fresh Indian signs, and followed the trail with greater activity than ever.

The march was a dreary and monotonous one. Seven long days we marched, and no glimpse of an Indian rewarded our anxious gaze. Captain Dick Turner was our guide. He had never been through there before, but his services as a guide were well rendered. So well did he pilot us through this trackless wilderness that, in a march of seventy-five miles, we missed our destination by only two miles. (When I revisited Chocaliska Bay, in 1880, in company with Prof. A. H. Curtiss, I was pleased to see Captain Turner pleasantly located on the Bay, surrounded by rich fields of sugar cane, orange groves and banana gardens. Truly, the "Captain" is well fixed, but not a whit better than he deserves.)

Finally we came to the Ock-kollowah-cootchee. Long and frightful as this name may seem, it was no worse than the thing itself. It was a field of dense saw-grass, about four miles wide. The grass was two feet higher than our heads, and was so dense that we could not see a foot ahead of us. One man was selected to break the road, so that the others could pass. No man could endure this task more than five minutes, and first one and then another "took turns" at pushing in front; the side and shoulders were used in this laborious and painful work. To add to our misery, the sun shone with terrible force upon us, and not a breath of fresh air could reach us. Worse than all, the water was poison, and our feet soon felt the effects of it. The men, who were grumbling before,

lifted up their voices and gave vent to some hair-lifting expressions. The volunteers from Middle Florida, who had never experienced the like before, were almost furious. But in time we emerged from the dreadful Ockkollowah-cootchee, and reached Fort Simon Drum.

There we were joined by other soldiers, and made our way to Fort Myers. At that place we boarded the steamer for Fort Brooke. We were there mustered out of the service, and bade each other good-by.

My readers have indeed been patient in following me thus far. My narrative has been necessarily a prosaic one, for I started out with the determination of telling nothing but the unvarnished truth. Many of the old settlers can bear witness to the truth of my descriptions, and would not be slow to detect any misstatement I might make. I am loth to part with the comrades who accompanied me through many hardships and vicissitudes. My journeys through the far South have been varied and full of incident, and in the second part of my little book, I have endeavored to give a new phase of Florida life, which will, I hope, leave an agreeable impression on the reader, who has been so patient to follow me thus far.

As to the subsequent life of my companions-in-arms, I can say but little. Captain Jacob Mickler was killed shortly after the war, by being thrown from his buggy, near Lake City. Andrew Wiggins disappeared from existence, as it were, without leaving a trace of himself. Ed. Marr died in 1864, on Indian river; and Jim Cook, the dauntless warrior and true hearted gentleman—rough-hewn though he was—departed from a useful life, near Tampa, a few years ago, honored and admired by all who knew him.

[END OF PART I.]

TO THE PIONEERS OF SOUTH FLORIDA.

We have found, with pride and pleasure,
  That our own fair State is known
To the world as the brightest treasure
  Of the semi-tropic zone,
For the East and the West awaken
  To the glory of the South,
And the wondrous story is taken
  Through the North, from mouth to mouth
Of a land, of which they were dreaming,
  As though it were not earth,
But which, today, is beaming
  In the light of its real worth.
Where the winds of evening, sighing
  Through the leaves of the cabbage-palm,
E'er whisper of peace undying,
  And a life of blissful calm;
A land where Time ne'er bringeth
  The snow, nor the dead leaves' fall,
And the angel of summer wingeth
  Her flight through the forest hall.
Where the sons of the colder regions
  Have found a home and retreat—
And they come in happy legions,
  Away from the snow and sleet.
But the land of endless summer,
  Where the orange and the lemon grow,
Had little to offer to the comer,
  In the days of long ago.

* * * * * * * * *

Then, the warriors, in their glory,
  Through the virgin forest roamed,
And 'neath the live oaks, old and hoary,
  They passed, with locks uncombed,
And an eye that mocked at capture,
  And scorned a prisoner's chain—
Will they thrill, with a hunter's rapture,
  In the olden haunts again?
Ah, no; for civilization
  Has banished each swarthy face,
And now, the Seminole nation,
  Is a half-forgotten race.

The guava and lime are growing,
  Where once they slaughtered the deer,
And engine-whistles are blowing,
  Where the war-whoop smote the ear.
The orange its fruit produces,
  Where the Indian wigwam stood,
And offers us golden juices,
  Instead of an enemy's blood.
The Sabbath bells are ringing
  O'er hammock and tangled brake,
And we hear the children singing,
  By the shore of the woodland lake.
Then we ask: Who fought for the honor
  Of our own South Florida—
And who are they, that have won her,
  The glory she wears today?

* * * * * * * * *

We hail them: Hughey and Holden,
Yates, Barber and Summerlin—
Their harvest is rich and golden,
  And bountifully gathered in—
Hendry, Patrick and Lanier,
  Hancock, and Speer, and Bass—
Each dauntless pioneer
  Began in the wire-grass;
And, wresting the land from the gopher,
  They planted the trees that gleam
With the treasures of ancient Ophir,
  And Pactolus' magic stream.
Through the long, dark years of waiting,
  With their noble wives by their side,
And with courage never abating,
  They watched for the turn of the tide;
And now, in their life's declining,
  Their evening sun is shed
On fruit-filled branches twining
  Like laurels above their head.
Let us wind them a wreath of honor,
  From the yellow jessamine—
Yea, drink to their health and honor,
  In shaddock and orange wine!

—Sigma.

SOUTH FLORIDA.

PART SECOND.

SCENES IN SOUTH FLORIDA.

PART 2.

SKETCHES OF TRAVEL, INCIDENT AND ADVENTURE AMONG THE LAKES AND HAMMOCKS OF SEMI-TROPICAL FLORIDA.

CHAPTER I.

HOW SPONGES ARE GATHERED AND DISPOSED OF AT KEY WEST.

There is no town in the world that is anything like the counterpart of Key West. Lying, as it does, at the very threshold of the tropics, it combines, in a rare degree, the snap and vim of the northern clime, with the laxative breath from gardens smothered in the flowers and trees of the equatorial regions. On one side is seen the symmetrical crown of the Australian fir, and close by a stately cocoa-palm rears its head. The dark-eyed Cuban jostles the Georgia "nigger" in the busy market places, and the tall, lank, hawk-nosed "land-stalker" is a Yankee, and no mistake, but, like the rest of his peculiar race, has a faculty of making himself at home, under all circumstances and on all occasions, which you can easily infer from the coolness with which he button-holes every ancient (or modern) Cracker who comes to town with a "kyart load" of garden truck. The sea breezes are just

as pleasant as anybody ever said they were, and I count the town among the nicest places I have seen in the State.

I have seen Key West described as a paradise for lazy men. This is a misrepresentation, and if the writer of that article had ever been there, he would have thought and written differently,—especially if he had ever happened to be without money.

Sponge-gathering and cigar-making are the chief industries of the place, and the former occupation is resorted to by those who cannot endure the strong, narcotic fumes of the cigar factories.

I lived in Key West fully six years before the idea occurred to me to try my fortune among the spongers. Vessel after vessel came in with their precious freight, attracting hordes of anxious buyers, and the fishermen generally brought in no less than one thousand pounds, which sold readily for a dollar a pound. Finally I decided that the "briny deep" should yield up to me some of its treasure, and secured a berth on one of the spongers that plied around the Keys. Besides myself, there were about twenty-five men, who were going to try their fortunes in the business. The manner of fitting out an expedition is as follows:

A vessel is engaged from some owner, who agrees to take half the amount of sponges gathered for the hire of his boat. A stock of provisions is laid in, and each sponge-gatherer is provided with a long pole and hook. The voyages are never more than eight weeks in length, and in that time, if the "catch" has been successful, there ought to be eight hundred "bunches" on board. A bunch weighs about two pounds and is worth at present about four dollars, although at the time I was engaged in the business the sponger could get only a dollar a pound.

Our crew set sail, and after a four days' voyage we came to the Anclote Keys, then a noted sponging ground. When we reached the grounds the small boats were

launched and other preparations made for the business. We had four of these small boats, and each boat was sent out with a man who was armed with a twenty-five-foot pole, with two prongs at the end. I rowed my little vessel some distance from the ship and began looking for sponges.

The water was very clear and about twelve feet deep. The bottom was covered with myriads of curious and beautiful growths, such as the Fenestrella, or sea-fan; the sea-feather, and tall, tree-like plants, which I could not classify. White rocks covered the bottom, and on these I could see thousands of young sponges growing. They were a glossy black, and most of them too small to be gathered. But as I went on I could see larger specimens, and finally I reached downward and drew up a fine one. There are many varieties of sponges, the sheep's-wool variety being the most valuable of all. Next in order come the yellow sponge, the "glove," the "grass," "boat," and "loggerhead." The last named variety is absolutely worthless, and is never gathered. The sheep's-wool is distinguished from other kinds by a multitude of small protuberances, and by its shining black color.

Thrusting the pole downward through the water, I inserted the prongs under the largest of the sponges, and it took but little exertion to detach them from the rock to which they were growing. When brought to the surface, the sponge appears to be a soft, limp mass of jelly. A tough, black membrane envelopes it all over, and this is not removed until the next day. The sponge, after lying out of the water, dies within a few hours, and the animal tissue dissolves, forming a dark, ill-smelling fluid, which the natives call "gurry."

We had selected a spot where the water was only five feet deep, and had driven a circular row of mangrove stakes, forming a pen, which we termed a "kraal." Several of these kraals had been made, and to one of them

I carried my load of sponges on the day after they had been gathered. Some of the others had also brought loads in, and after letting them soak awhile we began beating them with sticks and punching them about in the water, inside the kraals. In an hour or so the black, outside scurf, or membrane was gone, also all traces of the animal tissue were washed away, leaving nothing but the skeleton sponge. Then we took needles and thread and made them into bunches, so they could be handled easily. Afterward they were taken to the ship.

Deep-water sponging is a much more laborious operation. Two men set out in a boat and seek a suitable spot where the water is not more than thirty feet deep. One of these men sculls the boat gently along, while the other takes a glass, constructed for the purpose, and leaning over the side of the boat, examines the bottom closely. As soon as a large sponge is discovered they stop, and the long, slender pole is let down into the water with a sweep of the arm, which is acquired only through a long and tiresome experience. Some of the largest of all sponges are found in deep water, and there has been so much gathering done in the shallow places that one is forced to seek deeper water or give up the business.

When the "catch" was completed, we returned to Key West and sold our sponges. They were separated into lots, and a large number of buyers inspected each lot and made bids. Whenever a buyer has made his bid, the auctioneer proceeds to call out the amount bid for each lot, and thus each cargo or parcel of sponges is consigned to the highest bidder. I have seen as much as fourteen thousand dollars' worth of sponges sold in a few hours, at Key West. The price at that time was about one dollar a pound, but owing to the increased demand, and perhaps decreasing supply, the price is doubled. I have been reliably informed that substantial steps have been taken toward preserving them from ex-

tinction by planting them, and "cultivating" them, as it were. I cannot tell the reader just how that is done, but no doubt it is practiced successfully. If they have done that much I shall not be at all surprised to learn that they have since built large factories in Key West, where sponges are manufactured, by the wholesale, from saw-palmetto and wool.

Nearly all the sponges around the coast of Florida were destroyed some eight or ten years ago by some mysterious, unaccountable calamity. The first sign of the hidden scourge was the appearance of dead fish on the surface of the water, and soon the shores were lined with their dead bodies, and the air became almost pestilential. The oldest and most experienced fishermen were at a loss to account for it. Finally somebody noticed that there were green streaks in the water, two or three hundred feet wide and many miles long, occurring at intervals around the coast, from the mouth of the Withlacoochee river to Biscayne Bay. The poisonous strips of water were found as far as thirty miles out at sea, and nearly everything was killed in their wake. Even the sponges were destroyed, and fish became very scarce in the markets along the coast. Many houses in Key West are provided with cupolas which are used for looking out for wrecks on the reef. From these cupolas we could see immense quantities of dead fish of all sizes, from the largest sharks down, floating on the water. On the shore were myriads of the strangest looking fish I ever saw, and there were some species of which no one had ever before heard or seen, and which must have come from very deep water. Even the dreaded moray (a long, slender, serpent-like fish, which lives in holes in the rocks, where the water is a few fathoms deep, and whose bite is very painful and dangerous), and thousands of sponges of all varieties, besides many curious species of crustaceans, lined the shores in heaps, and the task

of burying them was no light matter. Porpoises seemed to be the only kind of creature that could withstand the mysterious poison.

Fishing smacks, on their way to Cuba with a cargo of live fish on board, sometimes encountered these streaks of dark green water. As soon as the smacks entered the poisoned water; the fish, which were kept in "wells" in the bottom of the boats, commenced floundering and dashing around, and in a few moments turned on their backs and died. In this way many of the poor fishermen lost the fruits of their hard labor and were forced to put about and return to their fishing grounds. The strange plague lasted a month or two, when the green streaks disappeared, but it was a good while before fish became plentiful again.

Many theories were advanced concerning this curious occurrence, but I have never regarded any of them as entirely satisfactory. Some people thought it was a poisonous liquid that flowed from the Withlacoochee, and, mingling with the Gulf Stream, encircled the peninsula. I don't believe a word of that, for there is nothing in any Florida river to produce such a result. Others, with more cogency, insisted that there had been some eruption on the bottom of the ocean, whereby an immense quantity of acid or gas was liberated, causing death and destruction to almost everything with which it came in contact. I don't suppose the real cause of the mysterious plague will ever be found out, but the fact of its having destroyed millions of dollars' worth of fish is well known among those who were living around the coast at that time.

CHAPTER II.

CATCHING THE MANATEE, OR SEA-COW, ON THE ST. LUCIE—DESCRIPTION OF THE CURIOUS CREATURE.

The St. Lucie river is one of the shortest in the State, if not in America, being only ten miles in length. It is, however, scarcely a separate, clearly defined river, and some contend that it is merely a part of Indian river. A small stream is formed from the water that oozes from the Halpattee-oka Flats, and broadens and deepens until it is navigable for small boats, and when it reaches St. Lucie bay it is of quite a respectable size.

There is something peculiar about this stream. Along its banks plants are found which are sought in vain elsewhere; and the Indians regard it with mysterious awe, so that it might be with propriety called the Ganges of the Seminoles. But the characteristic which gives it such importance in the eye of the hunter is that here the rare manatee is to be found. These animals were once quite abundant, in many parts of the extreme South, but I think I can with propriety assert that the St. Lucie river is the only place where the manatee can be looked for with any degree of certainty. The high prices paid for these rare animals induce many people in this region to hunt them, and it was my good fortune once to be present at the capture of a large one.

Perhaps it would be better to give a description of the manatee before we proceed to tell how they are caught. It is a difficult task, for we have here to deal with a creature whose like is not to be found anywhere. A more awkward, helpless and curious creature than the manatee, when landed, I never saw. The head is broad

and the eyes are completely hidden by heavy folds of skin, and the mouth is shaped very much like that of a cow, in every way but the teeth. These are so long and sharp that one might at first be led to believe that they belonged to a carniverous animal. The sea-cow, nevertheless, is a strict vegetarian, and eats nothing but aquatic plants. It has been asserted that its only food is the manatee-grass, which grows in immense quantities in the St. Lucie river. This grass has large, broad blades, and is found in eight or ten feet of water, growing on the bottom and extending to the surface.

