RIVER ROADS DOWN SOUTH

APALACH' TO CHATTAHOOCH', ON THE WAY TO COLUMBUS.

A Breezy Passenger and His Dainty Hunting Dogs—Electric Search Lights on Small River Steamers—Passengers Who Come and Go in the Night—A Young Georgian Who Disappeared Up a Hill.

ALAGA, Ala., April 14.—This place is too young yet and perhaps too small to appear upon the maps, being merely a little settlement and railway station at the end of a long iron railroad bridge that crosses the Chattahoochee River from Georgia to this State. It takes its name from a combination of the abbreviations of the names of the two States: Ala., Alabama, and Ga., Georgia.

It might be too much to say that after one map maker puts a dot on his paper to represent Alaga the others will soon follow suit; but there are some evidences extant to show that the map makers are only human, and that the map of 1895 is considered a pretty safe and trustworthy guide in making the map of 1896. The ancient and extinct city of St. Joseph, in Florida, furnishes an example of this. THE SUN showed a few weeks ago that the city of St. Joseph disappeared from the face of the earth in 1842, every building being either moved away or torn down, and that its site is now covered with a dense pine forest. But a little circumstance like that does not discourage the map makers. Take up a map of 1895, whether made for school use or otherwise, and in most cases you will find St. Joseph set down, as prominent as its little black dot can make it, though the place was utterly wiped out fifty-three years before. Some of the latest maps even show the railroad between Iola and St. Joseph, though that road has been nothing but a long sandbank for over half a century.

Besides its railroad and its telegraph office, Alaga has a steamboat landing; but that does not mean, on Western and Southern rivers, that there are wharves and warehouses. A steamboat landing hereabouts is any spot along the river bank where a steamboat can poke her nose in and lay a plank to the shore; and when the old landing place becomes choked with mud the boat goes a little further up or down the river. The boats that touch here ply the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint rivers, between Apalachicola and Columbus.

The system of naming these Georgia and Alabama rivers is confusing to the visitor until he masters it, and must be doubly confusing to the reader. Few of them carry to the sea the same names with which they started among the hills. The Chatuga River, for instance, rising in lower North Carolina, becomes the Tugaloo in upper Georgia, and the Tugaloo after a long run becomes the Savannah. The Ocmulgee River after its junction with the Oconee and the Ohoopee becomes the Altamaha. The Coosa River in Alabama becomes the Alabama River, which after its junction with the Tombigbee becomes the Mobile River, emptying into Mobile Bay. These streams have hard names and are mostly muddy and shallow, but they are all of vast importance in developing the agricultural and other resources of Alabama and Georgia. A few years ago they were the great highways of both States.

The Chattahoochee, in the same way, is not allowed to reach the sea under its original name. Rising in the extreme upper part of the State, hardly ten miles from the Tugaloo, which becomes the Savannah, it keeps its name until it is joined by the Flint River at Chattahoochee, and thereafter it is known as the Apalachicola. The big dam at Columbus, more than 400 miles from the Gulf, puts an end to further navigation, but above the dam the Chattahoochee is a big river for several hundred miles, and carries boat loads of cotton and provisions from the interior to Columbus.

The days when thirty-five side-wheel steamboats navigated this river, all cotton laden, are only a memory, but the present fleet of stern-wheelers, built after the Western pattern, are much better adapted to the purpose. The River Queen, now on the ways at Apalachicola for repairs, gives an opportunity of seeing how the hulls are constructed. If the boat was loaded down to the guards, as it often is, she would draw between two and three feet of water. But such boats as this and the Apalachee, both among the largest and deepest draughts on the river, are for use only when the water is high. In those seasons when the water is low, before the summer rains begin, still shallower boats are used—boats of such light draught that mud banks and sand bars have no terrors for them.

When a shrill whistle blows in Apalachicola everybody knows that a boat is about to start up the river—an event of some importance there, for there is no other way of leaving the place except by taking the seagoing boat along the Gulf coast to Carrabelle, where a small railroad ends. By taking a boat up the river the Apalachicolan can get off at Chattahoochee, and there transfer himself to the railroad. Each of the three large railroads crossing the river on its own bridge runs a line of steamers, for of late years the river has become merely a feeder for the railroads. Then there is an independent line; and as each line runs one boat at a time, and each boat makes one round trip a week, four boats leave Apalachicola for "up-river points" every week.

On a Monday evening the Apalachee, the Plant line boat, that blows the long, shrill whistle, she leaves before dark, and is due in Columbus on Thursday or Friday, according to the strength of the current. Then on Saturday evening she starts back again, and reaches Apalachicola on Monday morning, making the down trip in half the time that the up trip takes. But whether up or down she has forty or fifty landings to make, adding to her freight and passengers at every landing.

