Stowe Harriet Beecher

Palmetto-Leaves

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Содержание

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NOBODY'S DOG

YES, here he comes again! Look at him! Whose dog is he? We are sitting around the little deck-house of the Savannah steamer, in that languid state of endurance which befalls voyagers, when, though the sky is clear, and the heavens blue, and the sea calm as a looking-glass, there is yet that gentle, treacherous, sliding rise and fall, denominated a ground-swell.

Reader, do you remember it? Of all deceitful demons of the deep, this same smooth, slippery, cheating ground-swell is the most diabolic. Because, you see, he is a *mean* imp, an underhanded, unfair, swindling scamp, who takes from you all the glory of endurance. Fair to the eye, plausible as possible, he says to you, "What's the matter? What can you ask brighter than this sky, smoother than this sea, more glossy and calm than these rippling waves? How fortunate that you have such an exceptionally smooth voyage!"

And yet look around the circle of pale faces fixed in that grim expression of endurance, the hands belonging to them resolutely clasping lemons, – those looks of unutterable, repressed disgust and endurance. Are these people seasick? Oh, no! of course not.

"Of course," says the slippery, plausible demon, "these people can't be sick in this delightful weather, and with this delightful, smooth sea!"

But here comes the dog, now slowly drooping from one to another, – the most woe-begone and dejected of all possible dogs. Not a bad-looking dog, either; not without signs about him of good dog blood.

We say one to another, as we languidly review his points, "His hair is fine and curly: he has what might be a fine tail, were it not drooping in such abject dejection and discouragement. Evidently this is a dog that has seen better days, – a dog that has belonged to somebody, and taken kindly to petting." His long nose, and great limpid, half-human eyes, have a suggestion of shepherd-dog blood about them.

He comes and seats himself opposite, and gazes at you with a pitiful, wistful, intense gaze, as much as to say, "Oh! *do* you know where HE is? and how came I here? – poor, miserable dog that I am!" He walks in a feeble, discouraged way to the wheel-house, and sniffs at the salt water that spatters there; gives one lick, and stops, and comes and sits quietly down again: it's "no go."

"Poor fellow! he's thirsty," says one; and the Professor, albeit not the most nimble of men, climbs carefully down the cabin-stairs for a tumbler of water, brings it up, and places it before him. Eagerly he laps it all up; and then, with the confiding glance of a dog not unused to kindness, looks as if he would like more. Another of the party fills his tumbler, and he drinks that.

"Why, poor fellow, see how thirsty he was!" "I wonder whose dog he is?" "Somebody ought to see to this dog!" are comments passing round among the ladies, who begin throwing him bits of biscuit, which he snaps up eagerly.

"He's hungry too. Only see how hungry he is! Nobody feeds this dog. Whom does he belong to?"

One of the ship's stewards, passing, throws in a remark, "That dog's seasick: that's what's the matter with him. It won't do to feed that dog; it won't: it'll make terrible work."

Evidently some stray dog, that has come aboard the steamer by accident, – looking for a lost master, perhaps; and now here he is alone and forlorn. Nobody's dog!

One of the company, a gentle, fair-haired young girl, begins stroking his rough, dusty hair, which though fine, and capable of a gloss if well kept, now is full of sticks and straws. An unseemly patch of tar disfigures his coat on one side, which seems to worry him: for he bites at it now and then aimlessly; then looks up with a hopeless, appealing glance, as much as to say, "I know I am looking like a fright; but I can't help it. Where is HE? and where am I? and what does it all mean?"

But the caresses of the fair-haired lady inspire him with a new idea. He will be "nobody's dog" no longer: he will choose a mistress.

From that moment he is like a shadow to the fair-haired lady: he follows her steps everywhere, mournful, patient, with drooping tail and bowed head, as a dog not sure of his position,

but humbly determined to have a mistress if dogged faith and persistency can compass it. She walks the deck; and tick, tick, pitapat, go the four little paws after her. She stops: he stops, and looks wistful. Whenever and wherever she sits down, he goes and sits at her feet, and looks up at her with eyes of unutterable entreaty.