A full grown manatee should weigh about twelve hundred pounds, although one monster was captured, many years ago, which weighed fifteen hundred. Such a one would be twelve feet in length, and have a girth of four feet. They are provided with flippers about ten inches in length, and the body diminishes into a large fan-like tail, similar to a porpoise. The skin is black and sparsely covered with short, black hair. They move with considerable rapidity through the water, and although a most clumsy-looking animal when on land, they understand very well how to conduct themselves in their native element. They possess, perhaps, the most acute hearing of all animals. So delicate and perfect is this sense in the manatee that the sound of an oar, no matter how carefully handled, will alarm them at a distance of half a mile. It is a common habit, in Key West, in speaking of a man whose hearing is acute, to say that he hears like a manatee. This is a wise dispensation of Providence, for the manatee is lacking in almost every ordinary means of self-defense. When caught, they never attempt to bite, and cannot in any way resent the indignities offered by their captors.

I tasted manatee flesh once, and shall never forget it. The fattest, juciest Tennessee beef is by no means equal to it, and I very much doubt if there is anything

in the animal kingdom that is so entirely delicious. One of them was stranded on the beach near St. Lucie bay, and some hunters found and killed it, and that was the time I found an opportunity to test the flavor of the flesh.

In the year 1858 I met a man named Kelly who, with two or three others, had started out on a manatee hunt. They had a large marlin net, and a wooden tank for the purpose of keeping the animal should one be caught.

The spot selected was a cove, formed by a bend of the river, where the water was twelve feet deep. The net, which was three hundred feet long, was extended betwen stakes set firmly in the bottom, and the hunters retired to their huts in the adjacent hammock, and patiently awaited results. Two or three times a day we went down and inspected the net, but nothing was to be seen, except an occasional alligator, who beat a hasty retreat through the large meshes, as soon as he perceived the danger he was in. A small rowboat was used in going to and from the net, which was a quarter of a mile from the shore.

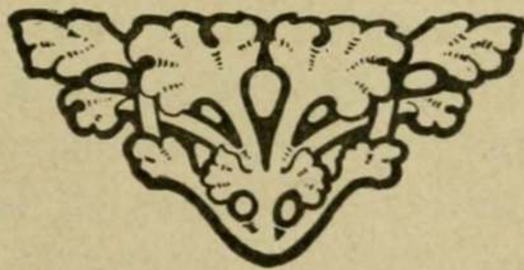
After two weeks of waiting we were at last rewarded by seeing the floats bobbing about in a lively fashion, one morning when we visited the nets. Excitedly, but with sure movements, the men took a bundle of inch rope and set out for the captured prize, who was creating quite a commotion in the water, and tangling himself up beautifully in the relentless meshes of the marlin. I did not go out in the boat and consequently did not get the first sight of the monster, but they soon tugged him into shallow water. A combination of ropes and pulleys was arranged and he was dragged ashore, and with his twelve hundred pounds he was by no means easily managed. He was then placed in the tank, which was six by ten feet, and kept until a sloop arrived, which carried the precious freight to Key West. This was a male, and about a week afterward we caught a female. This

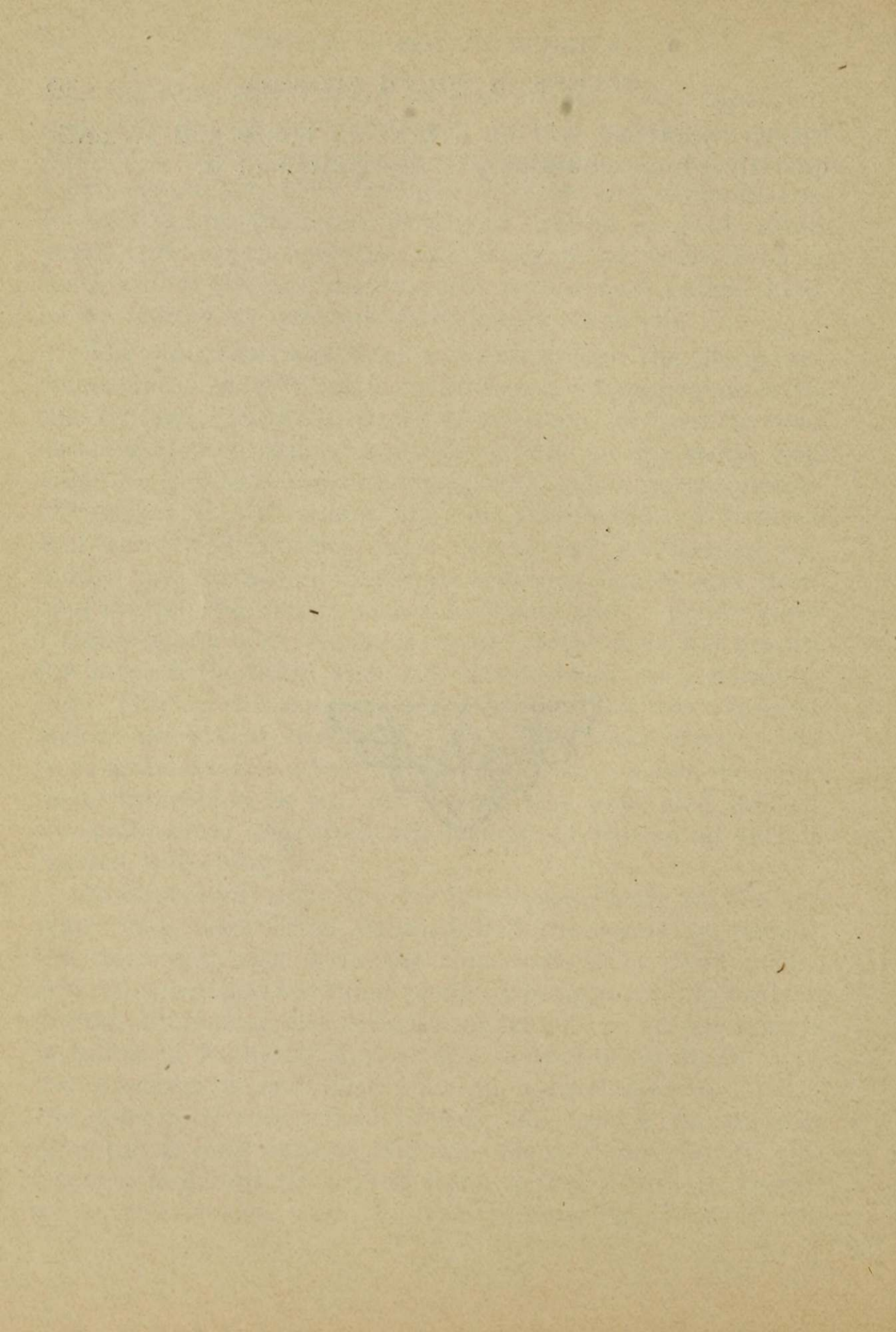
was the only pair I know of ever having been captured, and they should have brought quite a handsome price. But, as it was, they were fairly given away. As well as I can remember, they brought only seventy-five dollars. P. T. Barnum paid one thousand dollars in gold, some years ago, for a manatee not as large as some I have seen, and their extreme scarcity would now cause them to be valued at perhaps three times as much.

The manatee was kept a week before the sloop arrived, and I formed quite an intimate acquaintance with the strange creature. For the first day or two he was shy, but I commenced scratching him on the head, and when he saw that my intentions were good, our acquaintance ripened into something like friendship. I stroked and scratched his big, ugly head, and he opened his mouth and devoured bananas, cabbage leaves and delicate bits of vegetables which I offered him. Every time I came to the tank the huge beast would open his mouth for some little tidbit and present his head for a scratching. During the week the water in the tank was changed twice—once with fresh and once with salt water; one is as good as the other for the manatee. I had become quite interested in my pet before the week had passed by, and rather regretted the advent of the sloop which carried him away.

In days long gone by the Seminoles living in Whitewater bay, near Cape Sable, killed the manatee, jerked the flesh and sold it to the Spaniards at a good price, and ten years ago the meat could be bought at fifty cents a pound. Of course, the animals are becoming far too scarce to admit of its being sold at all. There is no doubt that the manatee is fast becoming an extinct animal. Like the dodo bird which flourished in the East in the middle ages but is now extinct, the sea-cow will pass out of existence, and will be looked upon a few centuries hence as a monstrosity, and the only remaining trace of its

former existence will be a few old bones and an antiquated volume containing a description of it.





CHAPTER III.

HUNTING BEE-TREES ON THE UPPER ST. JOHNS RIVER.

A STORY AND A TRAGEDY.

Life in Florida has its sweets and, like the grandmother, its bitters also. Among the sweets of an existence in the State may be reckoned the finding of bee-trees and consequent discovery of a fine lot of pure, rich, wild honey. That is, provided the little insects do not take a notion to avenge the desecration of their castle and destruction of their treasure. And I have often known them to "get in their work" on their human robbers in such a forcible manner as to render the job anything but sweet.

Of course the incident I am about to relate was not the first of the kind I had experienced, for I had been familiar with bee-hunting since early boyhood. But I do not remember to have ever had such success as we had that time. The way it happened was thus:

I was living on Indian river, near the mouth of the St. Sebastian, and one fine, sunny day in early spring, two of my neighbors came to me and proposed that we go on a hunt for bee-trees. The idea was favorable to me, for I had long been wishing for a taste of honey, and we made preparations for starting next day. Each took a gun and plenty of ammunition, together with provisions for a week.

Bees and honey were not the only objects we were going to look for. Obeying an instinct which is very strong in many people to expect something better ahead, we thought we could find land in that region we were going to visit which would eclipse anything we had yet

seen. Our destination was a certain region on the west side of the St. Johns river, near Lake Winder, about fifty miles away. We reached the place on the second day, and were disappointed to find that the land was low and flat, and in every respect inferior to that which we had left behind. But we applied ourselves next day to the hunt for bee-trees, and were not disappointed. In the morning we pressed our way through the briars and bushes of two or three bay-heads, and entered a low palmetto flat. It was not long before we heard a hum in the air, and one of my comrades, named Patrick, directed a sharp glance upward and saw a few bees issuing from a hole in a large pine about thirty feet from the ground. Immediately afterward we found another tree which bore unmistakable evidence of being the home of a large quantity of bees.

We marked the trees with our axes, scalping off the bark and leaving a broad, white mark which could be seen a long distance through the forest. Continuing through the woods, we kept our eyes and ears strained to detect the little workers. In going three-fourths of a mile we found no less than eight trees, and they all gave promise of a large yield of honey. But we postponed cutting the trees until we had made a more thorough inspection of the surrounding country.

That afternoon we shouldered our guns and went on a hunt for deer and bear. The St. Johns at this place was about one hundred feet across, and was navigable for small steamers, although none had ever penetrated that region at that time. We reached Lake Winder late in the afternoon. Near this like we found a clump of fine cabbage-palms, and heard a strange, ripping sound, as we drew near. Looking up in one of the trees we were astonished to see a large bear sitting on top, trying to pull out the tender bud of the palm. He had flattened out the crown leaves so as to form quite a good

lodgment for himself, and was untiring in his efforts to extract the sweet, tender bud. He had not yet observed us, and was too much absorbed, perhaps, in the anticipation of the delicious feast he was going to enjoy, to notice his surroundings. Finally the bud broke loose and the bear swung backward with all his weight, but the bud came out too easy. He had not calculated the sudden relaxation, and the result was that he lost his balance and came crashing to the ground. He hastily gathered himself up, and at the same moment his eyes fell on us. With a startled grunt he scrambled away into the bushes, and I must confess that by the time our firearms were in readiness, he was thrashing his way through the thicket, safely out of our reach. Pursuit was worse than useless, and it was growing late, so we returned to our camp.

In spite of the low, flat character of the land, it had its charms. The saw-palmetto and loblolly bay were in bloom, and their heavy sweetness burdened the night air, while the ground was carpeted with the spicy, aromatic pennyroyal, which gave forth its aroma as we walked through it. As Patrick remarked, the conditions were in every way favorable for bees, and he confidently predicted that the yield of honey from our trees would be a large one.

As early next morning as we could make preparations we commenced on the bees. Two of us took a good, keen ax apiece and proceeded. Our first tree was two feet in diameter, and "sound as a dollar." But our axes were sharp, and the thought of a solid yard of well-filled honeycomb braced our muscles, and the bees had hardly begun to get uneasy before their dwelling place trembled in its foundations, and soon smote the earth. They were somewhat stunned by the fall, and I took advantage of the opportunity by running forward and stopping the hole with a bunch of moss.

About a foot from the hole we cut out a large chip and proceed cautiously to open up the hidden treasure. Meanwhile, one of the men took a short stick, wrapped a bunch of rags around it and set it on fire. This produced a large volume of strong, suffocating smoke, and was intended to discourage the angry insects from pouring out of the holes and attacking us.

Soon the honey was reached, and with very little trouble. Patrick reached into the hollow and drew out a huge piece of comb, covered with dead and crippled bees, and although thousands were crawling over his hands, none showed any disposition to sting. Whenever they tried to swarm out of their prison, an application of the burning rag would repress them instantly. From this tree we secured at least twenty-five pounds of the best honey that ever was gathered from flowers. We then retired to a shady spot, each with a large piece of comb, and after selecting a few large saw-palmetto leaves, we wove a net of them and deposited our treasure thereon. The bees soon filled the air around the fallen tree, and would have perhaps made it lively for any one who had had the temerity to approach them.

Seated on a log underneath a large cabbage-palm, we had before us a feast that would have tempted a dyspeptic anchorite. Be it known that three mortals on that day ate so much honey that they avowed the bees could have all the rest, for all they cared. But after the fierce thirst, occasioned by such a diet, was quenched, the work of destruction was renewed.

With his hat on the ground under his feet, and his head thrown back against the palm-tree, Patrick was nibbling a choice bit of new unsealed comb, when he suddenly remembered that he had an adventure to tell. He was in that happy stage when the mind is as tranquil as a spring morning, and the stomach has earned the warm gratitude of its owner, for having such a liberal capacity.

Patrick was full—not quite too full for utterance, else we would have been compelled to forego the pleasure of learning just how and where he passed through such pleasant experiences.

Clearing his throat with a consequential air, he began: "When I joined Cap. H's. regiment, a couple of years ago, nobody ever thought about me a-gettin' any higher than a private, or a corporal, at the best. But I was a-gwine to prove jist what stuff was in me, and I saved my reegiment, and don't you believe nothin' else."

Of course we wanted to know how Pat had saved his regiment, and after waiting discreetly a few minutes, in order to give us an opportunity of asking him to continue his narrative, he proceeded:

"Well, I tell you how it was: You see, we kinder got out o' grub. Now, I've knowed of reegiments that fowt like killin' snakes, but didn't have no shootin' irons, nother; but when it comes to a lot of men fightin' when they hain't got enough in their craws to keep a week-old chicken alive two minutes, they hain't a-gwine to do much fightin', I can tell you. Well, it was just that bad with us. We tramped through swamps and over hills, and we couldn't shoot nothin', not even a kyarn crow, nor a buzzard. The Cap. had begun to look mighty black, and says he, 'Well, bullys, hit's about gittin' the best of us, this time, and we mowt as well say our prayers and hold a council of starvation,' says he. Says I, 'Cap., I'm nothin' but a common soldier, but if you'll gimme a chance I'll dust around and have everybody full to the chin before two hours,' says I. The Cap. allowed I was jist a-talkin' to hear myself, but all the same, he 'lowed I might try, seein' as how things was lookin' so black. To-be-sure, some of the men was a-lyin' down, and fixin' to drop off. One of 'em 'lowed as how he had been born with a pipe in his mouth, and was a-gwine to take his last smoke, feelin' happy and contented. I told

'em as how I was a-gwine to knock all that nonsence in the head, and that they must not give up till they hearn from me again. But they jist wunk their eyes and rolled over."