She is called the fastest boat on the river, the Apalachee, but a New Yorker unfamiliar with Western river boats would stare at her build. The hull is no more than a big float with rounded sides, the paddle wheel, hidden beneath the expanding guards, that stand out bold like the guards of a ferryboat, though much nearer the water. The single wheel is aft of everything, and there are two rudders, one on each side, just in front of the wheel. Two great arms reach from the engine to the wheel, one on each side, and turn it with the motion of a boy turning a grindstone.

The arms and all the machinery are in plain sight, for the lower deck is entirely open. There stand the boilers, six cylindrical ones, four of them a big black fireman who feeds the furnace continually with cordwood sticks. Nothing about the working part of the boat is hidden from view. When she starts the half dozen roustabouts throw themselves down on boxes and bales for a nap, for there is not much lot of darkies as ever were put in a picture, but for hard and rapid work at the landings few other men could compete with them.

If it is odd to see the engines thus exposed to view, it is odder yet to see the passengers cabin set up on the upper deck, forming the second story. No Queen Anne architect has yet appeared in the South and West to tell the boat builders that if only to preserve the utilities, they should put at least ostensibly heavy pillars under the big cabins to shore them up. The custom of fifty years ago they still follow, and prop up their heavy cabins with slender sticks, 4x4 stuff, giving the impression that the cabin may crash down to the lower deck at any moment, though it never does. A brass-mounted companionway leads up from near the bow, and once up the steps the passenger forgets all about the thin sticks and the seething furnace, and the tired roustabouts below, and makes himself comfortable in the cabin's rocking chairs.

Here, as on the Mississippi, no tickets are sold; but there is a purser's office, with a register, like a hotel, and the passenger registers his name, or in cases of inability the purser does it for him. Two-thirds of the way down the long cabin, with its tastefully furnished rooms on one side, is given over to the men passengers, the other third being partitioned off for women. At each end there are plenty of windows, the men looking forward to what is to come, the women looking out over the dripping wheel at what has been passed. The big stoves at each end are reminders of winter, but they look out of place while the boat lies at Apalachicola.

"George, what do you want a stove aboard this boat for?" a passenger asks.

"Gitte powerful cold up de river sometimes, sah," George answers. And so it does; and when the cold comes George builds up a tremendous pine-wood fire till the stove is red hot and half the pipe is red hot, and everybody who has drawn up a chair has to draw it back again; and then it is forgotten all about the fire for the next hour and a half, till stove and pipe and people are all cold as an ice machine; and he would doubtless forget it permanently if some one did not inquire in dangerous tones:

"Where's that damned nigger?"

Such an inquiry would sound harsh, perhaps emphatically harsh, in the North, but in the land of rich coloring it is hardly considered profane, certainly not unkind. George regards it rather as a term of affection; and from somewhere down in the depths of the boat his strong bass voice instantly answers:

"Comin', sah! Comin'!"

And he does come, and brings a big armful of wood, and makes the stove and the people red hot again, and an hour and a half later the same performance is repeated.

But who are these people who are going up the river? Apalachicolans as a rule do not travel much, and their visitors are mostly gentlemen with large satchels filled with specimens of American manufactures. Clearly none of the passengers are commercial travellers. It is more interesting to watch the passengers than to study out the intricacies of the boat.

Here is the first one; not in order of arrival, but in evident importance. He is a large man, well dressed as most New Yorkers, and with an easy but well-bred air of at-homeness with whoever he meets, that shows he has been further afield than western Florida. A breezy air comes through the cabin door with him; a servant follows him, carrying two guns in leather cases.

"Now, George!" says he to the expectant porter, "I've got two dogs on the lower deck, and I put them in your charge. See you take good care of them, too. If it gets cold in the night move them nearer the boilers. I'm-erstand? And in the morning I want a nice beefsteak and a chop. Hey, come back here; I'm not done yet. See you put plenty of gravy on the meat. I'm-derstand?"

And with this the new arrival turns toward THE SUN man and winks profoundly at him with all the confidence of an old friend.

This is Mr. James Fenimore Cooper Griggs, merchant of Apalachicola; and, what is more, proprietor of the independent line of steamers. There is nearly always an independent line of steamers on the river, leading a lonely and sorrowful life, for the three or four railroad lines make existence a burden to it. The wink of Mr. Griggs is equal any day to an introduction, and presently THE SUN man asks:

"Going off hunting?"

"Yes," he answers; "I'm going up to Chattahooch' for a little shooting."

"There ought to be plenty of good shooting about here."

"Plenty of big game," Mr. Griggs answers. "But I'm after birds this time. We don't have many birds down here so near the coast."

To push time ahead for a moment, Mr. Griggs landed next morning at "Chattahooch."

"Now, then, boys," says he, as he steps ashore, "look livelyr here! Get all my stuff ashore! Bring the dogs, George. These my three barrels of oysters? Here, you fellows, get these oysters up there in the shade, and be quick about it!"