The stewards passing through the deck-house give him now and then a professional kick; and he sneaks out of one door only to walk quietly round a corner and in at the other, and place himself at her feet. Her party laugh, and rally her on her attractions. She now and then pats and caresses and pities him, and gives him morsels of biscuit out of her stores. Evidently she belongs to the band of dog-lovers. In the tedious dulness of the three-days' voyage the dog becomes a topic, and his devotion to the fair-haired lady an engrossment.

We call for his name. The stewards call him "Jack: " but he seems to run about as well for one name as another; and it is proposed to call him "Barnes," from the name of the boat we are on. The suggestion drops, from want of energy in our very demoralized company to carry it. Not that we are seasick, one of us: oh, no! Grimly upright, always at table, and eating our three meals a day, who dares intimate that we are sick? Perish the thought! It is only a dizzy, headachy dulness, with an utter disgust for every thing in general, that creeps over us; and Jack's mournful face reflects but too truly our own internal troubles.

But at last here we are at Savannah and the Scriven House;

and the obliging waiters rush out and take us in and do for us with the most exhaustive attention. Here let us remark on the differences in hotels. In some you are waited on sourly, in some grudgingly, in some carelessly, in some with insolent negligence. At the Scriven House you are received like long-expected friends. Every thing is at your hand, and the head waiter arranges all as benignantly as if he were really delighted to make you comfortable. So we had a golden time at the Scriven House, where there is every thing to make the wayfarer enjoy himself.

Poor Jack was overlooked in the bustle of the steamer and the last agonies of getting landed. We supposed we had lost sight of him forever. But lo! when the fair-haired lady was crossing the hall to her room, a dog, desperate and dusty, fought his way through the ranks of waiters to get to her.

"It isn't our dog; put him out gently; don't hurt him," said the young lady's father.

But Jack was desperate, and fought for his mistress, and bit the waiter that ejected him, and of course got kicked with emphasis into the street.

The next morning, one of our party, looking out of the window, saw Jack watching slyly outside of the hotel. Evidently he was waiting for an opportunity to cast himself at the feet of his chosen protectress.

"If I can only see her, all will yet be right," he says to himself.

We left Savannah in the cars that afternoon; and the last we heard of Jack, he had been seen following the carriage of his

elected mistress in a drive to Bonaventure.

What was the end of the poor dog's romance we have never heard. Whether he is now blessed in being somebody's dog, – petted, cared for, caressed, – or whether he roves the world desolate-hearted as "nobody's dog," with no rights to life, liberty, or pursuit of happiness, we have no means of knowing.

But the measureless depth of dumb sorrow, want, woe, entreaty, that there are in a wandering dog's eyes, is something that always speaks much to us, – dogs in particular which seem to leave their own kind to join themselves to man, and only feel their own being complete when they have formed a human friendship. It seems like the ancient legends of those incomplete natures, a little below humanity, that needed a human intimacy to develop them. How much dogs suffer mentally is a thing they have no words to say; but there is no sorrow deeper than that in the eyes of a homeless, friendless, masterless dog. We rejoice, therefore, to learn that one portion of the twenty thousand dollars which the ladies of Boston have raised for "Our Dumb Animals" is about to be used in keeping a *home* for stray dogs.

Let no one sneer at this. If, among the "five sparrows sold for two farthings," not one is forgotten by our Father, certainly it becomes us not to forget the poor dumb companions of our mortal journey, capable, with us, of love and its sorrows, of faithfulness and devotion. There is, we are told, a dog who haunts the station at Revere, daily looking for the return of a master he last saw there, and who, alas! will never return. There are,

many times and oft, dogs strayed from families, accustomed to kindness and petting, who have lost all they love, and have none to care for them. To give such a refuge, till they find old masters or new, seems only a part of Christian civilization.