The listeners cleared their throats incredulously at this tragic turn of affairs, but Pat continued, as he artistically severed a piece of comb and cautiously proceeded to consume it:

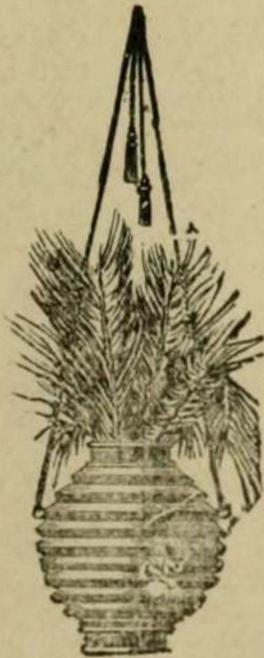
"Well, I left 'em lyin' there, and knowed I'd have to skedaddle or I'd find a fust-class funeral all in full blast when I got back. I took a ax and went after a bee-tree. And, lo and behold! I hadn't gone more'n a quarter 'fore I seen a stream of bees a-comin' out'n a big forked cypress. I fell to choppin' on it, and hadn't much more'n got through the sap, when out popped a stream of honey as big as my arm." A most energetic yawning interrupted the narrator at this moment, but he dauntlessly continued:

"Maybe you wouldn't have believe it, but that honey was as clear as spring-water, and I cotch my hat full the fust thing. 'But gosh!' says I, 'that won't begin to be a taste for then starvin' critters.' So I took and peeled off a big hunk of bark and let it run full. Well, I looked through the swamp and seen a 'tater patch on a hill on t'other side. I knowed them fellers 'ould want sump'in' 'sides 'pyore honey, so I run over there, and it wan't no time 'fore I was a'grabblin' them 'taters. Yes, a big flop-eared hound did make for me, but about the time he come "yoogle, yoogle,' atter me, I gin him a dost from my rifle, and you know them there pills allus gits in their work——"

At this supreme moment a solitary bee wandered past, and perhaps becoming angry at the coolness with which we had appropriated his hard earnings, surely and quickly selected Pat's upper lip for his resting place. The struggle was short and sharp. Pat danced the can-can,

making havoc with some of our honey, and it was with a sad eye and pulsating lip that he resumed his seat. His remarks were brief but to the point, as had been the encounter with the angry insect, and when we ventured to ask whether that was the kind of "pills" he had referred to, he looked dangerous. We wondered what became of the starving "reegiment" that had lain down to die, but we were not enlightened any further as to their fate. Pat went about with an overhanging lip and a dogged determination to say as little as possible.

We then cut several other trees, and secured as much of the honey as we could carry home in our improvised knapsacks of saw-palmetto. We brought home enough honey to last for several weeks. Even at this day, the region around Lake Winder is rich in bee-trees and honey, and people sometimes go as far as thirty miles to get a stand of bees from that vicinity.



CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH A COMPANY OF SOLDIERS GET SHORT OF RATIONS, AND THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO A REMARKABLE FAMILY.

I beg my readers to excuse me for recurring to an incident which might have come under the head of "War Reminiscences;" but, at this day and time we can, through the agency of memory, enter the battlefield and view the strife without fear of stray bullets and the terrors of those days have given place to the quiescent recollections, which still form the darling theme of many a veteran in the evening of life. As this will probably be the last of my "war series," I hope the reader will patiently hear me through the recital of an adventure of mine which, while perhaps devoid of dramatic or sensational detail, is none the less strongly impressed on my memory.

First, I will introduce you to our camp, situated on the east side of Pease Creek, half a mile from Fort Meade, on a little stream called Sink Branch. You observe that the surrounding country is high, rolling pine land, but as we cross a low ridge covered with willow-oaks, we come suddenly upon one of the wonders of this remarkable region. Making our way through the tangle of myrtle and palmetto, we suddenly behold, lying at our feet, a crystal-clear spring, bubbling up with great energy. The spring is twenty feet across and is fathomless. In all probability this spring is fed through some deep subterranean passage, by the waters of Pease Creek. The water is deliciously cool and as pure as mountain dew. Under the shade of some overhanging willow-oaks, we

pitched our tents, and I doubt if we could have found a better camping-spot in South Florida.

We rose from an invigorating breakfast of fresh venison, on the morning of the 10th of May, 1857, and assembled respectfully together, to receive commands for the day's service from our Captain, William B. Mosely, of the Florida Mounted Volunteers. (Captain Mosely was a son of ex-Governor Mosely, of Florida, and was one of the best men I ever knew. The soldiers were all much attached to him. He once owned a large tract of land on the Heights, near Palatka, and I believe is still living.) For many days previous we had not been called upon to perform any serious or exciting duty, and had deported ourselves as hunters, rather than soldiers. But now, something more serious was before us. Captain Mosely told us, briefly, that we were to go on a scout and gather in the few Seminoles who were yet out of the fold. In other words, we were to penetrate a region which, at that time, was almost entirely unknown and untraveled. That, too, in the face of rumors of the ugliest sort, concerning the dire fate of certain venturesome parties who had penetrated into this unpeopled wilderness in search of game, but no animal came near them, except the black vultures which found their poor, starved and shriveled corpses near some bay or hidden stream, where the lost hunters had lain down to die, in despair of ever getting home again. The distance to be traversed was something near a hundred miles, and the "Jornada del Muerto"* that lay between, held out but little inducement to

*The "Jornada del Muerto" (Spanish "Journey of Death") is a long strip of land lying west of the Rio Grande, where travelers often perish for want of food and water, while trying to cross the great soda plains. In the Florida "Jornada," however, the traveler suffered only for want of food. Water was plentiful, and only the lack of game and the sparse population rendered it unsafe for those who attempted the journey. But since then the region has become the home of a happy and prosperous people.

us, although not one of the stout Florida volunteers hesitated for a moment to obey the call of duty. Our destination was Camp Whipple, where a company of regulars were stationed. At that place we were to turn over our prisoners, if we were so fortunate as to make a capture, make our reports, and return to Fort Meade.

It was perhaps six o'clock in the morning when we shouldered arms and marched forth over the long slopes, carpeted with wire grass, which quivered and swayed in the morning breeze like a ground-swell on the ocean. The cavernous excavations of the gophers, and the little hillocks of yellow sand, upheaved by the "salamanders," were the only traces of animal life to be seen in that lonely spot.

Then we descended into long stretches of flatwoods, covered with a rank growth of blueberry, myrtle, saw palmetto and siren-flower. Our eyes were well practised in detecting Indian trails, but we utterly failed to discover anything whatever. Evidently the wary redskins were ensconced in some thick, shady hammock or bay-head, not trusting themselves out on open ground.

And whenever one of these jungles was approached, we began to look out for a shower of bullets from the hidden foe. Very often had a whole company been routed by a fusilade from a few dastardly rascals hidden in the palmetto and bramble, through which they glided with the ease of rattlesnakes, when pursued. In the hammocks the white man was hardly a match for the Seminole.

We marched along until the end of the second day, when our provisions gave out. The farther we went the less encouraging became the prospect, and in the morning we began to feel serious, for as the sun ascended, our appetites rose accordingly, and the wherewith to satisfy our cravings was nowhere to be found. From hunting human beings, we turned our attention toward hunting

for something to eat. When the day was far advanced, and we were faint and weary, one of the men found a bunch of comptie, the famous bread-root of the Indians. We tried to prepare some of the roots for food, by peeling them and frying them in the little mickle of lard we had saved, and we forced down a few spoonsful of the wretched mess. It is not necessary to say that we vowed to discard comptie from our bill of fare in the future. When prepared properly, it tastes very much like arrow-root or casava, although it does not contain as much nourishment as either.

The morning of the third day dawned upon a landscape radiant with dewy flowers, but it brought but little comfort to the handful of starving soldiers, who were looking as though they were well-nigh exhausted. "Tat" Kendrick and I volunteered to set forth in search of Camp Whipple, which we knew must lie within ten miles of us. Mounting our ponies we struck out toward Pease Creek, and reached the mouth of that stream after two hours' ride. At this place we fired off our guns, and were rejoiced to hear the answering report of a gun away off to the south. We repeated the signal, fearing that there might have been some mistake, and again the friendly booming of the guns told us that deliverance was near. My companion, "Tat" Kendrick, usually so vivacious, witty and full of life, had grown haggard and wan, and the few words he uttered were freighted with woe unutterable. His hopes revived, however, when he heard the guns. Right here, before I go any further, I wish to say a few words about the Kendrick family. They were a jovial, fun-loving set of mortals, who often whiled away the hours when in congenial company, by telling monstrous tales, which by far eclipsed Munchhausen or Jules Verne in the richness and grotesqueness of their imagination. Finally, "Old Bill Kendrick" became known as the "tarnationest story-teller in all Flurridy,"

and so rapidly did his fame spread, that people began to "make allowances" for evertyhing Mr. Kendrick said, whether joking or in earnest. This sad state of affairs did not alarm the old gentleman in the least, although it did him great injustice, for he was, after all, a sober, industrious citizen, his greatest drawback being a light regard for the welfare of his own good name.

As usual, when a person attained distinction in that region, everybody was ready to swell his reputation and add to his fame. Anybody who could make up a yarn on old Billy, repeated it whenever practicable, and many of his traducers were his inferiors, when it came to that. Somebody, who had very little else to do, told a huge story about Billy Kendrick and his brother Tat, which represented the latter as having once out-lied his brother Bill so completely that the old gentleman was sorely grieved, and bowed his head and wept, and the sound of his weeping was heard afar aff—boohooing like a colicky baby. I can not at this moment distinctly recall the yarn supposed to have been told by Tat, but I think it was something about a fish he had caught, which was so large that it made a hole in water so big that it was three days in filling up. They said that the yarn reformed Bill, and that he quit the romancing business then, and for all time.

Tat Kendrick rode off toward the spot from whence the sounds of the gun came, while I returned to the camp and reported the good news to our captain. It put new life into every man and strengthened them for the journey.

Now, I am strongly tempted to unveil a tragedy which was being enacted as I came into camp, wherein a poor, helpless gopher was the victim, perishing at the hands of a dozen soldiers, but I will not betray my companions-in-arms for any consideration. Besides, if I were to tell you that the men, with all due reverence and respect,

presented the two fore-legs of the miserable little turtle to their captain, before consuming the rest with the relish of starved vultures, you would not believe it; so, I will remain silent on the subject.

When we reached Camp Whipple, we were in a sad condition; completely exhausted and half-delirious. We were, of course, not allowed to eat as fast as our appetites prompted, and it was a long time before we were satisfied. We were taken care of in the best possible manner, and in a week were able to return to Fort Meade.

CHAPTER V.

SOME REMARKS ABOUT THE SEMINOLES—DESCRIPTION OF THE "GREEN-CORN DANCE," AND OTHER CUSTOMS.

The annals of this decaying race, if written in strict obedience to the laws of truth, and without prejudice, would place them in a better light than the one in which most people are disposed to regard them. The Comanche and Arapahoe are as inferior to the Seminole, morally and mentally, as is possible, in two tribes of Indians. The fiendish instinct which leads the wild tribes of the West to porlong the death of a captive over a slow fire, is totally lacking in the red man of Florida. Through all the long and bloody strife which preceded the settlement of Florida, no well-grounded tale was ever told of a Seminole putting a captive to death in an unnatural manner. He was none the less heroic or warlike, for his lack of brutality. In war, his first thought was to subdue his enemy at once and forever, with a bullet; the thought of a lingering death was not pleasant to him. The customs and habits of the aboriginees of Florida are not such as would grace a parlor or ballroom, but they are by no means repulsive. The wild, free life which suits them best, has engendered in them a love of freedom, which they know how to fight for with energy and wear with dignity.

However, the few Seminoles who remain as relics of past glory and power, are becoming demoralized, in an alarming degree, by the encroachments of modern civilization and "wyomi" (whisky). These potent agents have, in a great measure, subjugated the eesta-chatta's

wild, unbridled tendency to live and die as free, and as innocent of work, as the alligators and herons of his native marshes.

The average Seminole of today scorns any impediment in the way of breeches, and seems to think that these use of these garments betokens little else but vanity and extravagance on the part of those who wear them. The change of the season does not affect his attire, for the only garment between him and the world—a stout, well-greased shirt—serves him as well in winter as in spring. Sometimes they come striding into Kissimmee, as stately and en deshabille as a bronze statue of Mercury. Lately, however, the braves are presented with a pair of pants immediately upon their arrival in Kissimmee. Tom Tiger has formed the habit of dressing in a becoming manner, and when rigged out in a pair of new pants, a pair of moccasins, a bright, clean calico shirt, and half a dozen red handkerchiefs around his neck, crowned with an immense red turban, no one can help admiring him. His splendid figure, and the careless, unconscious grace with which he carries himself, will always impress the person who meets Tom Tiger for the first time. Billy Buster, who is a little older than Tom, does not reflect much glory on his ancestry. Billy still remains as unregenerated as can be, and disdainfully refuses to accept the pair of pants usually tendered him upon his arrival in Kissimmee. Nobody ever saw Billy Buster dressed like a white man, and it's very likely that nobody ever will.

The Seminole language is a curious anomaly of verbs, adjectives and nouns. I am almost tempted to say that these complete the parts of speech in Seminole grammar. The words are almost invariably accented on the penutimate syllable, and are rich in aspirates and linguidentals. Like the Russian language, the Semonile has no article, the words "the" and "a" being unknown. I will give

the following Seminole words, with their equivalent in English, in lieu of a longer dissertation on the grammar of the language, and in pronouncing them the reader should bear in mind that all the words are accented on the syllable next to the last:

Ab-bass-wah .... Bread.
Soff-kee .... Grits, or Comptie.
Po-leg-dah .... Stool, or Chair.
Ee-fah .... Dog.
Hal-pa-tah .... Alligator.
Ee-cho .... Deer.
Che-lok-kah .... Horse.
Wah-ku-hoo-tee .... Bull.
Wah-ku .... Steer.
Wah-ku-pos-see .... Cow.
Wah-ku-pos-see-ne-hah .... Butter.
Toad-kah .... Fire.
O-shay .... Rain.
To-kabiss-loo .... Boat.

The following words form an exception to the general rule, having the rising inflection on the last syllable:

Chan-kee .... Hand.
Thath-o .... Fish.
Chit-tokkanee-wah .... Money.
Chit-tokkanee-wah-katee .... Purse.
Lo-kasee .... Bear.

The above will suffice to give the reader an idea of this barbarous tongue, and will probably satisfy all who survive the first trial.

I do not think there are more than three hundred Indians living in Florida at the present day, although no accurate figures can be obtained, owing to their shyness and dread of anything pertaining to "red tape." Rumor once had it that Jacob Summerlin, one of the foremost of the frontiersmen of Florida, and a cattle-king of no mean dominion, once laid a striking and original

plan for taking a census of all the Seminoles in Florida, which apparently should have succeeded. It was alleged that he sent an agent among them to announce that a grand festival was to be given at Fort Myers, and the whole tribe was invited to partake of it. But the plan was a failure. "Holiwaugus—no good!" was the sententious reply, and no amount of argument or explanation could convince them that the invitation did not arise from sinister motives.

Like most other tribes, the Seminoles consider the labors of the field far beneath their dignity. The squaw is the farmer, while the brave warrior scours the hammocks and flatwoods in search of game, or dozes away the long summer hours beneath the oak and palm. The fine corn and pumpkins, of which I have spoken in the first part of my book, were planted and tended by these patient, horny-handed daughters of toil.