In mournful contrast with this breezy passenger is the withered old woman with the big hearty grandson. The pair of them sit in the women's cabin, and the young man selects a comfortable rocking chair and leans toward the stove, and sticks to both faithfully. Occasionally the old woman walks out into the men's cabin and wrings her hands and groans. Offers of assistance by the stewardess bring only more groans and moans. Presently the meaning of all this misery becomes manifest.

"Gentlemen," she mutters, going up to one of the men, "can you do something to help a pore old woman?" There is a story of woe, muttered too indistinctly to be understood.

In other parts of the world the suggestion might have been made that she put her big lubberly grandson to work. But these men are too polite for that, and every one puts his hand in his pocket and gives her a coin. At some mysterious larding in the night the old woman and her escort disappear.

Then there is the invalid from somewhere in the interior, who, as subsequent conversation reveals, is convalescing from a long and dangerous illness, and has been down on the coast for sea air. His wife is with him, giving him wifely care, and everybody knows him—Captain, purser, passengers, crew, and all—and sits down and talks to him, and congratulates him on his recovery. At half-hour intervals the man is dosed from sundry small bottles, and next morning he is gone. Passengers come and go at night most mysteriously.

The little man who insists upon discussing the silver question with the other and better dressed little man who must be either a local preacher or a schoolmaster; the planter who has been down to Apalach on business; and two or three men who are too quiet and commonplace to deserve separate mention, comprise the remainder of the passengers at the start. The grandest thing of all is that this is many miles removed from the routes of "tourist" travel. Not a single soul aboard has one of those familiar yard-long tickets entitling him to change cars a dozen times a day and to board in the best hotels at full rates. A public conveyance with neither a tourist nor a commercial traveller aboard is almost beyond the reach of the imagination, but here is one.

"No smoking outside the cabin," says a big printed sign; but it hangs harmless in the purser's office, and for the present it means nothing. The purser explains that it is for use only when the decks are loaded with cotton bales. Too cold night air keeps everybody inside, and there is no smoking outside the cabin. But much tobacco is consumed around the cabin stove.

At 11 o'clock or so there is a gentle bump, and this is Iola, where once were wharves and warehouses, and mountains of cotton bales, and steam cars to carry them to St. Joseph for shipment. No warehouses loom up now against the stars. The only wharf is built of mud and sand, and the river built it. The whistle that blew is not from a locomotive, but from the Apalachee to announce her coming. When the whistle blew, half a mile from the landing, a strange thing happened. One looks on these shallow river boats, with their black roustabouts and their cotton cargoes, for the big wire basket filled with blazing pine knots, as a great torch to light the deck and the landing. But the whistle was hardly done blowing before there shot out a glare of light that made the black river a sheet of gold, and threw weird shadows behind the moss-hung cypresses on shore. It was the Apalachee's electric search light, that illumined every landing between Apalach' and Columbus. Cotton bales are no longer rolled aboard under the light of the old pine torch. Every Chattahoochee River steamer carries an electric search light, and her business goes on as well by night as by day. It is not as poetic a light as its predecessor, but far more effective; and the roustabout sings as merrily as he walks under its rays as ever he did under the blazing wire basket.

Somewhere back of Iola are lakes and springs that are locally celebrated for their curative powers and their excellent fishing, with a small hotel and other accommodations for the public. The passenger list is increased by one young man who has been down to the springs for his health, and now is going home quite well. He comes nimbly aboard over the narrow plank, a big satchel in each hand; and all the officer and stewards know him, for he came down in the same boat.

This young man is a type, and therefore worthy of description; a type found often in the South, but not so often in the North. A tall, lithe, graceful young fellow of perhaps twenty-five, with good, broad forehead and a fine light of fearless face; with fancy shirt, good clothes, and his trousers tucked into the tops of leather-colored boots, with little tassels dangling down their sides. With good manners, and every sign of good training at home and in schools, and with no apparent lack in his make-up but that indescribable something which comes only from contact with the world as it is found in big cities.

The few passengers who linger about the stove within ten minutes know all the young man's affairs—for he has not the least hesitation about taking the public into his confidence. He has been "in business for himself" for eight or ten years, keeping stores in Georgia and Alabama. The work broke him down and he sold out, and he started on this river trip all used up.

"He don't know how bad he was," the purser says later. "He fell over in a faint here by the stove, and we had to carry him into his stateroom."

But a few weeks of the springs and baths have put him on his feet again, and he is as lively as a cricket. He tells of his wife and children, and of the long wait he expects to have for a train. Ten minutes later he and THE SUN man are discussing more authors, living and dead, than are often mentioned on the Chattahoochee River. A Latin or Greek quotation comes as easy to the young man as eating a dozen Apalach oysters. Few standard authors can be mentioned that he is not familiar with. He admits, however, that he has not read Hopkinson Smith's "Colonel Carter of Cartersville," and when it is suggested that that is sure to interest a Southerner, he takes out a little notebook and makes a memorandum, and says he will send for it as soon as he reaches home. He knows how to distribute coins freely, and next day the stewards are quite fond of him.