The more Christ's spirit prevails, the more we feel for all that can feel and suffer. The poor brute struggles and suffers with us, companion of our mysterious travel in this lower world; and who has told us that he may not make a step upward in the beyond? For our own part, we like that part of the poor Indian's faith, —

> "That thinks, admitted to yon equal sky,
> His faithful dog shall bear him company."

So much for poor Jack. Now for Savannah. It is the prettiest of Southern cities, laid out in squares, planted with fine trees, and with a series of little parks intersecting each street, so that one can walk on fine walks under trees quite through the city, down to a larger park at the end of all. Here there is a fountain whose charming sculpture reminds one of those in the south of France. A belt of ever-blooming violets encircles it; and a well-kept garden of flowers, shut in by an evergreen hedge, surrounds the whole. It is like a little bit of Paris, and strikes one refreshingly who has left New York two days before in a whirling snow-storm.

The thing that every stranger in Savannah goes to see, as a matter of course, is Bonaventure.

This is an ancient and picturesque estate, some miles from the city, which has for years been used as a cemetery.

How shall we give a person who has never seen live-oaks or

gray moss an idea of it?

Solemn avenues of these gigantic trees, with their narrow evergreen leaves, their gnarled, contorted branches feathered with ferns and parasitic plants, and draped with long swaying draperies of this gray, fairy-like moss, impress one singularly. The effect is solemn and unearthly; and the distant tombs, urns, and obelisks gleaming here and there among the shadows make it more impressive.

Beneath the trees, large clumps of palmetto, with their waving green fans, give a tropical suggestion to the scene; while yellow jessamine wreathe and clamber from tree to tree, or weave mats of yellow blossoms along the ground. It seems a labyrinth of fairy grottoes, and is in its whole impression something so unique, that no one should on any account miss of seeing it.

Savannah is so pleasant a city, and the hotels there are so well kept, that many find it far enough south for all their purposes, and spend the winter there. But we are bound farther towards the equator, and so here we ponder the question of our onward journey.

A railroad with Pullman sleeping-cars takes one in one night from Savannah to Jacksonville, Fla.; then there is a steamboat that takes one round by the open sea, and up through the mouth of the St. John's River, to Jacksonville. Any one who has come to see scenery should choose this route. The entrance of the St. John's from the ocean is one of the most singular and impressive passages of scenery that we ever passed through: in fine weather

the sight is magnificent.

Besides this, a smaller boat takes passengers to Jacksonville by what is called the inside passage, – a circuitous course through the network of islands that lines the shore. This course also offers a great deal of curious interest to one new to Southern scenery, and has attractions for those who dread the sea. By any of these courses Florida may be gained in a few hours or days, more or less, from Savannah.

A FLOWERY JANUARY IN FLORIDA

Mandarin, Fla., Jan. 24, 1872

YES, it is done. The winter is over and past, and "the time of the singing of birds is come." They are at it beak and claw, – the red-birds, and the cat-birds, and the chattering jays, and the twittering sparrows, busy and funny and bright. Down in the swamp-land fronting our cottage, four calla-lily buds are just unfolding themselves; and in the little garden-plat at one side stand rose-geraniums and camellias, white and pink, just unfolding. Right opposite to the window, through which the morning sun is pouring, stands a stately orange-tree, thirty feet high, with spreading, graceful top, and varnished green leaves, full of golden fruit. These are the veritable golden apples of the Hesperides, – the apples that Atalanta threw in the famous race; and they are good enough to be run after. The things that fill the New-York market, called by courtesy "oranges," – pithy, wilted, and sour, – have not even a suggestion of what those golden balls are that weigh down the great glossy green branches of yonder tree. At the tree's foot, Aunt Katy does her weekly washing in the open air the winter through. We have been putting our tape-

measure about it, and find it forty-three inches in girth; and for shapely beauty it has no equal. It gives one a sort of heart-thrill of possession to say of such beauty, "It is mine." No wonder the Scripture says, "He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot." The orange-tree is, in our view, the best worthy to represent the tree of life of any that grows on our earth. It is the fairest, the noblest, the most generous, it is the most upspringing and abundant, of all trees which the Lord God caused to grow eastward in Eden. Its wood is white and hard and tough, fit to sustain the immense weight of its fruitage. Real good ripe oranges are very heavy; and the generosity of the tree inclines it to fruit in clusters. We counted, the other day, a cluster of eighteen, hanging low, and weighing down the limb.