Many years ago, I became acquainted with a young man named Moore, who had earned quite a reputation by his attempts to affiliate with the Seminoles, and become as one of them. He stayed with them three months, and in that period of time saw many of their peculiar manners and customs displayed. He often spoke of the famous "green-corn dance," which he had once seen. Now, I never was an eye-witness of this peculiar ceremony, and will have to quote Mr. Moore as my authority for the following description:

He had been with them perhaps a month, and had been initiated into many of their mysteries. In his intercourse with them he had picked up enough of their language to make himself intelligible to them; his fine sportsmanship, unerring aim and unfailing good humor had won the admiration of the young braves, and even the old, long-headed warriors had begun to regard him with less suspicion. Many a frisky squirrel, seemingly secure, on the topmost boughs of the towering live oaks

and hickories, came whirling to the ground at the call of his rifle, and if he "jumped" a deer, there was sure to be venison in camp that day. Littleton Hancock, in his palmiest days, could not have been a greater terror to deer than was this man Moore.

As I said before, he had been with the Indians about a month, when he saw the dance, and it was in early May. One day, soon after the orange blossoms had faded in the hammocks, and the tassels were just browning over the fields of corn, there were great preparations made for some sort of feast, which Moore could not account for, and the Indians were not communicative on the subject. Great piles of comptie had been dug and washed; many cabbage palms trees were slaughtered, and the snow-white buds prepared for the pot. A spot of ground was selected in the shadiest part of the hammock, where three giant-bodied live oaks leaned their great arms together, and a large space of ground under the trees was divested of its growth of palmettoes and bushes and swept clean. A fire of rich pine-knots and oak limbs was built in the center, and after awhile there was a deep bed of live coals. The women came in from the fields, laden with green corn, which they husked and placed in the embers to roast, while the old men held secret council together, and skinned the deer and wild hogs brought in by the young warriors. From the dark recesses of the Coontee-sassa-hollober, the ancient warriors came, bearing venison and bear-meat on their shoulders; from the islands of Okeechobee, and the heron-tenanted prairies and hammocks of the great Coontee-seema-pollawah and Saffaj-eehojee's Town, the dusky red legions came trooping to the scene of festivity.

When the guests had assembled, the chief, glittering in war paint and silver ornaments, rose to his feet, and in a few words, directed the opening of the performance. A circle was formed and a march begun, during which a

strange, dirge-like song was chanted; faster and faster moved the procession around the fire. On and on they swept, not pausing a moment for breath, until finally the yelling, dancing, jumping redskins sank down to rest and to feast on the venison, comptie and palm-cabbage, which were temptingly displayed on platters of palmetto. The fragrant brown ears of roasted corn were brought forward and distributed among the throng, as an emblem of future peace and prosperity.

Moore said that one peculiar feature of this custom was that all fugitives who had been banished from the tribes were allowed to return, for a brief period, even when they had been exiled for some grave offense. As the procession formed around the fire, there could be seen brothers, sisters, parents and sometimes sweethearts, standing and waiting for the dear one who had been long absent.

At a Seminole wedding, the new couple enter a ring composed of two or three dozen dancers. The procession moves rapidly around them; the bridegroom carries in his hand a piece of venison, and the bride has an ear of corn, which she hands to her husband, saying: "I will provide bread if you will furnish the meat." Whereupon the warrior presents the venison to his squaw, and repeats his part of the formula.

Moore also witnessed a war dance, in which over fifty braves participated. While they were forming a ring, preparatory to commencing the dance, the chief hid himself in the densest portion of the hammock, and no one dared approach him; some mysterious rite was being celebrated, which must not be witnessed by profane eyes; perhaps a consecration of body and soul, to the god of war. In the meantime, the solemn, measured minuet began; in deep chest-tones, the warriors sang the song of battle, their voices rising from a low wail in a minor key, to a roar like that of an alligator. Suddenly, with-

out the least warning, the chief came bounding into the midst of the ring. The circle widened, leaving him plenty of room for his wild leaps and gyrations, and the yells of the excited savages rose to the highest notch. The chief took a stick of sour-orange wood, on one end of which was a carving of a man's head; thrusting this in the ground, in the center of the circle, he drew his long, bright hunting-knife, brought it down upon the carved head, and went through all the motions of scalping. Then rose the death-song:

> Ecah-esah-ah-lee—
> Ecah-bosah-ah-lee!
> Wah-luck-luck-luck—
> Wah-luck-luck-luck!
> Wah-lucklo-mah-ah-lee!
> Olucklo-wah-ah-lee!

The orgies were now at the highest pitch, and it would not have been safe to jump into their midst, at that moment. Moore said that he "lay low and sung easy," while that war-dance was oging on. After the ceremony of scalping was ended, the panting braves subsided, and they proceeded to stow away an incredible amount of comptie and venison.

An Indian needs but one cooking utensil. A brass kettle takes the place of pot, stew-pan, oven, basin and bucket, and great care is taken to keep it polished brightly. On rainy days, the squaws whittle out spoons, and that completes the list of table-ware, for the eesta-chatta has no use for cups or dishes.

Seminoles have very strict ideas of social virtue, and any of their number—male or female—who oversteps the bounds of chastity, is severely punished. Perpetual banishment has often been inflicted on those who broke the laws in this respect; Billy Bowlegs, a former chief of the Seminoles, was condemned to wander apart from his tribe, for a long time, as a punishment for some

misdeed of a similar nature. Tom Tiger once brought his squaw to town on a visit, and while there, of course, she attracted a good deal of attention. One of the "big men" of the town invited Tom and his squaw to take a boat ride with him, on a neighboring lake. Tom accepted the invitation in silence, but eyed the eesta-hotka distrustfully, all the while; with an Indian's keen perception, he concluded that the white man was not actuated solely by a desire to please him and his squaw, and he prepared himself for some unfair trick. But the pale-face had no such intentions; the Indians interested him, and he wished to learn some of their peculiar ways. He learned a good deal. Actuated by a sudden burst of gallantry, he seized Mrs. Tiger's hand. Tom raised his gun, and with a "Holiwaugus!" that would have startled anybody, ordered the boat put about for land. Tom and his squaw hustled off down the river to Rosalie. He never brought his squaw to that place any more, and it is very likely that that white man generally managed to be absent, whenever the Indians "painted the town red."

CHAPTER VI.

NED MARR AND MYSELF TRY OUR FORTUNES ON INDIAN RIVER—A NARROW ESCAPE FROM DEATH.

Many and varied have been the descriptions of the Indian River region, and it is not an easy task to traverse untrodden ground in speaking of it at this day and time. Sidney Lanier dreamed his sweetest dreams under its feathery cocoa palms, and tells us, in glowing words, how his heart was enthralled by the weird beauties of the enchanted river. Audubon, the great naturalist, entrapped the purple gallinule and roseate spoonbill in its silent marshes, and left for succeeding generations a record of the wonders of that region, and now when the blase tourist has become surfeited with the scenes of the West, he often comes to the shores of Indian river, to forget the fatigue and ennui in the charms of the bee-hunting, mullet-catching, and chasing that noble animal, the bear. And if he wishes to descend, at one flop, from the sublime to the ridiculous, he takes a "grain" in his hand, and impales the festive stingaree. This animal (which is also called "the bob-tail end of creation") will receive proper attention farther on.

I was more fortunate than many other mortals, in the selection of a birthplace, and have always been proud of my good judgment in choosing Florida as my native State; indeed, that is the only act of my life of which I can make much boast. Having been born in the semi-tropic zone, I did not have to go through the initiating process, like the people who come here late in life. And as the years increase, I lose not a ray of the sunshine that surrounded my infancy, and I might well say that

the Florida of half a century ago was not more pleasant than it is today. The people, with their steamboats, railroads and other big projects have turned things around completely, making a new country of it. And in the midst of all this, the old stagers are all having their say, about how it "used to was." Now my turn has come.

The chilling winds of November, A. D. 1858, were causing the orange trees to huddle their limbs together for warmth and protection, when my companion, Ned Marr, and myself concluded to forsake our bachelor quarters on Tampa Bay and seek more congenial surroundings on the east coast. Our objective point was Honey Branch, which had attracted my attention when I passed through the region several years before. The greater part of the remainder of the year was consumed in reaching our destination, and when we got there, the first act of our administration was to build a hut of poles and palm leaves. We were well supplied with knives, forks, tin plates and other kitchen utensils, having attended to all business of that description before we left Tampa Bay. The spot selected for our future home was a shady nook, in a cabbage palm grove, within a few feet of the river. Taking a sharp hatchet, I sought out some slender poles from a hammock near by. Each pole was about eight feet long, and had a crotch on one end, formed by the short stump of a limb spared for that purpose. The other end was hewn to a sharp point. One pair of poles was cut three feet longer than the rest. I stuck the four short poles in the ground, forming a square of about fourteen feet; the long poles were placed in the middle at the ends, so as to give the roof the proper slant. Other poles were used to finish up the framework. Meanwhile, my friend Marr was by no means idle. Taking a sharp hatchet, he climbed the trunks of the palm trees by means of dead leafstems, and

cut off the great green fronds or leaves; depriving these of their stems, he piled them up near the frame of the hut. Then we both went to work, and at the end of two days had a roof over our heads and a cosy place to sleep. In all this piece of architecture there was not a particle of iron, everything being lashed together with strips of palm leaves.

Full of peace and contentment, we moved into our new quarters. I can not describe the exquisite sense of comfort I experienced when, after a day of brisk fishing and hunting, I lay down to rest beneath a roof of fragrant palm leaves; and what music the rain did make as it pattered overhead! Never more will I see such days of unmixed pleasure; never again can I pass such nights, fanned by the cool breeze, and lulled to sleep by the murmur of the rain. But this isn't business—this straying off the track—and I will finish the description of our palmetto hut, by saying that it was perfectly water-tight, and built to last ten years.

Marr and I, in seeking this region as a home, were filled with the idea that we could make our fortune in an orange grove. As well as I can remember, the "orange fever" did not fully break out until the fall of 1858, but the few who were stricken had it bad, and my comrade and I were among the earlier victims. Reports of enormous returns from small investments in orange groves reached us from time to time, and fired our ambition to "go and do likewise."

In one respect, we succeeded admirably. The spot we selected for the scene of our operations was one which left nothing to be desired, as far as nature went. A cool spring of water lifted its crystal waves into the sunlight within easy reach of our door; Indian river, with its untold wealth of fish and fowl, spread out to the east of us, and we had only to shoulder a gun and enter the hammock to supply our table with bear or tur-

key. Deer were so common that we let them go, sometimes, out of sheer contempt. We cleared about an acre in the hammock, where the soil was blackest and deepest, and grubbed leisurely along until we had prepared ground for about two dozen trees. We found a wild grove not far away, and transplanted a few of them where we thought they would do the most good. But when the leaves began to have that rich, golden hue which the ripe fruit possesses, and speedily turned into so many dry, withered sticks, we gave up in despair of ever making an orange grove. We planted them among a tangle of roots, and in taking them up, chopped off nearly all their side roots, while the tap roots were lopped off without mercy. The only wonder is, that they lived as long as they did. If I had practiced a little less sportsmanship then and went about the orange business in the right way, and entered that fine tract of land, I would be worth, today, fifty thousand dollars more than I am.

Thus the winter was whiled away and spring came. Our nearest neighbor, Capt. John Houston, lived fifteen miles away to the north, on Elbow Creek, at a place now called Eau Gallie. But when we got our supplies, we had to take a boat and row about thirty miles southward to Fort Capron, where Maj. William Russell kept a little grocery store. The Major supplied the people for leagues around with the necessaries of life, and his store was the Mecca of many a long pilgrimage.

In the month of May it fell to my lot to take such a journey. I entered a boat and, taking enough dried venison, onions and roasted potatoes along to keep me alive for three days, set out for Fort Capron. The first night I camped in a hammock, near the river side. The moon was just rising and showed up everything plainly. I was intently engaged in picking up dry sticks to make a fire, when I looked up and was startled at the sight of a

bear sitting on his haunches within five feet of me. He was a monster. How in the world it was that I came so near the bear without alarming him I never could imagine. I groped wildly for the hatchet, and if it had been found I could very easily have brained him on the spot. Finding that the hatchet was determined to elude my grasp, I yelled at the top of my voice. Such a jump as that bear gave! Talk about your deer, but that bear made better time (and more noise) than a runaway team of mules, as he tore through the hammock. That was the last of the bear episode, and I will now proceed to conclude this chapter by the recital of something none the less true, but a little more serious.

One day in early June I took a stroll out toward the head of the St. Sebastian, which was not more than two miles away. I was looking for bee-trees, and entered a scope of country that contained but little water. It was Friday — unlucky day! — and I encountered something that afternoon which came near cutting short my thread of existence.

The weather was warm and I became very thirsty. No water appeared to exist in that region at all, but as I was hurrying back home my eye fell on a green, grassy spot off to the right, and upon closer inspection it turned out to be a small dried-up pond, covered with a rank growth of maidencane, and a clump of willow trees in the center. Very naturally, the first thing I thought of was water, and in I walked. I wore nothing on my feet but a pair of moccasins, and should have known better. I had nearly reached the clump of willows, when a blow was struck on my foot which nearly knocked me down. I hastily parted the grass, in order to get a view of the alligator—for I felt sure nothing else could have given such a blow—and was horrified to catch a glimpse of a stump-tailed cotton-mouth snake of immense size. After delivering the blow, he wriggled off through the maiden-

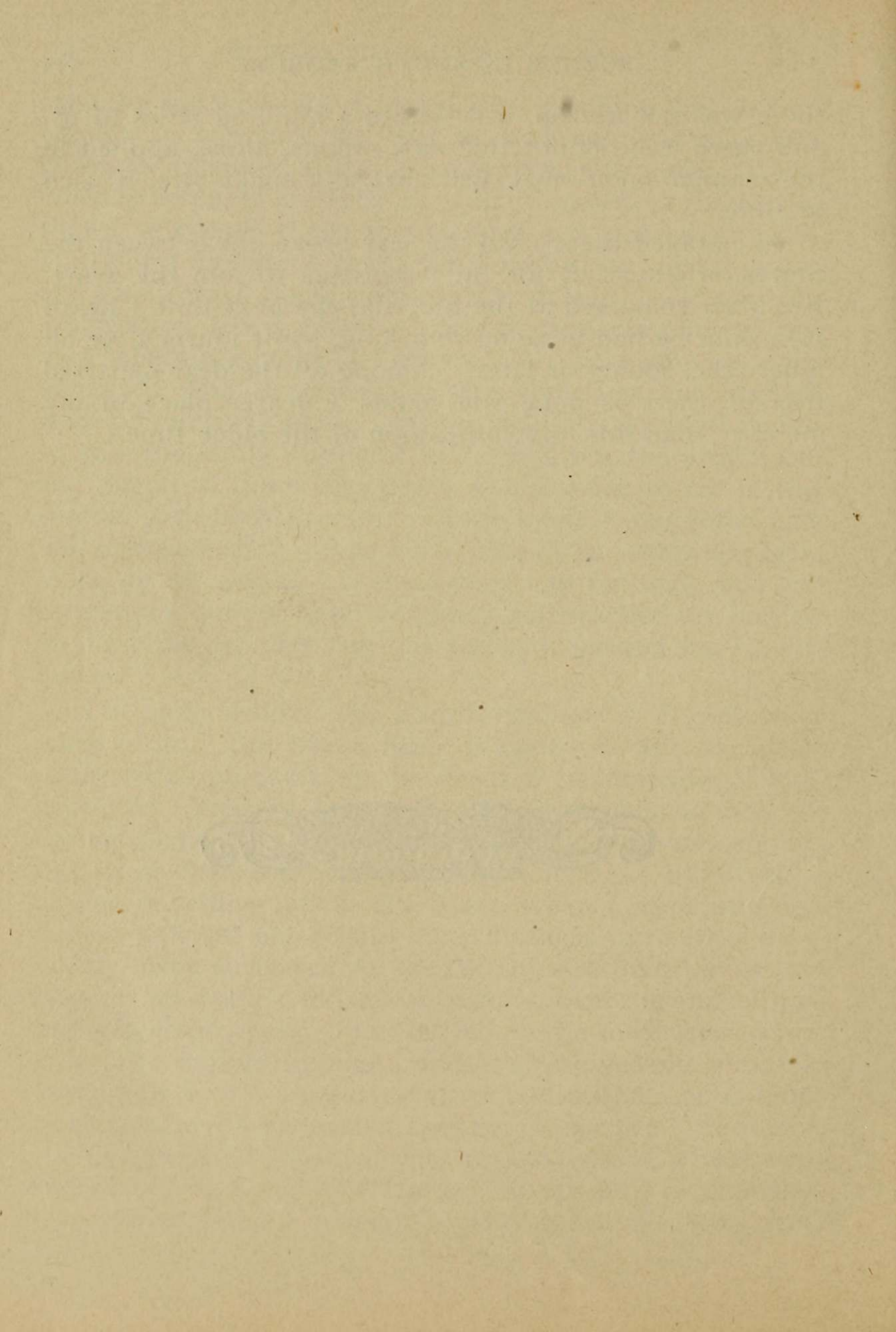
cane so quickly that I could not kill him, but I saw enough to convince me that he was not less than five inches in diameter, and a little over four feet long. These hideous serpents are fully as much dreaded as the rattle-snake, although their poison does not act so quickly. Without a moment's hesitation I rushed out of the grass and ran toward home with all my strength. There was a sensation like a piece of red-hot iron clinging to my toes, where the fanks had struck. At every step the pain increased, and it seemed as if a thousand hot needles were piercing my body. Worse than all, my leg became so stiff and badly swollen that I could not run any more, and began to think that death would come to me in the woods, with no help nigh. Three times I staggered and fell, and each time it was more difficult to regain my feet. With all my power I continued to cry for help, but my companion did not hear me until I had reached the border of the clearing. He ran out and half carried me to the house.