In his case, also, time may be logged along a little, so as to land at some point on the upper river, there to take a train for home. Two nights later that point is approaching, at 2 o'clock in the morning, and so pleasant a companion has the young man been that THE SUN man gets up an hour to bid him farewell.

"I wish you would come ashore with me," he says; "come home with me and stay a week or two. We would enjoy having you very much, and we will make it pleasant for you."

But a travelling Northerner who accepted every hearty invitation would never get back from the South. The whistle blew and the search light blazed out and the landing was made. It was at a point where the Georgia shore was a high bluff, hundreds of feet high, perhaps, but no man could tell in that upper darkness, for the top was invisible. It was a railroad crossing, and there was said to be a bridge across the river somewhere in the dark distance. There was said also to be an engine house at the top of the bluff, with an engine to operate a car that ran down an inclined railway to the water's edge. This, however, was solely for hoisting bales of cotton, and was not working in the middle of the night to hoist passengers.

All that was visible of this arrangement, if, indeed, such an arrangement existed, was the fifty feet or so of the inclined track nearest the water, upon which the search light shone, running up into the darkness with a slant of about 45 degrees. The space between the rails was floored with planks, and across these planks cleats were nailed at intervals of perhaps two feet, with here and there a cleat missing. It was up that hill of boards, bracing himself against the cleats, that a landing passenger must climb, with no rail to hold to, nothing to assist him but the muscles of his legs, and no living soul at the top to greet him; nothing but an empty shanty in which he might regale himself until it was light enough to cross the bridge to the railway station.

At this nightmare of a landing place the young man walked the plank that was thrown out, and sprang nimbly at the cleats. A slip or a tilt backward meant a broken neck for him, but he climbed as if he had been born on a slanting railway. When the search light was shifted he was still climbing, a big satchel in each hand, balancing him like the iron balls on the arms of a steam governor, knees bent, legs spread out like a frog's, every muscle in his body at work. The search light pointed up the river, and, like another distinguished traveller, he was seen no more.

The woven wire spring and the hair mattress have invaded all parts of the South. Perhaps there are some uncomfortable beds left, but the traveller does not see them. In the most unpromising looking hotels the beds are good. On the Apalachee they are like beds of down, and doubtless they are equally good on the other river boats. Maybe it is because a good bed in these days costs so little more than a poor one. In the morning the little tables that had been standing against the cabin walls were stretched out into long ones, and an odor of fried bacon came from the pantry. The boats have up real Southern fare, and that is a comprehensive enough description for any one who has travelled in the South. The variety of dishes is amazing, and as for quantity, food is as plenty as hay ricks in a Northern field in August. It is only where the work of the live oak ends, begins the time to draw the veil. That grand old Southern cook we used to read about was buried thirty years ago, and his successor drowns everything in a bath of melted fat. Bread? Certainly not; the passengers would not eat what they call "light bread," which is what we call simply bread. Fine hot soda biscuits, sah, and slabs of good hot corn bread; dyspepsia pills as big as your fist.

"That's one thing I never can stand when I go South," an Alabamian said to the writer one day, not on the boat, but in another place, pointing to a plate of "light bread" on the table. He came from Birmingham, and said that for years he had been taking twenty-one doses of medicine every day. "It always seems to me just like eating shavings. I must have good hot bread, or I can't make out a meal." Yet this man still moves, and imagines himself alive.

"I don't like light bread," said a Florida orange grower one day. "I'd rather have good hot biscuit. They're more solid and more filling." He was an Englishman, too.

Chattahoochee is one of the places one hears of but never sees. There is no record of any one having gone there except in transit, in the expectation of traveling on to other place. At certain stages of the river the boats do not always go up the Flint to Bainbridge, and in those cases passengers waiting for them take a branch railroad down to Chattahoochee and catch the boat there. There is said to be a town somewhere near the station, but it is not in evidence.

It is even said that there is a big brick asylum for Florida's insane patients, but it does not show itself. Chattahoochee landing, however, is a great big moist subject that must be taken up by itself. It is just south of the Georgia line, and so far the boat has gone over only 100 miles of her 400-mile voyage to Columbus.

One phase of travel on the Apalachee should have been mentioned sooner, and with bated breath. It is the Apalachicola oysters. When 10 o'clock at night comes, or 11 o'clock, or whatever hour the travelling stomach begins to crave them, it is only necessary to say to the steward:

"How are the oysters, Charley?"

"Have 'em ready in two minutes, sah!" he answers. And two or three minutes later a dozen on the half shell are ready, that bring as many to the plate will conveniently hold. But that is only a beginning. As fast as the dozen emptied shells are taken away a fresh dozen take their place, and the process is repeated till the passenger cries for quarter, the steward never cries for quarter till he has blacked the passenger's boots.