But this large orange-tree, and many larger than this, which are parts of one orchard, are comparatively recent growths. In 1835, every one of them was killed even with the ground. Then they started up with the genuine pluck of a true-born orange-tree, which never says die, and began to grow again. Nobody pruned them, or helped them, or cared much about them any way; and you can see trees that have grown up in four, five, and six trunks, – just as the suckers sprung up from the roots. Then, when they had made some progress, came the orange-insect, and nearly killed them down again. The owners of the land, discouraged, broke down the fences, and moved off; and for a while the land was left an open common, where wild cattle

browsed, and rubbed themselves on the trees. But still, in spite of all, they have held on their way rejoicing, till now they are the beautiful creatures they are. Truly we may call them trees of the Lord, full of sap and greenness; full of lessons of perseverance to us who get frosted down and cut off, time and time again, in our lives. Let us hope in the Lord, and be up and at it again.

It is certainly quite necessary to have some such example before our eyes in struggling to found a colony here. We had such a hard time getting our church and schoolhouse! – for in these primitive regions one building must do for both. There were infinite negotiations and cases to go through before a site could be bought with a clear title; and the Freedman's Bureau would put us up a building where school could be taught on week-days, and worship held on Sundays: but at last it was done; and a neat, pleasant little place it was.

We had a little Mason and Hamlin missionary organ, which we used to carry over on Sundays, and a cloth, which converted the master's desk of week-days into the minister's pulpit; and as we had minister, organist, and choir all in our own family, we were sure of them at all events; and finally a good congregation was being gathered. On week-days a school for whites and blacks was taught, until the mismanagement of the school-fund had used up the sum devoted to common schools, and left us without a teacher for a year. But this fall our friend Mr. D., who had accepted the situation of county overseer of schools, had just completed arrangements to open again both the white and the

black schools, when, lo! in one night our poor little schoolhouse was burned to the ground, with our Mason and Hamlin organ in it. Latterly it had been found inconvenient to carry it backward and forward; and so it had been left, locked in a closet, and met a fiery doom. We do not suppose any malicious incendiarism. There appears evidence that some strolling loafers had gotten in to spend the night, and probably been careless of their fire. The southern pine is inflammable as so much pitch, and will almost light with the scratch of a match. Well, all we had to do was to imitate the pluck of the orange-trees, which we immediately did. Our neighborhood had increased by three or four families; and a meeting was immediately held, and each one pledged himself to raise a certain sum. We feel the want of it more for the schoolhouse than even for the church. We go on with our Sunday services at each other's houses; but alas for the poor children, black and white, growing up so fast, who have been kept out of school now a year, and who are losing these best months for study! To see people who are willing and anxious to be taught growing up in ignorance is the sorest sight that can afflict one; and we count the days until we shall have our church and schoolhouse again. But, meanwhile, Mandarin presents to our eyes a marvellously improved aspect. Two or three large, handsome houses are built up in our immediate neighborhood. Your old collaborator of "The Christian Union" has a most fascinating place a short distance from us, commanding a noble sweep of view up and down the river. On our right hand, two

gentlemen from Newark have taken each a lot; and the gables of the house of one of them overlook the orange-trees bravely from the river.

This southern pine, unpainted, makes a rich, soft color for a house. Being merely oiled, it turns a soft golden brown, which harmonizes charmingly with the landscape.