The poor fellow was almost frantic, and knew not what to do. But like a flash of light into the darkness of the situation came the recollection of something I had heard Dr. Reid, of Savannah, say about his method of curing snake bites. He made a poultice of raw onions, beaten up fine, and applied to the wound. I barely succeeded in telling this to Ed. Marr, when I went into delirium, and did not regain consciousness until next day, when I was surprised to see the injured limb almost as large as my body. Marr was bending over me and applying a fresh poultice. Faithful fellow! he never closed his eyes once during the night, and had renewed the poultice every half hour. Fortunately, we had raised a good crop of onions, and I knew that they saved my life.

The swelling subsided very gradually, and it was two weeks before I regained the use of my limbs. Whisky is considered the sovereign remedy for snake bites, but

there was not a drop of it within a hundred miles of us, and there is no doubt that raw onions, alone, applied in the manner mentioned, will cure any snake-bite, if used in time.

We stayed there until the war broke out between the States, when I left for St. Augustine to join the army. Ed. Marr remained at the hut, and the next time I heard from him he had gone on that long, swift journey we all must take, sooner or later. Among all the dear departed friends, there is none who holds a dearer place in my memory than this, my companion of the olden time.



CHAPTER VII.

INTRODUCING A GENTLEMAN BY THE NAME OF "ALLIGATOR FERGUSON"—SOME OLD-TIME HEROES.

It is strange how men will get names fastened on them. By some untoward circumstance the unfortunate wight gets a ridiculous soubriquet attached to his name, which, like a deep scar, lasts as long as the man lives. I once knew a man who, by some accident, got his eye injured. The first thing he knew everybody was calling him "Old Frog-eyed Bill," and another acquaintance of mine was christened "Horse-leg Jim," on account of some slight obliquity in his make-up. Both men were known only by these names. "Alligator Ferguson" and "Alligator Platt" wore their nicknames into the grave. It starts, sometimes, from something a person has said or done, and often from some personal peculiarity. Here in Florida, a man wins a name by his exploits. (I am not dealing now with military nomenclature; for, of course, majors, generals, lieutenants and commodores are as plentiful as mosquitoes, and a corporal is seen occasionally.) I am speaking of such heroes as Alligator Ferguson and Alligator Platt, whose fame shall never fade from the minds of those who were witnesses of the great havoc made by these men among the alligators, in good old days gone by. Not from any fancied resemblance to the saurian tribe, nor from any amphibious inclination, were these gentlemen graced with the names above mentioned. The titles were fairly and honorably won, and as substantial and unfading as any you ever heard of.

Alligator Ferguson didn't confine his operations to

any particular portion of South Florida; from Tampa to Biscayne Bay, and from the saw-grass fields of Lake Apopka to the shores of Okeechobee, he created consternation among the scaly denizens of the marshes, and I think he could lay claim to having killed more alligators than any other man living. He made his bed among them, ate among them, spent many months among them, as his only companions, and it is probable that he hardly ever thought or talked of anything but alligators. The gigantic snarls and growls with which they communed together in early spring was the only music which charmed his ears. At that time of the year he knew they could be found in pairs, and were more easily captured. He stayed among them so long that he became, as some people said, almost amphibious. One man thought Ferguson's teeth were growing longer, and another, with an exceptionally keen pair of eyes, was certain that the great hunter's skin was growing rough and hard, in patches, preparatory to changing into scales. Ferguson didn't care a cent what they said or thought about him, so long as he could kill big alligators and sell their teeth.

When I first saw him, in 1880, he had given up the alligator business and commenced carrying fruit from the Ten Thousand Islands to Tampa. He made quite a snug sum from the teeth of the 'gators he had killed, and became an expert at the business. Teeth were worth from four to five dollars a pound, and sometimes he gathered four and five pounds a week. He never cared anything for the hides, although they were worth more than the teeth. He said the alligators were more plentiful on Fish-eating Creek, but that their teeth were very much inferior to those from other places. On the Gulf Coast, he said, was the best place for real good teeth, and professed a preference for salt-water alligators. Those that live in salt water are of stouter build, and the

head is larger in proportion to the body than that of the fresh water species. Some people claim that they are more ferocious than the others, but Ferguson didn't seem to think so.

Ferguson was quite an expert at decoying alligators within range of his gun. He had a way of barking like a small dog, and when he commenced that it was not long before you could see their huge snouts sticking out of the water. Another way was to take a little dog, or pig, in his arms, and twist its tail so that it would yell and attract the alligators. A screaming pig will excite the interest and attention of any alligator, no matter how indolent or phlegmatic. Old Jimmie Yates said that he was hunting one spring morning, near Tohopekaliga, and had brought a young, fine-blooded dog with him. Coming to a deep, round pool, which formed a small bay in the lake, he commenced looking out for alligators, which he knew were to be found in that place in large quantities. The dog was a little too eager for the sport, and jumped into the water. Jimmie said he tried to call him back, but the dog was deaf to all remonstrance. When he had reached the middle of the pool, he began howling and struggling, and looked back appealingly to his master for help. In a few moments the dog disappeared and was seen no more. "Hit riled me awfully to see my purp gobbled down that-a-way," said old Jimmie, "and I laid for that 'gator. I wouldn't a-took the purtiest fifty-dollar bill you ever saw for that dog, and I jest says to myself, I am goin' to make them 'gators hop. And I did make 'em hop. I takes my leetlest purp and I wrings and twists his tail untwel he hollers like as if he was a-bein' killed, and first thing I knowed, out popped the head of a whoppin' big 'gator. Then another one of the big black devils poked his sassy snoot out'n the water, and hit warn't no time 'fore the pond was teetotally covered with 'em. I never seen so many

'gators in the known world! I shot and shot and shot, untwel I was bodaciously out of breath, but I made them devils sweat. They eat up my purp (and I wouldn't a-took a brand-new fifty-dollar bill for him), but I ever-lestin'ly peppered 'em for it."

It would hardly do to dwell very long on this subject without saying something about "Alligator Platt," another hero of the olden time, whose deeds were embalmed in the lore of South Florida. Platt was not such a great hunter as Ferguson, but what he did was done quickly and well, and there was some originality about his exploits. Joshua Creek is a branch of Pease, and flows near the town of Pine Level, in Manatee county. This creek was fairly alive with alligators, and here it was that Alligator Platt exerted his curious talents to the fullest extent. Creeping along under the palmettoes to the bank of the creek, he peered into the amber-colored depths and waited for a victim. When a rippling, swirling spot on the water betokened the presence of an alligator, he leaned over and poised himself. The 'gator cautiously poked his snout and then his entire head above the water, and looked around to see if an enemy was in sight. Perceiving no danger, he leisurely floated along on the surface until he caught a glimpse of Platt's red, excited face, and hurriedly proceeded to sink out of sight. Too late. Platt was not going to let his glory as a hunter become overcast by any such a slip as that. He plunged into the water and dived after the huge reptile. Those who stood by, anxiously awaited the reappearance of the man, and the immense whirls and swirls in the water where he went down showed that he was quite busy below. In a very few moments Platt reappeared, in triumph, astride of the alligator, which he rode to the shore, like a horse. When once he got his thumbs into the alligators eyes, it was easily managed, and although it was nearly twelve feet long, no lamb could have been

more gentle. Platt said he could manage the very biggest of them this way, and he advised everybody to pursue that plan, when attacked by an alligator.

Ned Beasley was another fellow who earned considerable reputation by his affection for alligators. It was told, for an actual fact, that Beasley was more alligator than human, and that he was so near cannibal in his tastes that he frequently put up a barrel or two of 'gator meat to be used in his house during the winter. He grew real fat and healthy from indulging in this questionable diet, and often declared that no earthly delicacy could tempt him from a dish of 'gator stew. His chickens were fed on it, and grew to unheard-of proportions. The hogs and dogs, however, let it studiously alone. The chickens would congregate around the kettle where the oil was being "rendered out," and wait for bits of the meat,, which Beasley threw to them after the oil had been extracted. And it was laughable to see those chickens (so it was said) as they staggered off into some shade to rest and sleep.

Somebody asked Beasley how he came to be so fond of alligator meat. "Well," he replied, "I'll tell you how it came about, and mebbe you won't believe it, and mebbe I don't keer whuther you believe it or not." With this ornate introduction he proceeded to tell how and where he fell in love with 'gator meat.

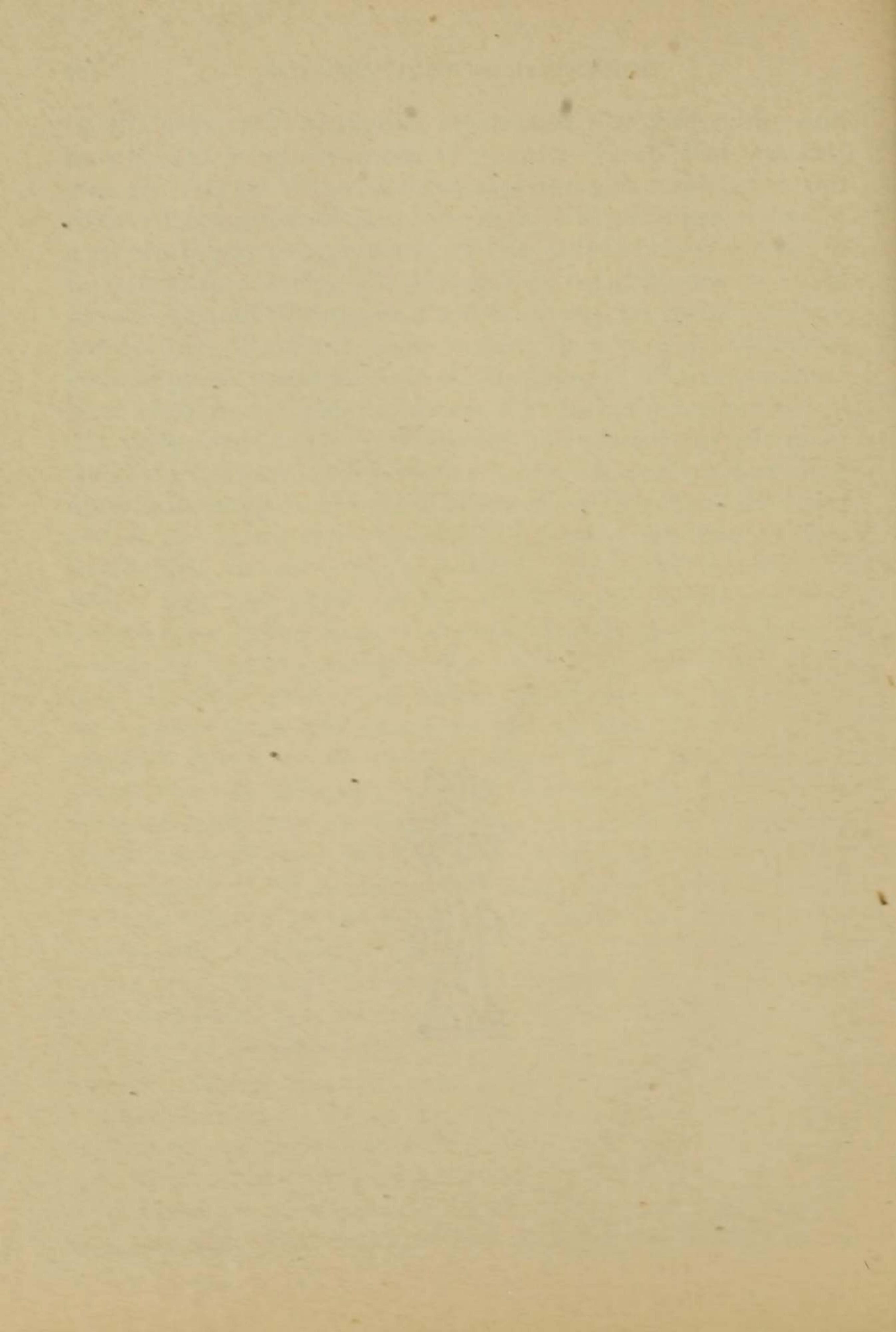
"Me and my ole dad was a workin' on a boat one time, and there was a whole lot of us fellers workin' together. There used to be a 'ole 'ummern as would come 'round every mornin' and sell fried fish to us for breakfast. Gosh, but didn't them there fish go good! 'Peared like they jist slipped down by theirselves. Finerly, the ole 'ummern brung a fish around one mornin' that beat anything I ever hearn teil of. I never seed sich a fish in the known world! She had it fried in meal and pepper, and it was so big that she had it strapped on a piece of fence

rail so she could lug it on her shoulder. When we was a-eatin' of it, we axed the ole critter whur she cotch it, and she tole us hit was cotch down on the Ellifiars (the Alafia river), and when we axed her what breed of fish it was, she said it was somethin' like a trout, only hit eat a heap better. And hit shore did go mighty good. Dad 'lowed he never head in all his born days seen a fish with sich a big backbone. (You see, that 'ere fish's backbone was every bit as big as my arm.) And he said hit was mighty cur'ous that there wan't no ribs, nor no little bones in it, and he'd be blowed if he seed any sense in the thing, nohow, and he said he wan't a-gwine to swaller nary 'nother bite untwel he knowed what he was a-eatin'. (After all the meat he'd gobbled down!) Finerly, the ole witch tole us we'd been a-eatin' 'gator-tail for breakfast. You jist orter a-seed them there fellers makin' fer the edge of the boat, with their fingers in their throats, a-strainin' and a-groanin', like as if they was distracted. But all their cuttin' up didn't do no good; the 'gator was down, and hit was a-gwine to stay down. They couldn't throw it up to save their lives. Dad was for givin' the ole 'ummern a good duckin', but I wouldn't have no sich doin's; 'sides, you see, I kinder liked the truck, anyway, and dad had already said he'd seen a heap wuss meat in his time. Dad said he might a-knowed hit wan't fitten to eat by hits not havin' no ribs nor no bones, but a whalin' big backbone. The ole 'ummern never come foolin' around our boat no more, and even now dad hain't got no use for no kind of fish."