SMALLS'S DAREDEVIL EXPLOIT.

How a Negro Pilot Delivered a Confederate Boat to the Federal Government.

From the Washington Post.

How Robert Smalls, the well-known negro politician of Charleston, S. C., took possession of the Confederate steamship Planter in Charleston harbor during the war and delivered her to the Federal authorities forms the subject of one of the most interesting war claims now before Congress. At that time Smalls received a part of the prize money, but the full amount to which he was entitled was never paid him, and there is now before the House a bill, favorably reported, which appropriates $20,000, to be paid over to him for the performance of one of the most daring feats of the rebellion. The case is not entirely new in Congressional history, for Mr. Smalls has not been idle all these years, and the measure has been previously considered by the committee and favorably recommended. But comparatively few persons know the history of the case, which is given in detail in one of the reports recently made to the House from the Committee on War Claims.

On May 13, 1862, the Confederate steamship Planter, the special despatch boat of Gen. Ripley, the Confederate post commander at Charleston, S. C., was taken by Robert Smalls under the following circumstances from the wharf at which she was lying, carried safely out of Charleston harbor, and delivered to one of the vessels of the Federal fleet blockading that port:

On the day previous, May 12, the Planter, which had for two weeks been engaged in removing guns from Coles Island to James Island, returned to Charleston. That night all the officers went ashore and slept in the city, leaving on board a crew of eight men, all colored. Among them was Robert Smalls, who was virtually the pilot of the boat, although he was only called a wheelman, because at that time no colored man, in fact, could have been made a pilot. For some time, previous he had been watching for an opportunity to carry into execution a plan he had conceived to take the Planter to the Federal fleet. This, he saw, was about as good a chance as he would ever have to do so, and therefore he determined not to lose it. Consulting with the balance of the crew Smalls found that they were willing to cooperate with him, although two of them afterward concluded to remain behind. The design was hazardous in the extreme.

The boat would have to pass beneath the guns of the forts in the harbor. Failure and detection would have been certain death. Fearful was the venture, but it was made. The daring resolution had been formed, and under command of Robert Smalls wood was taken aboard, steam was put on, and with her valuable cargo of guns and ammunition, intended for Fort Ripley, a new fortification just constructed in the harbor, about 2 o'clock in the morning the Planter silently moved off from her dock, steamed up to North Atlantic wharf, where Smalls's wife and her two children, and seven or eight women and one other child, and also three men, were waiting to embark. All these were taken on board, and then, at 3:25 A. M., May 13, the Planter started on her perilous adventure, carrying nineteen men, five women, and three children. Passing Fort Johnson, the Planter's whistle blew the usual salute and she proceeded down the bay. Approaching Fort Sumter, Smalls stood in the pilot house leaning out of the window, with his face partly covered, across his breast, after the manner of Capt. Relay, the commander of the boat, and his head covered with the huge straw hat which Capt. Relay wore on such occasions.

The signal required to be given by all steamers passing out was blown as coolly as if Gen. Ripley was on board, instead of the rightful inspection. Sumter answered by signal, "All right," and the Planter headed toward Morris Island, then occupied by Hatch's light artillery, and passed beyond the range of Sumter's guns before a shot was fired, showing that she was wrong. When at last the Planter was obviously going toward the Federal fleet off the bar, Sumter signalled toward Morris Island to stop her. But it was too late. As the Planter approached the Federal fleet a white flag was displayed, but this was not at first observed, and the Federal steamers, supposing the Confederate rams were coming to attack them, stood out to deep water. But the ship Onward, Capt. Nichols, which was not a steamer, manned, opened her ports, and was about to fire into the Planter, when she noticed the flag of truce. As soon as the vessels came within hailing distance of each other, the Planter's errand was explained. Capt. Nichols then boarded her, and Smalls delivered the Planter to him. From the Planter Smalls was transferred to the Augusta, the flagship off the bar, under the command of Capt. Parrott, by whom the Planter, with Smalls and her crew, were sent up to Port Royal to Admiral Dupont, then in command of the Southern fleet.

Smalls continued to distinguish himself in a number of naval engagements, and upon one occasion, in December, 1863, while the Planter, then under Capt. Nickerson, was sailing through Folly Island creek, the Confederate batteries at Secessionville opened a very hot fire upon her. Capt. Nickerson became demoralized and left the pilot house and secured himself in the coal bunker. Smalls was on the deck, and finding that the Captain had deserted his post, entered the pilot house, took command of the boat, and carried her safely out of the reach of the guns. For this conduct he was promoted by order of Gen. Gillmore, commanding the Department of the South, to the rank of Captain, and was ordered to act as Captain of the Planter, which was used as a supply boat along the coast until the end of the war. In September, 1866, he carried his boat to Charleston, where she was put out of commission and sold.

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THE WILDCAT A HOME BODY

CURIOUS TACTICS SHOWN WHEN A DOG IS IN PURSUIT.