How cold is it here? We ask ourselves, a dozen times a day, "What season is it?" We say, "This spring," "This summer," and speak of our Northern life as "last winter." There are cold nights, and, occasionally, white frosts: but the degree of cold may be judged from the fact that the Calla Ethiopica goes on budding and blossoming out of doors; that La Marque roses have not lost their leaves, and have long, young shoots on them; and that our handmaiden, a pretty, young mulattress, occasionally brings to us a whole dish of roses and buds which her devoted has brought her from some back cottage in the pine-woods. We have also eaten the last *fresh* tomatoes from the old vines since we came; but a pretty severe frost has nipped them, as well as cut off a promising lot of young peas just coming into pod. But the pea-vines will still grow along, and we shall have others soon.

We eat radishes out of the ground, and lettuce, now and then, a little nipped by the frost; and we get long sprays of yellow jessamine, just beginning to blossom in the woods.

Yes, it is spring; though still it is cold enough to make our good bright fire a rallying-point to the family. It is good to keep fire in a country where it is considered a great point to get rid

of wood. One piles and heaps up with a genial cheer when one thinks, "The more you burn, the better." It only costs what you pay for cutting and hauling. We begin to find our usual number of letters, wanting to know all this, that, and the other, about Florida. All in good time, friends. Come down here once, and use your own eyes, and you will know more than we can teach you. Till when, adieu.

THE WRONG SIDE OF THE TAPESTRY

IT is not to be denied that full half of the tourists and travellers that come to Florida return intensely disappointed, and even disgusted. Why? Evidently because Florida, like a piece of embroidery, has two sides to it, – one side all tag-rag and thrums, without order or position; and the other side showing flowers and arabesques and brilliant coloring. Both these sides exist. Both are undeniable, undisputed facts, not only in the case of Florida, but of every place and thing under the sun. There is a right side and a wrong side to every thing.

Now, tourists and travellers generally come with their heads full of certain romantic ideas of waving palms, orange-groves, flowers, and fruit, all bursting forth in tropical abundance; and, in consequence, they go through Florida with disappointment at every step. If the banks of the St. John's were covered with orange-groves, if they blossomed every month in the year, if they were always loaded with fruit, if pine-apples and bananas grew wild, if the flowers hung in festoons from tree to tree, if the ground were enamelled with them all winter long, so that you saw nothing else, then they would begin to be satisfied.

But, in point of fact, they find, in approaching Florida, a dead sandy level, with patches behind them of rough coarse grass, and

tall pine-trees, whose tops are so far in the air that they seem to cast no shade, and a little scrubby underbrush. The few houses to be seen along the railroad are the forlornest of huts. The cattle that stray about are thin and poverty-stricken, and look as if they were in the last tottering stages of starvation.

Then, again, winter, in a semi-tropical region, has a peculiar desolate untidiness, from the fact that there is none of that clearing of the trees and shrubs which the sharp frosts of the northern regions occasion. Here the leaves, many of them, though they have lost their beauty, spent their strength, and run their course, do not fall thoroughly and cleanly, but hang on in ragged patches, waiting to be pushed off by the swelling buds of next year. In New England, Nature is an up-and-down, smart, decisive house-mother, that has her times and seasons, and brings up her ends of life with a positive jerk. She will have no shilly-shally. When her time comes, she clears off the gardens and forests thoroughly and once for all, and they are clean. Then she freezes the ground solid as iron; and then she covers all up with a nice pure winding-sheet of snow, and seals matters up as a good housewife does her jelly tumblers under white-paper covers. There you are fast and cleanly. If you have not got ready for it, so much the worse for you! If your tender roots are not taken up, your cellar banked, your doors listed, she can't help it: it's your own lookout, not hers.

But Nature down here is an easy, demoralized, indulgent old grandmother, who has no particular time for any thing, and does

every thing when she happens to feel like it. "Is it winter, or isn't it?" is the question that is likely often to occur in the settling month of December, when everybody up North has put away summer clothes, and put all their establishments under winter-orders.