Beasley delighted in palming off alligator meat on his guests, telling them it was corned beef, "jist in from Fulton Market." After the feast was over it was funny to him to see the expression on the men's faces when he told them what they had been eating.

I have no idea what Ferguson is doing now, and I can not say whether Platt and Beasley are alive yet or

not. But Alligator Ferguson, Alligator Platt and "ditto" Beasley will always remain as monuments of example to those to whom dog and gun are sacred. "Uncle" Jimmie Yates is enjoying a hearty old age, surrounded by children and grand-children. If you were to pay Jimmie a visit, he would take you out in his grove and insist on your feasting on some of his oranges. Then he would probably give you a greater treat than all—one of his Indian stories. A written account of these things interests some people, but it is incomparably better to hear it from the lips of the old heroes who went through it all. And nobody can be more entertaining than Uncle Jimmie. Should you ever visit Kissimmee, you would do well to call on him.



CHAPTER VIII.

SOME OF THE CURIOUS AND INTERESTING INHABITANTS OF THE INDIAN RIVER REGION.

If, in any of these statements, you think I have painted "things that are not, as though they were," and given to "airy nothings a local habitation and a name," why, of course, you have a right to investigate. But I will again say that I have started out to tell the truth (regardless of the difficulties and temptations involved), for, if my conscience should wear out, there would be plenty of old stagers around the State who would be ready to let me (and others) know, if I strayed from the path of veracity. Now, with this explanation, here goes.

Didn't I promise a description of the celebrated stingaree? Nobody that has ever been to Indian river is considered up with the times unless he has seen this king of aquatic nuisances. We will, in imagination (and with your consent) translate you from your cosy home to the coquina banks of Indian river. The time of the year is July—a time when you can get a good idea of mid-summer life in this region. Now you make a discovery; there are mosquitoes! You ask me why I didn't mention that fact before; and I comfort you by the explanation that I thought it would be a source of more satisfaction to both of us if I left you to make the discovery yourself. But, after all, there are not so many of the little vampires as you think; the shrill cry and bold advances of the few that encircle your head, give you the impression that the country is alive with them. But even if that were the case, there are so many other things of beauty that you will forget the little minnesingers. If we go out yon-

der on the bosom of the river, I can show you something new, that for pure, unadulterated cussedness and curiosity is unexcelled.

If I were a poet I would try to make you forget the mosquitoes by raving about the sunset; how the reflections of the palms in the painted waters are broken up and twisted into million augers and corkscrews by the night breeze that is springing up, and would point to the whippoorwill, or bull-bat, sweep downward almost to the water, with a croak that is echoed down the river. But we are on the lookout for stingarees, and must give them our undivided attention. The water beneath us is clear, and we can see the curious creatures crawling and walking on the bottom; we see horse-shoe crabs, sea-porcupines, tarpons, saw-fish, sharks, and many other things very distinctly, and they don't seem to be very much afraid of us. Hold! don't get excited, that isn't a stingaree, that's only a poor, harmless "bishop;" he looks ugly enough, with his tawney hide, with white spots on him, and his eyes are both on the top of his head, about as close as they can be, and he looks like he wanted to raise a row with somebody, but he won't hurt you. Now ir you want to see a stingaree, look right ahead. You can't see him very well, he darts about so actively; so when he is speared and brought into the boat, he serves our purposes better. This is a small specimen—only three feet long.

The body, in such a speicmen, is about one foot across, and nearly round. It is slate-colored, and three inches through the deepest part. On each side, it slopes to a thin edge, a flapping motion of which impels them forward. The tail is round, an inch in diameter, tapering to the size of a lead pencil, and has a rough, gristly surface. The eyes are situated about three inches from the nose, and are close together, small and wicked-looking. Its mouth is underneath the front part of the body, and

it don't have any teeth worth speaking of. But the peculiarity which gives the stingaree such importance, is the sting. It ornaments that part of the back, where the tail joins the body, is hard and bony, tapering to a very fine point, and is covered with sharp fibres, which point downward, so that it is very difficult to extract from a wound. A sting on such a specimen is four inches long, and it is able to inflict a very painful wound, which is a long time in healing. An irritating substance, secreted by this barb, which, while never fatal (as far as I know), is often productive of evil results, such as marasmus and chronic ulcers.

You can wade about among them, where they are swarming as thick as leaves in autumn, but they will never try to harm you, if you don't step on them, for they are not aggressive.

The whipparee is very much like the stingaree. The only difference is that the tail is somewhat longer, and the sting is lacking. The tail is very tough and pliable, and is often used as a buggy whip, and as such will stand many years of hard service. I imagine that you shiver when I remark that these hideous creatures are very often eaten. No, the people don't eat the whole animal; the thin edges of the body—commonly called "wings"—are the only parts that are considered fit to eat. I sampled this luxury once, and although I managed to survive it, I wasn't troubled with any ambition to try it again. It tasted a little weak and fishy, and after indulging in a dish of stingaree, my digestive apparatus was a icted with a peculiar "ever-present goneness," neither to be imagined or described. Where there is such a boundless wealth of fish and fowl that are really delicious eating, I would advise no one to bother with stingarees. They should be the dernier ressort—the last dodge of a starving hound. With this, I drop the stingaree subject, as one not pleasant to handle.

The sharks of the Indian river are not very dangerous, and if a man falls overboard, I don't think he need fear that he will make a Jonah of himself. The shark of Indian river, according to the account of persons who ought to know, does not possess the dignity of the white shark which follows in the wape of ships, and has to turn on its back before it can bite. They say that the Indian river shark has a mean way of slipping up behind a man that is wading, and nipping as big a piece as he can out of the calf of the man's leg, generally disappearing with his prize before the surprised and startled individual can make any remonstrance. I hardly credit this, but I have heard some pretty well founded stories of men having been killed and eaten by the sharks in Indian River Inlet. But don't be scared, for if you will only be half-way careful, you will never die by a shark.

Titled peers and noblemen, from all parts of Europe, were once as plentiful on Indian river as you please, but either on account of the disappearance of game, or a complication of interesting affairs at home, they are not so common nowadays in that region. The pink curlew, or roseate spoonbill, is not esteemed at all as an article of food, but its splendid plumage causes it to be an object of great value to the hunter. A roseate spoonbill, captured alive, sometimes sells for a hundred dollars. Snowy egrets, blue herons, and ducks of several kinds, were once to be found here "world without end." Anything richer and more succulent, in the line of game, than the young teals, widgeons and grease-ball ducks, one cannot well imagine. If they had not been so wantonly destroyed, regardless of breeding seasons and everything else, it would still be a sportsman's paradise; as it now is, a man can find a good deal of sport, but in a great measure the glory of former days has departed. There are still plenty of water turkeys, purple gallinules, and blue herons. But the "Johnnie gogglin" is worthy

of a little special mention. This great bird, which is also called the "whooper," stands, when full grown, nearly five feet high, and when it takes its flight through the pine woods, greeting the rising sun with a clear, trilling cry that resounds through the still morning air, it will always command the attention of the hunter. The flesh of the gogglin is very much like venison. The black-winged curlew, or "flint-head," whose bills are so ponderous that they cannot hold their heads erect, and many other interesting things might be described, but it would take too long.

The mullet that are caught here, in the middle of September, are the fattest fish I ever saw. I have seen rolls of fat fully an inch thick in many of these fish. I was once present when a haul was made, on a seine in Indian river, where ten men found is impossible to raise it. After raising the foot-line and letting out about fifty barrels of the mullet, the rest were secured. Words cannot describe the delicious tenderness of these fish when first caught. But the highest luxury, in the way of an eatable, that I know of, is a pompano. This fish is by no means common, and, although the largest specimens hardly ever measure more than twelve inches in length, they sell for no less than twenty-five cents apiece, and command a ready sale at that price. They are more plentiful on the west coast than the east. Then we have the drum, that grunts like a hog; the grouper, the red-snapper, and the saw-fish, which often attains a length of eighteen feet. These great fish sometimes get entangled in the turtle nets, and at such times are dangerous to approach. I have seen the fishermen cautiously come up alongside of the saw-fish, in a boat, and, with a blow of a heavy, sharp ax, sever the long, serrate snout, cutting it off near the eyes. Of course the fish could not live long after such treatment.

I will conclude this chapter by telling a story I once

heard, on James Russell, who is still holding forth on Indian river, I believe at Fort Capron. Now, it was alleged that Jim and three others went out into a dry willow marsh, where a great many alligator holes were to be found. (In dry seasons, these holes have no water in them, and are generally tenanted by alligators of medium size. There are more of these "dry holess" around Southport than any other place I ever saw.) Jim carried a rope with him, but the most persistent questioning failed to reveal his purpose in carrying it, until the field of future conflict was reached. The hole was two feet across, and when Jim slapped the side of the cavity, a loud hissing, coming out of the dark depths, told that there was a 'gator down there. Jim Russell fastened one end of the rope around his waist, and in tones that could not be misunderstood, commanded the men to hold the other end, while he descended and laid hold on the reptile. "And," he added, "when I say 'haul away,' you haul." So saying, he crawled into the hole. Louder and fiercer became the hissing, and a churning sound betokened the alligator's efforts to hide himself from the enemy. Jim's boots disappeared into the darkness, and soon a faint, smothered "Haul away!" told that Mr. Russell had secured his prize, and desired a whiff of fresh air. The alligator was evidently in close quarters, and the musk of his anger, rising from the hole, mingled with a murmur of cuss-words, told that the struggle was nearing a crisis. The men pulled until they "saw stars," and at last they brought the weary, panting pair to the surface. Jim was muddy, and the rope had pinched him in the waist considerably, but he had his alligator.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT PHELPS, THE KING OF BEAR-HUNTERS, AND HIS INTERESTING COMPANIONS.

If ever a man deserved the surname of Nimrod, it was that man Phelps. His very soul seemed to leap within him at the thought or suggestion of a chase after big game; bear was his favorite game. He had roamed with Fremont over the Rocky mountains, and caused countless grizzlies to tumble down the canyons in a death struggle; even the mountain eagle, wheeling around his eyrie among the beetling crags, and looking down "a thousand fathoms' depth of nether air," was not safe from his rifle, for his climbing powers were equal to his marksmanship. But evidently, the transition from the rugged cliffs of the Rocky Mountains to the quiescent lakes and level stretches of Florida hammock and pine woods did not betoken a wane in his ambition as a sportsman. He found the alligator a rather cowardly citizen, and the bear of the Indian river hammocks was tame when compared with the grizzly, but its flesh was better, and in eating it he grew so robust and jolly that he never looked back on the old scenes with regret.

I met him in 1854, about the time his fame began to spread in the Indian River region. In those days you could hardly leave your house for ten minutes without encountering a deer or bear. The old cow-hunters of the surrounding country considered themselves "tip-top" at bear-slaying, but they all acknowledged the superiority of Phelps. They told some great stories of his extraordinary skill in that line; said that he could take aim and kill a bear a hundred yards distant, simply by sound,

the darkest night that ever came, and some were ready to swear that he was in the habit of following trails by scent, as well as any of his dogs. Everybody knew or felt that he was something great, and I, among others, was anxious to make his acquaintance.

We came upon him in a hammock one day, surrounded by his dogs, and eating bear meat. The dogs looked hungry at us, and beat their tails on the ground, but a word from their master appeased them. (They were fearful beasts.) Phelps came forward and invited us to the feast; an offer which was accepted with gratitude, if not with etiquette. Taking our seats on the mossy trunk of a fallen live oak, and seizing each a bone, draped in fat, tender flesh, we made a most hearty meal, a la cracaire. Our host was glad to have met us; his eyes lighted up, and he looked gleeful at the prospect of having an audience for his latest bear tales. For, next to hunting and eating that lordly game, he liked to tell of his exploits. I wish I could recall one of these yarns; I am sure it would astonish and amuse you.

Phelps was clothed in raiment of cotton, dyed with the bark of the red mangrove. (This gives cloth a beautiful purplish brown color, and when treated with a mordant like alum or copperas, will hardly ever fade. Some long-headed Yankee may yet find his fortune in red mangrove bark. If he wants to try it, he can find any amount of the raw material around the south coast.) His hunting shirt had been rendered perfectly waterproof by the oil from the fat bear meat which he was in the habit of carrying on his shoulders, and his long, black hair shone with a fine lustre, from the same cause. Sickness to him was a myth, and medicine an insult; while he could imbibe liberal draughts of sweet, limpid bear oil, what cared he for wind or weather?

His dogs were not less remarkable than their owner. There were five of them, and the features of the blood-

hound seemed to predominate. Phelps had procured them from Capt. Douglass Dummitt, of orange grove fame, and trained them himself. Like most dogs of this breed, they were silently ferocious, and seemed ever to yearn for a victim; they were all formidable, but Rowdy, the leader was simply a terror. I looked on him very much as a rabbit looks on a big cat. Those watchful eyes of his seemed never to close, and his jaws dropped just enough to show an armory of teeth as cruel as Cerberus, and as relentless as death itself. He was white, with black spots. Our hero was well provided with defenders, but not the least of his possessions was his rifle, which he called "Ruin." He purchased Ruin from Capt. Miles Burnham, who had it made to order in New York, at a considerable outlay, and it was the most perfect weapon of the kind then in use.

In the evening, after he had finished the most important task of the day—the supper of bear's flesh and palm-buds—he laid himself to rest, as if no company was present. Underneath a palmetto shed, he unfolded and hung up his forty yards of mosquito netting, and extended himself on the soft Mackinaw blankets he had brought from the Rocky Mountains. Then, raising the netting a little, he called each dog—Rowdy first, and then the others; and they came, just as their names were called, and took their places around their master. Then, with the invincible Ruin nestling by his side, he drifted off into a dim, shadowy land, where bears were as plentiful as mosquitoes, and much easier killed. With those sleepless sentinels around him, I cannot imagine what he had to fear. Such a cordon of watchers might make a night's sleep in an East India jungle, one of security and peace. And you may rightly judge that those dogs received good treatment. Every morning they received a liberal allowance of hominy and bear oil, together with what bits of meat they wanted. Phelps assured me that he would

sooner go hungry any time, than see his dogs suffer for something to eat. "The man that strikes a dog of mine, strikes me," was a frequent remark with him. What an expression! As if that man could be found who would dare such a thing! It would have been strictly a personal matter between the man and the dog, to be settled in a very short time, to the decided detriment of the former.

Usually, a bear is not of a very aggressive turn of mind, but I heard something once which gave me a different opinion. Phelps, Jim Russell and Captain Davis were rusticating on Lake Worth, and they had found a fine camping spot. Bear signs were abundant, and the outlook for a huge run of sport was very encouraging. The day was spent in making all possible preparations for the hunt next morning. (It was their intention to turn out before daybreak in the morning and surprise the bears while they were napping.) Late in the afternoon the party went on a reconnoitering tour, so as to be well posted when the chase was begun in the morning. It was some time after dark when they returned to supper. While they were eating they heard heavy steps approaching, and before they could utter a word a huge bear strode into the camp. "Not a moment stopped or stayed he," to ask permission of the proprietors, but walked right into their midst, almost brushing against one of the men and rushed at a dog who was sitting near by. That startled animal, finding himself decidedly at a disadvantage, took to his heels, with the bear in hot pursuit. Round the camp they went, and the men stood stock-still, gazing at the strange spectacle in powerless and speechless amazement. Finally, Jim Russell rushed down to the boats, which were on the margin of Lake Worth, about two hundred yards away, where the guns had been left. Before he returned, the big beast had vanished, and nothing could be done, but quietly sit

down and finish their supper. Jim Russell—who is still living on Indian river—said he never could account for this strange freak, and thinks it is the only case of that kind ever known.