Apparent Pleasure that the Wildcat Takes in Leading the Dog On and in the Maze of the Pursuer—Roamings of Wildcats—A Hunt with Disappointment at the End.

"All our native wild animals," said Judge W. H. Crane of Port Jervis, "are home-lovers. That is, they are devoted to the locality where they may have been born, or where they have come to early domicile. Abroad from that particular range they feel as strange and uncomfortable as do human beings far from their own homes and friends. This is, perhaps, not so marked in the bear, which is of a roaming disposition naturally, and thinks nothing of long journeyings from its native swamp or den in the rocks, but even the bear will turn its head homeward when trouble assails, and endeavor to reach the familiar places of refuge that abound there.

"In the wildcat we have a particularly strong illustration of the home-loving trait in wild beasts. Not that this wily creature clings to the hole in the rocks where it perhaps was born, or does not care to wander from its own fireside, so to speak. Its home is its familiar range, and this may be a circuit miles in area. One may see a wildcat, or signs of one, at a certain locality on one ridge, say this week, and next week see another on a ridge eight miles from that spot. That is, he may think it is another wildcat, but the chances are that it is the one he saw before. It is the habit of the wildcat to prowl about one locality a week or so, then change its base to another a long distance away, moving thus at intervals until it reaches the limit of its range, when it will move back again by the same slow degrees, sometimes returning over the same trail, and sometimes on the opposite side of the circuit, until it is once more at its starting point.

"A wildcat hunt, to an observant person, is an intensely interesting thing. For that matter, I don't see how a hunt of any kind can be of wholesome interest and real profit to any one who engages in it with no sense of anything actuating him but the prospect of coming upon his game as quickly as possible and killing it. If he does not see and appreciate the ever varying tactics of that game to outgeneral its pursuer, and study out means to circumvent it instead of following blindly and mechanically on the trail, trusting to time and bull-head luck and persistence to win him the day; or if he does not take note of the manifold incidents which the woods and their restless, but never purposeless, living things present to him as he steals along, or tarries here and there for advantage in the chase, the hunt to him, in my mind, is simply as pearls cast before swine. There is nothing insignificant in the woods or their creatures to the true lover of nature, even when wrapt in the excitement or expectancy of the chase. I remember once I was waiting on a runway for the very good chances of the hounds driving a deer to me. As I sat there listening for the first faint cry of the dogs on the ridge to warn me of the expected coming, I saw the gentle movement of a reed in an opening near me, where there were many reeds. Looking closer I saw that the agitation was caused by a tiny field mouse which had climbed the reed. It rested for a moment there and then leaped to another reed, and thus, leaping from reed to reed, drew near to where I was. In front of me, not more than six feet away, a deer in passing had left the deep impression of its feet in the soft ground, and one of these indentations had filled with water. The field mouse came on, making its way by the reeds, until it was two or three yards from the deer track. Then it dropped to the ground, and came springing along until it reached the tiny pool. Pausing for a moment, the little creature stepped into the water-filled track, and proceeded to take a bath. It scattered the water about in sparkling drops until all was gone. Then it stepped out again, dressed its soft fur with its tongue and tiny hands, and went tripping away again to the reeds, and was gone. This was a trifling thing, but it seems to me that in my pleased contemplation of it the deer and the hounds might have dashed past me without my knowing it. But perhaps not.

"Another time I was on a runway, and, having set the dog forward to the drive, I lay down and stretched myself at full length on the ground, my feet a few inches apart. Presently I saw a chipmunk come loping along directly toward me. One side of its face was swollen to enormous proportions, and I knew the little squirrel had nuts or acorns there which it intended to store somewhere against the winter's coming. I lay perfectly quiet. The chipmunk came on until it reached my feet, and there between the two it dug a pit, perhaps three inches deep. It then squeezed the contents of its face pouch out into the hole, replaced the dirt upon it, fitted back the grass, and arranged it so that no person or thing would ever have known the ground had been disturbed, and scampered away to gather more stores and cache them somewhere else, but the acorn the chipmunk buried between my feet could never have done it any good, for the reason that my feet, which the calculating squirrel had chosen for landmarks by which it was to find again the place of that cache, naturally could not remain there to mark it, and I have no doubt that a more or less sturdy oak tree stands where that cache was made, the growth of the chipmunk's planted acorn. I never knew whether the deer came or not.