Consequently, on arriving in mid-winter time, the first thing that strikes the eye is the ragged, untidy look of the foliage and shrubbery. About one-third of the trees are deciduous, and stand entirely bare of leaves. The rest are evergreen, which by this time, having come through the fierce heats of summer, have acquired a seared and dusky hue, different from the vivid brightness of early spring. In the garden you see all the half-and-half proceedings which mark the indefinite boundaries of the season. The rose-bushes have lost about half their green leaves. Some varieties, however, in this climate, seem to be partly evergreen. The La Marque and the crimson rose, sometimes called Louis Philippe, seem to keep their last year's foliage till spring pushes it off with new leaves.

Once in a while, however, Nature, like a grandmother in a fret, comes down on you with a most unexpected snub. You have a cold spell, – an actual frost. During the five years in which we have made this our winter residence, there have twice been frosts severe enough to spoil the orange-crop, though not materially injuring the trees.

This present winter has been generally a colder one than usual; but there have been no hurtful frosts. But one great cause of

disgust and provocation of tourists in Florida is the occurrence of these "cold snaps." It is really amusing to see how people accustomed to the tight freezes, the drifting snow wreaths, the stinging rain, hail, and snow, of the Northern winter, will *take on* when the thermometer goes down to 30° or 32°, and a white frost is seen out of doors. They are perfectly outraged. "*Such* weather! If this is your Florida winter, deliver me!" All the while they could walk out any day into the woods, as we have done, and gather eight or ten varieties of flowers blooming in the open air, and eat radishes and lettuce and peas grown in the garden.

Well, it is to be confessed that the cold of warm climates always has a peculiarly aggravating effect on the mind. A warm region is just like some people who get such a character for good temper, that they never can indulge themselves even in an earnest disclaimer without everybody crying out upon them, "What puts you in such a passion?" &c. So Nature, if she generally sets up for amiability during the winter months, cannot be allowed a little tiff now and then, a white frost, a cold rain-storm, without being considered a monster.

It is to be confessed that the chill of warm climates, when they are chilly, is peculiar; and travellers should prepare for it, not only in mind, but in wardrobe, by carrying a plenty of warm clothing, and, above all, an inestimable India-rubber bottle, which they can fill with hot water to dissipate the chill at night. An experience of four winters leads us to keep on about the usual winter clothing until March or April. The first day after our arrival, to be sure, we

put away all our furs as things of the past; but we keep abundance of warm shawls, and, above all, wear the usual flannels till late in the spring.

Invalids seeking a home here should be particularly careful to secure rooms in which there can be a fire. It is quite as necessary as at the North; and, with this comfort, the cold spells, few in number as they are, can be easily passed by.

Our great feature in the Northern landscape, which one never fails to miss and regret here, is the grass. The *nakedness* of the land is an expression that often comes over one. The peculiar sandy soil is very difficult to arrange in any tidy fashion. You cannot make beds or alleys of it: it all runs together like a place where hens have been scratching; and consequently it is the most difficult thing in the world to have ornamental grounds.

At the North, the process of making a new place appear neat and inviting is very rapid. One season of grass-seed, and the thing is done. Here, however, it is the most difficult thing in the world to get turf of any sort to growing. The Bermuda grass, and a certain coarse, broad-leafed turf, are the only kind that can stand the summer heat; and these never have the beauty of well-ordered Northern grass.

Now, we have spent anxious hours and much labor over a little plot in our back-yard, which we seeded with white clover, and which, for a time, was green and lovely to behold; but, alas! the Scripture was too strikingly verified: "When the sun shineth on it with a burning heat, it withereth the grass, and the grace of the

fashion of it perisheth."

The fact is, that people cannot come to heartily like Florida till they *accept* certain deficiencies as the necessary shadow to certain excellences. If you want to live in an orange-orchard, you must give up wanting to live surrounded by green grass. When we get to the new heaven and the new earth, then we shall have it all right. There we shall have a climate at once cool and bracing, yet hot enough to mature oranges and pine-apples. Our trees of life shall bear twelve manner of fruit, and yield a new one every month. Out of juicy meadows green as emerald, enamelled with every kind of flower, shall grow our golden orange-trees, blossoming and fruiting together as now they do. There shall be no mosquitoes, or gnats, or black-flies, or snakes; and, best of all, there shall be no fretful people. Everybody shall be like a well-tuned instrument, all sounding in accord, and never a semitone out of the way.