Our hero's tales of triumph and adventure were numerous and varied, but his favorite theme was his encounter with "Old Slewfoot," a bear of prodigious dimensions, that had tantalized the old hunters in that region for years, appearing at intervals and giving them a glimpse of a huge back and shoulders, only to fade away into the recesses of Pepper Hammock, where the utmost efforts of his pursuers failed to reveal his hiding place. This hammock took its name from the wild pepper which grew there in great abundance. Old Slewfoot once had a fight with a panther, and bore a memento of the conflict on his left fore-foot, which had turned "wopper-jawed," and made a track easily recognized by all who had heard of him, and gained him the name above mentioned.

To kill Old Slewfoot became the dearest ambition of Phelps' life. Creeping under the palmetto, in the sombre shades of the hammock, morning and evening, enduring the bites of mosquitoes, red-bugs and seed-ticks, with his trusty hounds along with him, he hunted the old veteran for two months. One morning, the bell-like tones of his big dog Rowdy waked him to the sense of something important. Hastily slipping on his moccasins (it was about daybreak), he slung Ruin across his shoulder and ran toward his dogs, who were creating a fearful racket in the hammock, two or three hundred yards away. "If they've treed him—if they have treed him!" was his only thought, as he rushed along.

Yes, Old Slewfoot was in close quarters. The dogs were all around him, and Rowdy was about to reach his throat, when old Ruin delivered a message in lead and flame that made the cool morning air quiver for miles,

and the great animal reared and fell at a conqueror's feet, never again to roam through the shady hammock. The voice in which each old hunter congratulated Phelps on this exploit was tinged just a little with envy, for they all imagined that the bear was their lawful prey, and had a kind of idea that no interloper should take such advantages. But when the time of feasting came, each old worthy enjoyed a good quantity of the meat. Thus did Old Slewfoot find, at last, a warm place in the hearts (and stomachs) of those who had been his bitterest enemies. And Phelps understood just how to cook bear meat, if anybody did.

Let me tell you of a favorite dish of his, and then I will close. You know, a great many people throw away the feet of a bear. Well, Phelps didn't. After cleaning them thoroughly, he boiled them in plain water for two or three hours; then he would stew them up some way with onions and palm buds, and you couldn't, for the life of you, tell what kind of meat it resembled; but you knew one thing—but few delicacies were equal to it. If I had that dish for dinner every day now, I would undoubtedly be a healthier (and probably a better and wiser) man.

CHAPTER X.

GIVING MY READERS MY IMPRESSION OF THE FLORIDA KEYS—A SOJOURN WITH PROF. CURTISS.

When you take up a map of Florida, one of the objects which strikes your attention, is a long row of little dots for islands, extending in a long, oblique group, around the southern extremity of Florida, graced with innumerable names, each with a "Key" attached to it. These are known as the Florida Keys, and many who have never visited them are often heard to ask what the keys consist of, and want to know "what they are good for." My object in writing this chapter is to answer these queries.

In the year 1880, Prof. A. H. Curtiss was detailed, by the Department of the Interior, to obtain a complete collection of Southern woods, and it was my good fortune to be able to act as guide for him, on this important trip. On the morning of the 6th of May, we started out from Key West, in a sail boat, and headed for Boca Chica. After a sail of two or three hours, we landed on the Key, and prepared a camp. The Professor had invited Mr. Ashmead, of Jacksonville, to accompany him, and as we had made every conceivable preparation for the journey before leaving Key West, there was nothing to put a damper on our spirits. The afternoon was spent in exploring the island and gathering plants. The soil was very rich, covered with sea-grape, wild sappadillo and dog-wood trees and vines. There did not seem a very promising field for collecting specimens, so we made our visit as short as possible. The Professor was desirous of reaching a locality where specimens were more abundant, and the scenes which lay ahead were looked

forward to with pleasant anticipations. Our time, which had not been limited or fixed by any arbiter, must nevertheless be put to the very best possible use, and we hastened onward, actuated by a desire to seek out the habitat of all the forest trees, common and uncommon, that were to be looked for in this sunny latitude.

Next morning we "weighed anchor" and proceeded on our journey. The morning was calm and bright, and the breezes still slumbered on the waters, which lay unruffled before us, shaded by the reflections of the trees on hundreds of little islands or keys, behind, before, and around us. Of course we made rather slow progress, and until a slight breeze sprang up, I was afraid we would do nothing at all that day. We drifted idly among the keys, and did not pass them rapidly enough to prevent an examination of some of their peculiarities. Occasionally a column of smoke, arising from a solid phalanx of banana and lime trees, showed that the key was inhabited On the shore, a deer occasionally jumped into sight and then disappeared in the bushes, about the time a discussion was begun as to the propriety of stopping and having some sport as well as venison. The usual size of these smaller keys was about a mile, and sometimes we encountered some containing no more than forty acres, while others were many hundred acres in extent. The width of these curious bodies of land was never equal to the length; in many cases a key two miles long was scarcely a half mile wide, and covered almost entirely with lime-rocks. Around the borders was a dense growth of mangrove and button-wood, which often hid the interior of the island from view.

Buttonwood makes better fuel than any wood I ever saw. A log of buttonwood, set on fire at one end, will burn to ashes before the fire goes out, and generates an intense heat. The wood is collected on the keys and

shipped to Key West, where it brings from five to seven dollars a cord; it is about the only fuel used there.

That evening we landed at Little Pine Key, something near fifteen miles from Boca Chica. We stopped here, simply as a matter of necessity, for the island was little else but a long, irregular pile of lime-rocks, covered sparsely with pine trees of small stature. To the west, about three miles away, we could see Big Pine Key, with its tall pines and mangrove thickets. These are the only keys on which pines are found.

On that morning we were favored with a fine breeze, and it did not take us long to reach Knight's Key, and all day we wound in and out among the archipelago of keys which stretched in every direction, as far as we could see.

At 10 o'clock next morning we came to Matacomba Key, and were given a cordial welcome by Messrs. Pinder and Sanders, and it may be easily imagined that we were glad to find ourselves among human beings once more. Matacomba was two miles long, and not much more than one-fourth of a mile wide, bordered with a beautiful white sandy beach. As usual, the soil was rocky, and it was a source of continual surprise to me that such luxuriant forests could grow on land like this. Not only forest trees, but many varieties of semi-tropical fruits and flowers, made themselves perfectly at home in this halcyon spot; well might they lift their heads fearlessly into the warm, brine-laden air, for no modicum of frost ever reached their home, and the tenderest exotic might never find its ambitions checked by an unkindly blast.

Our newly-found friends spared no effort to make our visit a pleasant one, and it was with much interest and pleasure that we inspected their gardens of tropical fruits. Here, indeed, was the very home of the pine-apple. At that time, they had made but a modest beginning, but

since then, I have heard that they have made some immense shipments in the last year or two. The manner of cultivation was peculiar. No hoe could be used, on account of the extreme shallowness of the soil. The truth of the matter is, that the ground could not be stirred for fear of its blowing away and leaving nothing but the bare rock. But you could not throw a plant down without its taking root, so favorable were the conditions for growth. The plants were set out about eighteen inches apart, and then left mainly to themselves. One weeding was considered sufficient, and the soil was not stirred at all. The severe droughts that prevail on the Florida Keys, at times, do not affect the pineapples very seriously. Indeed, I have been led to believe that they are more than half air-plants; lately, the botanists have established a very palpable relationship between the air-plant, long-moss, and pineapple, and that is one point in favor of my theory. At any rate, I have always noticed that they grow much better on dry soil than in a damp location.

I doubt if the Professor or Mr. Ashmead had ever before enjoyed such an abundant and protracted feast of pineapples, and I (Floridian that I am), can truthfully say that I had never eaten so much of the luscious fruit. Sappadillo, pawpaw, and sugar apple trees were loaded with young fruit, and it was quite tantalizing to reflect that we were there too early in the season to enjoy any of the ripe fruit. We consoled ourselves, however, with looking for specimens. Before I leave the subject of fruit-growing on this key, I wish to say a little about the cultivation of bananas, etc.

On different portions of the island were little patches of deep soil, called by the inhabitants "red holes." These curious spots are from fifteen to thirty feet in diameter, and take their name from the peculiar reddish color of the soil contained in them. Scarcely any rocks are found in these spots, and the fruit-growers select them on that

account, as a place to plant bananas and tropical fruit-trees. Dwarf bananas are the only kind grown to any extent on this key, and, although the plants are of low stature, the heads are very large, and sometimes are so long that they touch the ground. These red holes are not found on every key, and are valued highly by the planters.

For nine days we remained on Matacomba, and the ax was kept busy, and our negro, Dave, displayed great energy in felling the trees, under the Professor's directions. Here we found fine specimens of prince-wood, crab-wood, lignum vitae, torch-wood, and Madeira-wood. Torch-wood is almost as fine-scented as sandal-wood, and is very inflammable. Crab-wood, which finds its way to Northern markets in the shape of walking-canes, was found here in abundance. The wood is valuable and is worth at least fifty dollars a cord, notwithstanding the fact that it was being used for fuel on this key. It would weary the reader to give the name and description of each tree we saw at this place, and I will content myself with the remark that on no other key did we find a greater variety of woods.

The nine days of our sojourn at Matacomba were calculated to remain as bright spots on the memory of the three principal actors in the affair, and we were really sorry to turn our backs on this lovely, sequestered spot. It seemed to us that we had seen the garden spot; and that the coming scenes would prepare us for disappointment. A certain subtle, inexplicable air of comfort and content about the place had not failed of its effect upon us, and in reviewing the favorable features of the surroundings, I almost forgot the charms of Indian river. But the voice of duty reminded us that we must seek new fields, and extend our investigation among the semi-tropical forests.

Plantation Key next received our attention. But a

brief glance in the interior showed us that the prospects for a new collection were not flattering. The main objects of interest were Mr. Low's pineapple field and cocoanut grove. Here we saw thirty acres planted in pineapples, covering the ground completely, and gay with ripening fruit. Ah, wasn't that a spicy breeze that saluted us, when we landed? Sated as we were with the fruit we had eaten at Matacomba, we still could not help enjoying the rich fragrance of the breeze that swept that precious expanse of green, purple and gold. The crop that year was coming on finely, and Mr. Low was counting on cutting at least eight thousand dozen pineapples.

Pleasant as the prospect was, we could not stop, and soon the green island with its long colonnades of palms was left behind, and our sail filled with a noble breeze, which bore us in the direction of Key Largo. At the key we formed the acquaintance of Mr. Baker, one of the first men who ever thought of raising pineapples on the keys. This is more than twice as large as any other key, being twenty-five miles long, and averaging nearly half a mile in width. "Largo," in Spanish, signifies "long," and the name fits this key very well.

Key Largo was well timbered, but as there was no prospect of finding any new specimens, our stay was short. Two days afterward we reached the Indian hunting grounds, on Biscayne Bay. This was my second visit to this wonderful region, and we all entered it with pleasant anticipations. I was not going into an entirely strange land, for I was sure of meeting Mr. John Addison, and old-time friend of mine whom I had known for thirty years. The first thing we did was to penetrate the dense green wall of hammock which rose up before us. Here, indeed, was a lavish wealth of pure, undefiled nature; huge trees of gumbolimbo, red-stopper and mastic towered away above us, and the graceful trunks of innumerable palms met our eyes on either side. A strange

but not unpleasant odor was exhaled from the ground, where centuried logs and leaves from spicy tropical trees were mouldering into dust. We found a tree which, I believe, could not have been found anywhere else in Florida. This was the so-called paradise tree—a lovely specimen of the vegetable kingdom. It was forty feet high, covered with a wide spreading crown of leaves, of a delicate, sea-green tint, which gave the tree an extremely handsome appeaarnce. When we found this tree, the berries were just ripening, and we were deprived of the opportunity of seeing the flowers. Judging from the descriptions of those who were well acquainted with the paradise tree, the flowers must be marvelously beautiful.

We found John Addison snugly hidden away in this hammock, with his dwelling almost hidden from sight by a grove of fine banana plants. Frost was unknown at this place. On Addison's farm we saw the finest of sugarcane and Jamaica arrowroot growing. No orange trees were to be seen, but limes and lemons were doing well. (It is a curious but undisputed fact that orange trees can not be grown on the Florida Keys, nor on such land as the Indian Hunting Ground. Unsuccessful attempts have been made to raise them in these places, but the rock which underlies the soil prevents the taproot from penetrating deep enough. And you very seldom see a cow about the Hunting Grounds. The old settlers say that there is some poisonous grass growing in the woods which kill the cattle. A cow is very seldom seen on the Florida Keys. But there are so many good points about this part of the country that you would be well satisfied to forego cattle and oranges.)

I don't remember how many new varieties of woods we found here; there was the red and black-stopper, the blolly tree, and the cocoa-plum, the "pull-and-haul-back" —a thorny tree or vine, whatever you may call it, for it

partakes of the nature of both—and the rubber trees. Dave served us faithfully, and he and his ax were potent agents in getting together one of the most complete collections of forest trees ever made in this or any other country. Dave made the chips fly with a zeal that reflected great credit on his race, but there was one time when he refused to obey commands. And that time he had a pretty good reason for it. It was when we were on Boca Chica, and it was a manchineel tree that excited Dave's fears. After listening to a description of the terrible properties of this tree, Dave swore that we might ask any other duty of him, but that he would not touch that manchineel for anything. He described, with a shiver, the dire consequences attendant upon cutting the tree; one stroke of the ax, he said, would be sufficient; the milk, which is found in this tree in great abundance, would be scattered over him, and everywhere a drop fell there would be a frightful sore. The manchineel is terribly poison, but not so bad as Dave believed.

We divided our time between the Hunting Grounds and Miami, and stayed in that region about ten days. Before we left we secured the greater part of the collection. While at the Hunting Grounds (which didn't very well deserve its name, for game was by no means overabundant), we were astonished at the springs, which burst up in the salt water, near the beach. Truly, they were wonderful. Wading out twenty-five or thirty yards from the shore, we could see the fresh water springs rippling up through the brine, and we tried some of the water to see how it tasted. Knocking out both heads of a barrel, we placed it around a spring, and carefully bailed the salt water out. Soon the barrel was half full of cool, sweet drinking water. There were a great many of these springs, and some of them were of quite good size. I do not remember having seen anything like it,

before or since, and am inclined to believe that it is a first-class curiosity.

We made arrangements with a man to carry the specimens to Key West, and then journeyed to the Gulf coast, where the collection was completed. We had gathered together forty-four distinct varieties of South Florida woods. We were three months on the trip, and came back with the consciousness of having seen a great deal of Florida, and it was just the impression made on me by this trip that led me to write an account of it. My compagnons du voyage have each given their impressions to the world, and I have tried to do the same. Five years have elapsed since the journey was made, and the visitor now would have to remember that, about the time he thought of taking me to task for some apparent discrepancy between my description and the country as it appears to him.

CHAPTER XI.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF SOME OF THE TROPICAL FRUITS WHICH FIND A HOME IN FLORIDA.

"The tropical fruits of Florida!" What a nameless charm invests this subject for the denizen of a colder region, in whose imagination these children of the southland exist only as a dream! But the thrill of enthusiasm awakened by the contemplation of these unseen glories must, in a considerable measure, fade in presence of reality. That is, you must prepare yourself for disappointment, if you expect the fruits and flowers of paradise on an earthly soil. The fruits I am about to describe are objects of interest mainly on account of their rarity in this country, and partly as an undeveloped source of revenue to the State.