"But I was telling of a wildcat hunt. It is an intensely interesting thing. A bear, a fox, and every other wild animal of our woods except the wildcat at once endeavors to reach its hole or den or other place of refuge when it hears the dogs on its track. But the opposite is true with the wildcat. So long as the dogs or dog is following it this contrary beast will avoid its den. The manœuvres of a wildcat when a dog is on its trail would seem to indicate that instead of being irritated or harassed by the pursuer the cat is in good humor by reason of the chase. A wildcat's track shows to the extremest degree its hatred of the beast it is pursuing, and its almost uncontrollable desire and anxiety to get at and rend it. This is what seems to please the wildcat, and to enjoy it to the utmost the animal never permits itself to get far ahead of the dog, and a great deal of the time it is really behind the dog. Forty yards is as far as a wildcat will keep the head of a dog. Then it will circle around and fall back in the rear, where, from the cover of a thicket or a laurel bush, it will crouch and watch the excited, furious, and impatient dog rave along on the trail, sniffing the trace of excitement or anxiety as the outcome of the chase, but manifesting a nonchalance that the popular opinion of the nature of the wildcat could never give the animal credit for.

"When the dog has followed the track until its circuitous course has brought the pursuer once more behind the cat, the latter will bound forward to the limit it permits itself to be in advance of the dog, circles back again, and once more enjoys the dog's wild rage from the rear. These tactics it would keep up indefinitely, I suppose, if it were not that in the mean time the hunter may come up on the trail and bag the game. But when the wildcat discovers that the dog has tired of the chase and has quit or perhaps may have gone off on some other trail it tarries no longer by the way, but bounds on in haste and does not stop until it has reached its den in the rocks, which is usually inaccessible to any other living thing, except one of the wildcat's kind. When a wildcat hunter, therefore, finds that his dog has abandoned the trail he might as well give up the hunt for that day.

"I had an interesting wildcat hunt the first winter, although the ending of it was disappointing—not so much that I didn't kill the wildcat myself as in having to acknowledge that men may be mean and selfish even with life-long example of the generosity of nature and the woods before them. Lew Boyd, who lives at Hartwood Park, Sullivan county, sent me word one day that a big wildcat was in a swamp near there, and I went up to join Lew in a hunt for it. We found its track in the snow, and taking one of Lew's dogs we started after the cat. The cat had started some time before, and we followed it close to the Mongaup country, on the high rocky hills overlooking the Delaware Valley. There the track was warm and fresh, and the action of the dog showed that the cat was near. It was making toward the still higher and rougher country on the hills. Before long we discovered that the dog, which was a young one, had left the wildcat's trail and gone off on a fox's track.

"'That's bad luck,' said Lew. 'Now that cat will never stop until it gets into its hole way over on Rocky Hill.'

"A brilliant idea popped into my mind.

"'Why not play dog yourself, Lew,' said I, 'and fool the cat into going?' I'll go around and maybe get a shot at it.'

"The idea struck Lew as being a good one, and away he went on the trail, barking and yelping like a dog bound to tear something to pieces if he could only come up with it. I took a course over the rough country, travelling a long distance, when, while on the top of a high cliff, I heard the sound of some heavy object either fall or jump to the ground. I could see nothing, and was picking my way around to find out what it might have been, when Lew Boyd came up. I told him what I had heard.

"'It was the wildcat,' said he. 'It discovered that I wasn't a dog, and has probably been looking you over for the last five minutes or so from a perch on the rocks. It has gone for its hole now, sure.'

"I found where the cat had jumped from the top of one ledge down ten feet or so to another one, and saw its tracks leading along that ledge. I clambered down to that shelf of rocks and followed this track a long distance over rough and dangerous ground. Suddenly the track ended. There was no hole or fissure there that the cat could have dragged into. Looking up I saw a projection in the face of the cliff not more than three inches wide and six or eight feet above me. From the scratches on the rocks I saw that the wildcat had leaped from the spot where its track ended, grasped that slight projection with its claws, and drawn itself upon it. Small as that support was, it had been sufficient to enable the agile cat to spring upward again as much further, seize a similar projection, and from that make its way to another, and so on until it had reached the summit of the high cliff above me, and there, perhaps, found refuge among the inaccessible rocks. It would have taken a man in a balloon to get at that eyrie, and we gave up the hunt.

"'That cat,' said Lew Boyd, 'doesn't live in the rocks. It lives over near Hartwood, and either to-night or to-morrow night it will go back home. I'll keep a watch out for it and send you word when it gets there.'

"Sure enough, a day or so later Lew telephoned me from the Hartwood Club House that the cat had come back.

"'It's in Horsecamp Swamp,' he said.

"I went up to Hartwood as soon as I could get there, and Lew and I started after the cat. But the wily beast had heard Lew when he went to the swamp that morning and found its track leading into it, and had gone out on the east side. It had four hours' start of us, and we followed it five miles. Then we met our dog coming back. That was something we couldn't understand just then, but we proceeded, and soon found out what it meant. A fellow living in the mountains in that locality had hoaxed our dog on the wildcat's trail, and had come out with another fellow, and a big building he had drawn out of the old trail, put their building on it, and had just killed our wildcat as we came up. There was only one thing for us to do, and we did it. We came home mad."

THE HOMES OF THE VETERANS.

The Inspection by Gen. Breckinridge's Officers of the Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Over 30,000 Members.

