DOWN IN THE WILDERNESS.

RUNNING UP THE SOURCE OF THE LITTLE ST. JOHN'S.

By Dare-to-the-Slow—Curious Marshes of Florida—The Home of the Alligator and the Turkey Buzzard—A Coming Fourth of July—A Sad Ending with Bitterness and Gall—Crawfish—Gray Curl was Bad Blue Snake—A Fish-Net Battering Ram—Fish Stories—Lake Harney—Lost in the Wilderness—A Fine Rainbow—A Fish Chowder—The Floating Islands—Fine Shooting—Snakes and Lizards.

ST. JOHN'S RIVER, Florida, Lat. 28°, Long. 81°, June 5, 1873.

At the afternoon the boys were blazing away with varying success. Hawks, coots, bitterns, cranes, crows, and blackbirds were creeping everywhere. About sunset we left the left bank of the river was six feet high. We approached a clearing. A long house, with a cartway through the middle, hove in sight. Its occupants had evidently prepared to start on a orange grove, but the trees looked sickly and showed a lack of attention. A knock-kneed darkey stood in the cartway with his hands in his pockets, and a little bareheaded colored boy in a tow-aroon shirt and the foot missing hoeing. The Captain hailed the knock-knees, and asked where Prevatt's wood landing was. There was no answer. "Where Prevatt's wood landing?" repeated the Captain. The knock-kneed darkey neither stirred nor opened his mouth. A third time the question was put.

"Is yah am Lawton Bluff," knock-knees replied.

"What's Prevatt's wood landing," inquired the Captain.

The knock-kneed African was dumb again, but the little nigger hollered down the river, and answered, "Down dawaway."

THE THREE ILLINOIS SAILORS.

We found the landing a mile above. The Captain took in wood enough to last through the trip. During a ramble on the shore we found the three Illinois sailors who had left Enterprise a few days before on a camping expedition. Their complexities were dumped in a pile. They said that they had seen several coons, but had to run away to kill. One of them had broken his gun, and talked about sending it to Chicago to get it fixed. This pleased Johnston. He offered them his duck, and when we left they were quarreling about who was to use it next. It was to put up the tent and build a fire. Johnston says he will bet a thousand to five cents they kill something within the next forty-eight hours.

THE CHAIN OF LAKES.

Above the boat was wooding I skirted the lily-pads in a small boat, and took in a two-pound bass, and a little bigger fish. The latter is an average sunfish. It is savory, and makes an excellent fry. I underwent a express I saw an alligator about six feet long. Ernest Man sent a bullet after him, but the ball glanced from his back, and the little fellow paddled for the water.

MOONLIGHT ON LAKE HARNEY.

As we moved from Prevatt's the Colonel lost his chicago sabre. He had left it in the water, when carrying wood. The Johnsons fought a snaken and the Colonel was in consequence absent. I offered him a New York troll, but he refused it.

About dark we passed a beach for Indian mound and entered Lake Harney. The full moon was out and the air was warm. It was so clear that the stars sparkled like diamonds. A gentle breeze was blowing, and acres of tall, yellow reeds danced in the moonlight. Marsh hens chucked in the rushes, and the plaintive cry of the snipe floated over the lake. On our left was Deep Creek, a dark, narrow, sluggish stream. The creek with the intention of digging a canal to connect two miles of pines, thus connecting the Atlantic ocean with the waters of the river. The State granted the company a subsidy, but the great rebellion knocked away their picks, and their works lay in the ground. Lake Harney is a circular sheet of water. It shone like a grand silver shield. It is about twelve miles wide. St. Francis Sykes calls it the finest lake in Florida. Palms in trees stand upon its shores. Lofty pines are its sentinels, shading a beach of silver white sand.

MORNING FOR WATER.

The Daylight skirted the left shore of the lake. We were in shallow water. "Peter! hollo Peter," shouted the captain. Peter was the extra hand. The moon was rushing upon the falling dew, creating a dim lunar bow. Its rosers were shining like a million of stars. The boat soon passed long bluff, a grove of palmettoes half a mile in length. Two fresh fish were caught for breakfast. The morning was clear and the sun hot. Great yellow butterflies rested on the stems of the rainbow swing from the canebrakes.

The noise of the birds was inspiriting. We were all looking for breakfast. A poor coot was the first victim. Its head was already dressed. Its body was all torn from the shot. The coot is a good bird, and was devoured by a hungry alligator. The bell rang, and we sat down to the table. While the boys were eating, the Captain scanned an enormous alligator. There was a rush to the pilot house. The Colonel was ahead with his Chicago sabre. Johnston fired a rifle ball to stop the boat while he peppered the end fellow with No. 6 shot. The alligator shed the shot as a duck sheds water. He did not even wink. Another monster was sighted. The three riders were ready. Johnston fired a rifle ball, and he crawled from the bank into the water. The side his way along the bottom of the river he sent to the surface a row of bubbles as large as soup plates.

ALLIGATOR STEAKS.

Nineteen alligators were shot before night. One was skinned, and its oil used for greasing the lower parts of the boat. At my request the cook cut some nice steaks from its hind legs and they were served for dinner. The meat was as white as chicken. The Chicago Colonel ate some under the supposition that it was black bass. He took but one mouthful, and said there was something wrong about that fish. The steak tasted like halibut, but, though the alligator was young, it was very tough.

At 11 o'clock we passed Buck Island, said to be a great resort for deer. The scenery again changed. Live oaks appeared, and a vast prairie dotted with islands of palmetto, and the high land was marked in the distance by a purplish rim of woods.

At noon we met a brigade of poisonous water moccasins. Some of them were nine or ten feet long. The boys sailed into them with a relish. The air whistled with bullets, and the snakes lashed the water until it turned bloody with their contortions.

THE FISHING.

Possum Bluff is a charming island, alive with possums and alligators. Many singular birds and reptiles were slaughtered here. As we approached Lake Monnsetts, a few miles from the bluff, the water became sluggish. Great soggy bunches of moss struggled in its depths, and vegetation was twice as rank as below. Mulberry Mound is an Indian mound at the entrance of the lake. Some of them are fifty feet high, and covered with dead trees, but the Indian sachems and vines were so luxuriant that the trees were hidden. Here I drew in my last black bass for the day. The twelve hours' catch was as follows:

Lbs.	No. of Bass.	Lbs.	No. of Bass.	Lbs.	No. of Bass.	Lbs.	No. of Bass.
1	1	4	1	2	1	3	1
2	1	2	1	3	1	2	1
3	1	3	1	2	1	3	1
2	1	2	1	3	1	2	1
3	1	3	1	3