Accounts of tropical fruits are as often exaggerated as fish or alligator stories. I read a dime novel once (reader, it was a good while ago; that's my only excuse), I think Wild-Cat Ned, the Bloodhungry Prince of the Prairies, was the hero, where the brave lad rescued a maiden, single-handed, from a band of savages. The scene was laid in a wilderness where all manner of fruit was opportunely abundant. There was nothing remarkable in all this—I had read of countless exploits of a similar nature before,—but I was astonished to hear that the young hero, in looking around for something for his girl to eat, found some delicious ripe bananas "growing on a vine!" That disgusted me with that sort of literature. There are some big stories told of other fruits. An American traveler, in speaking of an East India fruit called the durion, or durian, says that it is at once the

most delightful and most disgusting of all fruits. He says the odor of a ripe durian is a hundred times worse than a whiff from a glue-factory or bone-yard, and yet so intensely luscious and rich that the appetite for it amounts almost to a frenzy. He gives is as a well established fact that the native women often sell their children in order to procure the fruit. There is undoubtedly such a fruit as the durian, but I hardly think its propties are so "agonizing" as one would gather from the above description. In our own Florida, the guava plays a milder role, but is sometimes roughly handled by those who are so unappreciative of the good things of Nature, as not to like them. The following incident is said to have occurred at Orlando, in Orange county:

A down-east ankee mounted a "kyart" belonging to a venerable Cracker who had brought some of his plantation products to town. Sniffing the air vigorously, the Yank looked around in the cart and saw a box covered with moss. "What have you in here?" inquired the descendant of John Alden, bending his eyebrows in the direction of the Cracker, who answered, smilingly: "Gwavers." "Great horn-spoon!" gasped the Yank; "now, p'r'aps you'll tell me how long they've been dead!" It is said that that Cracker has not yet quit laughing over the Yankee's ignorance.

Very few people like guavas at the first trial. The odor is so powerful and penetrating, and is calculated to antagonize the senses, until a closer acquaintance is gained. The best variety I know of is the large, white, pear-shaped kind, and I challenge any one to show me any kind of Northern fruit that will eclipse this prince of luxuries. The pink, catley, strawberry, and vinegar guavas grow finely throughout South Florida. The finest specimens of this fruit I ever saw were grown at Point Pinellas, on Tampa Bay, in the grove of Vincent Leonardy. Guavas will grow, with a little protection, as

far north as Palatka and Jacksonville, although it is seldom met with north of Putnam county. The fruit ripens from July to November.

The Agua Cate, or alligator pear, is not a pear at all; it has one large seed in the center, weighing two ounces, in a good specimen. I have seen agua cates (pronounced ah-guah cahta) weighing two pounds each. The flavor transcends that of the finest muskmelon, and the fruit is eaten with salt and pepper. It contains no acid, but its rich, marrowy, vegetable-like pulp renders it a fine article of food. One full grown specimen is as much as any man can eat, and it more nearly takes the place of meat than any other fruit I know of. One fine feature of this tree is its power of resisting cold. Confident that it would succeed as far north as Palatka (notwithstanding the evil predictions of a few croakers who styled themselves judges of such matters), I introduced some of the trees in 1882. Mr. Dorwin, Mr. Jackson and others procured young plants of me, and the present fine condition of the trees attests the favorable action of Palatka soil and climate. They can undoubtedly be grown successfully in Putnam county, although hardly in such perfection as farther South. The best specimens of this valuable tree I have seen are growing on the property of John Roble, near Tampa. In August, 1880, I accompanied Prof. A. H. Curtiss to this place. The trees at that time were thirty-five feet high and about fifteen inches in diameter. Professor Curtiss pronounced it one of the most beautiful that he had ever seen. Such a tree would no doubt bear annual crops of fifteen hundred pounds of fruit, that would sell readily at eight cents a pound. In Tampa I never saw them sell for a lower price than seventy-five cents a dozen. The agua cate begins to bear at the age of five years. A temperature of 20 degrees above zero is cold enough, but I think they will stand it for a short time. The fruit ripens from August till October.

The mango is a fruit that has many friends, on account of its handsome appearance and its novel flavor. It is pear-shaped, flattened, and covered with russet-brown and greenish-red splotches. The seed is very large and flat, the flesh adhering to it very firmly. Just the least odor of turpentine, in some of the specimens, detracts a little from the popularity of the fruit. The tree is exceedingly prolific, and the fruit bears shipping well. Mangoes will stand a pretty sharp frost, but I wouldn't advise any one to risk too much of it. They begin bearing when three years old, and are of rapid growth. The long, drooping branches, laden with fruit, and the shining red, willowy terminal leaves, are quite handsome. The fruit commences ripening in July, and the crop is of short duration.

The sappadillo is one of my favorites. There are eight varieties of the fruit, and they are all good; but the egg-shaped variety is the best. The Cubans say: "Es fruta muy delicada;" "The fruit is most delicious." On the Keys they attain their greatest perfection. The Cubans acknowledge the superiority of the Florida sappadillo over their own. The tree is small, hardly ever exceeding four inches in diameter, and the leaves are very dark green. The pulp is very sweet and brownish in color. Outside, the fruit resembles an Irish potato. Like the mango, the sappadillo bears the third year after planting, and very prolific. They always command good prices in the markets of Key West and Tampa. I am pretty sure they can endure a moderate frost without protection. The crop, which begins with July, lasts well.

Probably the largest fruit in Florida is the sour-sop, or Anona muricata, called by the Spaniards guanavana. They are simply immense. Four pounds is the common weight. The seeds are numerous, small and black, floating in a snowy, custard-like pulp, which has a fine flavor, unlike that of any other fruit. Ice cream and cooling

drinks are made of them in Key West. The exterior of the fruit is of a greenish color, irregular in shape, and covered with soft prickles. The tree, which begins to bear at five years of age is a strong grower, and the leaves are small and lanceolate. The fruit is rare in Key West, and commands as high as sixty cents apiece sometimes. In the latter part of August the fruit begins to ripen, and is jealously guarded, to prevent its getting injured or stolen. A man named Sanders, in Key West, was the owner of the largest tree in the city. To prevent the fruit from falling and bruising itself during the night, he prepared bags of cloth, placed them around the fruit, and tied them to the limbs. If the fruit took a notion to part from the parent stem during the night, the bag would hold it. Sour sops can not withstand frost; I am pretty sure of that. I think it is the most delicate fruit grown in Florida, and one of the most valuable.

The Jamaica apple, or cherimoyer, is not at all like a Northern apple; the seeds are half an inch long, and flat; the pulp is firm and white, with a rich, sub-acid flavor. This fruit is not plentiful in Florida; the tree is small, and by no means a prolific bearer. On the Keys is its home, where it ripens in August, and it bears in five years from the seed.

The sugar-apple tree resembles the above, but the fruit is very different. It is exceedingly rich; the pulp is like candied honey, with a peculiar grainy texture. Like the papaw of the Middle States, and other members of the Anona family, the seeds are smooth, round and black, and the outside skin is olive-green, with a knotty surface; the aroma is fine in the extreme. It can endure a moderate degree of cold, but does not bear transportation. It commences to bear in three years, and ripens its fruit in August.

The mammee tree is very rare in Florida; the only specimens I know of in the State are growing on Mrs.

Gilbert's place in Miami. Professor Curtiss (considered the most prominent botanist in the South) passed Miami with me, in the year 1880, and we saw these trees. They were at that time at least thirty feet high, with a spreading summit. The leaves were a most vivid green, and interspersed with snow-white flowers, fully two inches across. Magnificent is a tame word to use in connection with these trees. Two of them stood near together, one loaded with fruit and the other with blooms. The tree is dioecious; that it, requires two trees to produce fruit. I think these are the only specimens of the mammee in the State. The fruit is as large as a cantelope melon, with a dark, brownish skin. Inside it is yellow, with a soft, yielding pulp, when fully ripe. If I were asked to describe the flavor of this fruit, I would have to answer: "It tastes like a mammee, more than anything else." It ripens in June, and continues about two months.

The West India papaw (Carica papaya) is not a very delicious fruit; it is as large as a man's head, and is ranged around the trunk of the tree, where the crown of leaves put forth. In two or three years you may expect fruit, if the tree has been planted in soil sufficiently rich and moist. Papaws are most plentiful on the coast, where the frost protection is fairly good. They will not stand a heavy frost.

I have seen a fruit in Key West, the name of which I will write Tee-Ess. It is very rare, and the few trees in Key West are valued highly. It looks somewhat like a large, yellow plum, but the flavor is something entirely new. The Tee-Ess is undoubtedly the costliest fruit, to its size, in the State, and is very sensitive to cold. The fruit, which ripens in late August, is produced when the tree is five years old.

Tamarind trees are plentiful on the Keys. A most delicious summer drink is made from the pods, which are

filled with an acid pulp, of a jelly-like consistency. Handsome, indeed, are the long, drooping boughs and bright green bi-pinnate leaves, and the tree resembles, in some respects, the honey-locust, without the thorns. It bears early and is not injured by a moderate frost.

The date-palms of St. Augustine bear heavy crops each year. Some of them are over thirty feet high, and must be fully a hundred years old. The date is dioecious, and the fruit, which is hard and of a reddish color, is not of much value, as no one seems to understand the art of curing it. This secret must be learned before dates become a source of revenue to the State.

The India rubber, saffron-plum, mastic fruit, cocoa-plum (Chrysolalanus icaco), and custard-apple have been mentioned in my Indian War Reminiscences. Bananas, pineapplies, and the Citrus fruits have not been touched upon, as they are too well known to need any description. Of course, I could not enter into detail in regard to the cultivation of the fruits described in this chapter; anything like a satisfactory synopsis of that kind would make a book of itself. Much information and pleasure could be gained from a thorough tour through Florida. Our flatwoods and scrubs are teeming with tropical plant-life, and our hammocks abound in fruits and flowers, some of which have never found their way into any botany.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH THE INEVITABLE FINALE AND DISCLAIMER APPEARS—SOUTH FLORIDA IS VINDICATED, AND THE PEN IS LAID ASIDE.

Since that auspicious and eventful morning of Palm Sunday, A. D. 1512, when Ponce de Leon lifted the veil of obscurity from a land sui generis and unrivalled in the gifts which partial Nature had bestowed upon it, Florida has smiled through a mist of romance which has not been dispelled by the advance of three and three-quarter centuries. The wild, ambitious dreams of the Spaniards who sought the precious metals in our hammocks find their counterpart in the eager anticipations of those who come here to plant orange groves, fondly believing that a speedy fortune awaits them in the "field of the fruit of gold." The difference is, that the latter dream is capable of realization.

The title of these sketches does not seek to draw an invidious distinction between North and South Florida. It so happened that the greater portion of my life as a guide, soldier and pilot has been passed in the extreme southern portion of the State, and as it did not behoove me to enter into details, in any portion of the book, in regard to the advantages or disadvantages of any particular section of Florida, I can disclaim any intention of writing an immigration pamphlet, or an advertisement of real estate. The old settlers of Florida here read an account of scenes with which they are familiar; the stranger is introduced to a region of which he has heard a great deal, and every reader may know that the descriptions are capable of corroboration, for they are all

true. The book will not tell the reader how many orange trees can be planted on an acre, or how many thousand boxes of oranges those trees will yield in five years, and does not even give a hint as to the best place in the State for growing them. Not a line will be found in reference to any real estate, for I have not a foot of land for sale. And I don't think I have made the impression that I was trying to persuade anybody to come here. I reason this way: If you have made up your mind to come here, why you are coming, and nobody need try to dissuade you. On the other hand, of course, if you didn't want to come, you wouldn't thank anybody for insisting on your doing so. But I hope I haven't scared you away by any of my descriptions. The stingarees of Indian river, and the 'gators of Okeechobee are still "alive and kicking," but I never hear of their hurting anybody, nowadays. Mosquitoes and mosquito stories are plentiful as ever; the lordly Seminole still scours the hammocks of Walk-in-the-Water, in search of deer and bear, and loves "wyomi" and red handkerchiefs as passionately as ever.

The enthusiast who wants to come here, should remember that he can't find everything just to his notion; he must not lose his religion if he is bitten by a few mosquitoes and sand flies while walking beneath blossoming orange trees with the girl of his choice, and if he wants to recline at length on the grass in the shade, he must not be surprised if the sand spurs pin his clothes to his skin. The botanist who penetrates into the rich semi-tropical hammocks in search of flowers should not grumble if he returns laden with red bugs and other interesting little creatures who lie in wait in the shady woods, and whose name is more than legion.

In coming to Florida, one should leave kid gloves and great expectations behind. And, while many people and many papers are saying that this is the poor man's terrestrial paradise, I would advise the comer to bring a lit-

tle money along with him, "just for convenience's sake, you know;" such little items come in pretty handy sometimes. As a general rule a double-barreled shot gun will kill all the game you will find, without resorting to a breach-loader, and the fishermen here are a modest sort of men. You hardly ever hear of the capture of a very big fish, but what they lack in size is made up in quantity. Hunting gophers inland and pegging turtles on the coast is by no means on the wane, and although these sober occupations are not resorted to by those who thirst after the gore of big game, they are sometimes participated in by some of as dignified and respectable personages as you ever saw.

The day is past when you could take up a homestead, half hammock and the other half a wild orange grove, and when the deer oblingingly browsed within a few feet of your door, as if anxious to supply you with venison. Once in a while, however, a man is seen who wants and expects all these things, and a great many more. One of these peculiar specimens of the human race lived (or rather stayed) at Tampa Bay, in the year 1858. His name was Hunter, and I think he hailed from Georgia. That man was the very embodiment of dissatisfaction and unrest. According to his own statement, he had looked in vain, all over his native State, for a suitable place for a "buildin' locayshin," and came to Florida, to see if he could do any better. When I met him he was dressed in a rather seedy looking suit of clothes, but there was a grin of hope on his faded features which told that he expected to attain his object, sooner or later.

"What kind of a place do you expect to find, Mr. Hunter?" I asked him, one day, as he came sauntering along the street. He answered, with a nasal drawl:

"Well, I'm a-huntin' of a homestead what has got a piece of hammick lend (land) for raisin' gyarden truck, and a high pine ridge 'jinin' onto it, fur a buildin' locay-

shin, with a na-tral spring, and a fust-rate mill-site throwed in. I've bin a-huntin' of jist sich a place as that, fur five or six year, and I 'spect to git it, atter awhile."

With that soft, stereotyped whistle, and that easy, shambling step, he vanished form my sight. Sometimes he put a couple of pieces of hard-tack in his pocket, and sallied forth in quest of the wonderful combination-homestead, and he would be gone for three or four days. His "widow and orphans," which he was in the habit of calling his wife and children (with more propriety, perhaps, than he was aware of) had to scratch around pretty lively for a living, while he was hunting for the "na-tral spring and mill-site," and they had perhaps long ago given up all hope of his success.

The moral of the above incident is, of course, that you shouldn't come to Florida, unless you come prepared to take it as it comes. Hunter's restless disposition would not allow him to settle anywhere. It reminds me of a yarn I heard of a grandiloquent Yankee, who used some pretty big words where they were not needed. A Cracker standing near by, whose mouth had gradually expanded as he took in the ripple of elegant English, exclaimed with a burst of native sarcasm: "Stranger, if I had the eddification you've got, I wouldn't stay here, nor nowhere else!"

The "short and simple annals" of the pioneers of South Florida might fill many a volume larger than this one, and might be made to embrace many thrilling scenes and adventures, which as yet lie dormant and unknown to all except those who figured in them. Mine has been the fortune to speak to a larger audience, and should my desire for the entertainment of my readers be fulfilled, I shall be encouraged to give other sketches of life in the far South, in another edition.

With this, I take leave of you, commending my little book to your kindest consideration.

Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library