WASHINGTON, April 16.—The sharp discussion in Congress of the affairs of the National Home for Disabled Volunteers lends additional interest to the report on this subject made only a few weeks ago by the Government inspecting officers.

It appears that the maximum number present during the year at the various branches of the home was 17,425, the minimum 14,955, and the average 16,477. But if we add the average number present for longer or shorter periods, we get an average total of members, present and absent, of 20,207.

There is a steady increase, too, in the number of old and needy soldiers cared for. During the past six years it has averaged 799 annually, and last year this average was exceeded by 86. There would be many more present but for the lack of accommodations. The branch homes are overcrowded, and at one of them tents are greatly resorted to. As many as 355 veterans were reported as sleeping on floors, 240 in attics, 818 in basements and 612 in places not originally intended for sleeping purposes. There seems to be little doubt that, although the number of veterans is now rapidly dwindling, yet the fact that so many of them are arriving at ages at which they are less able to take care of themselves increases the pressure for more accommodations.

One method of obtaining collateral help is that afforded by what is known as outdoor relief. At the home near Washington an average amount of about $6.88 per month was thus granted, but this is much less than the cost of maintenance at the homes.

The provisions, however, made by Congress are most liberal, as will be seen by the fact that the sum appropriated for the last fiscal year was $2,484,474, of which only $87,600 was for special construction, leaving $2,396,874 for routine expenses. And this last sum increased from various sources to $2,471,458, so that the total available, including special construction, exceeded $2,500,000.

Further it appears that the per capita cost of maintenance on the reported average of those present was $128.78, and that this was a reduction of $12.03 from the year preceding. That would indicate a saving of $208,141 on the basis of the average number present. In this respect the financial condition of the homes is gratifying, especially as there had been a decreased appropriation for maintenance from the previous year and an increase in population. There was further shown to be a surplus of $114,000, which some balances increased to nearly $600,000.

Mention may be made of the permanent funds, the principal one being given by Horatio Ward of London in 1871, originally $100,000, of which there still remains $68,300 in state bonds and $1,536.67 on deposit. Another fund is the Stimson legacy, consisting of the bequest of $10,000 of by a former member of the house, Daniel Stinson of New York, of which $7,16.88 remained on hand. Leavenworth gave $50,000 in city bonds to the branch near that city, and this has been used for improvement, the balance at the beginning of 1895 being $1,000.

As to the barracks, the floor space for each occupant averages about 60 square feet and the air space 622 cubic feet. As an average increase of 792 cubic feet is needed, it is expected, it is thought that there should be some sort of increase of accommodations, and more outdoor relief is proposed. It is also urged that future purchases of bedsteads should be of the present standard size, that is, 37 instead of 30 inches wide. The reports both upon clothing and food are favorable. The food is substantial and well cooked, and the large kitchens and inviting dining halls are admirable. But there is a difference in cost of food at the several branches, the prices varying, for example, from about 18 to 22 cents per pound for coffee, from 27 to 37 cents for tea, and from 55 to 78 cents per bushel for potatoes. Of course, the time of year adds to other causes a tendency to some extremes. The average annual cost per capita of subsistence is $117.64, with $95.57 at the Southern and $130.34 at the Pacific branch.

One gratifying feature of the homes is that the hospitals are very well conducted, and have reduced the death rate. This is made more important, since it is felt that the homes themselves will, in large part, become one day virtually hospitals for the accommodation of the enfeebled, and perhaps ill, persons who live there. During the year reported upon there were 1,600 deaths, at the rate of 8.8 per 52 per thousand of the average present and absent, and about 42 of the whole number actually cared for.

As to the individual branches, they are seven in number, known as the Eastern, Central, Marion, Northwestern, Western, Pacific, and Southern. The Eastern branch is under Gen. Luther Stevenson, and its increase in average number of members was 90 over the preceding year. A credit balance of about $12,000 appeared in its farm accounts over the expenditures. The amusements were supplied by a theatre, band and orchestra concerts, a deer park, a library, a billiard and pool room, and a bowling alley, the income from the latter being considerable profit, going to the general fund.

The Central is the largest branch of the National Home, and has been under Col. J. B. Thomas. Here the amusements are about the same as at the Eastern, with the addition of boats. The site around Martinsburg Lake is very beautiful. The band consists of thirty-four musicians, of whom thirty are civilian. There is a large library of 19,712 volumes, with 202 newspapers and 35 other periodicals. I suppose, if it were not that in the mean time the hunter may come up on the trail and bag the game. But when the wildcat discovers that the dog has tired of the chase and has quit or perhaps may have gone off on some other trail it tarries no longer by the way, but bounds on in haste and does not stop until it has reached its den in the rocks, which is usually inaccessible to any other living thing, except one of the wildcat's kind. When a wildcat hunter, therefore, finds that his dog has abandoned the trail he might as well give up the hunt for that day.

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