Meanwhile, we caution everybody coming to Florida, Don't hope for too much. Because you hear that roses and callas blossom in the open air all winter, and flowers abound in the woods, don't expect to find an eternal summer. Prepare yourself to see a great deal that looks rough and desolate and coarse; prepare yourself for some chilly days and nights; and, whatever else you neglect to bring with you, bring the resolution, strong and solid, always to make the best of things.

For ourselves, we are getting reconciled to a sort of tumble-down, wild, picnicky kind of life, – this general happy-go-

luckiness which Florida inculcates. If we painted her, we should not represent her as a neat, trim damsel, with starched linen cuffs and collar: she would be a brunette, dark but comely, with gorgeous tissues, a general disarray and dazzle, and with a sort of jolly untidiness, free, easy, and joyous.

The great charm, after all, of this life, is its outdoorness. To be able to spend your winter out of doors, even though some days be cold; to be able to sit with windows open; to hear birds daily; to eat fruit from trees, and pick flowers from hedges, all winter long, – is about the whole of the story. This you can do; and this is why Florida is life and health to the invalid.

We get every year quantities of letters from persons of small fortunes, asking our advice whether they had better move to Florida. For our part, we never advise people to *move* anywhere. As a general rule, it is the person who feels the inconveniences of a present position, so as to want to move, who will feel the inconvenience of a future one. Florida has a lovely winter; but it has also three formidable summer months, July, August, and September, when the heat is excessive, and the liabilities of new settlers to sickness so great, that we should never wish to take the responsibility of bringing anybody here. It is true that a very comfortable number of people do live through them; but still it is not a joke, by any means, to move to a new country. The first colony in New England lost just half its members in the first six months. The rich bottom-lands around Cincinnati proved graves to many a family before they were brought under cultivation.

But Florida is peculiarly adapted to the needs of people who can afford two houses, and want a refuge from the drain that winter makes on the health. As people now have summer-houses at Nahant or Rye, so they might, at a small expense, have winter-houses in Florida, and come here and be at home. That is the great charm, – to be at home. A house here can be simple and inexpensive, and yet very charming. Already, around us a pretty group of winter-houses is rising: and we look forward to the time when there shall be many more; when, all along the shore of the St. John's, cottages and villas shall look out from the green trees.

A LETTER TO THE GIRLS

Mandarin, Fla., Feb. 13, 1872

YES, the girls! Let me see: who are they? I mean *you*, Nellie, and Mary, and Emily, and Charlotte, and Gracie, and Susie, and Carry, and Kitty, and you of every pretty name, my charming little Pussy Willow friends! Dear souls all, I bless your bright eyes, and fancy you about me as a sort of inspiration to my writing. I could wish you were every one here. Don't you wish that "The Arabian Nights" were true? and that there were really little square bits of enchanted carpet, on which one has only to sit down and pronounce two cabalistic words, and away one goes through the air, sailing off on visits? Then, girls, wouldn't we have a nice wide bit of carpet? and wouldn't we have the whole bright flock of you come fluttering down together to play croquet with us under the orange-trees this afternoon? And, while you were waiting for your turns to come, you should reach up and pull down a bough, and help yourselves to oranges; or you should join a party now going out into the pine-woods to gather yellow jessamine. To-day is mail-day; and, as the yellow jessamine is in all its glory, the girls here are sending little boxes of it North to their various friends through the mail. They have just been

bringing in long wreaths and clusters of it for me to look at, and are consulting how to pack it. Then this afternoon, when we have done croquet, it is proposed that we form a party to visit Aunt Katy, who lives about two miles away in the pine-woods, "over on Julington" as the people here say. "On Julington" means on a branch of the St. John's named Julington Creek, although it is as wide as the Connecticut River at Hartford. We put the oldest mule to an old wagon, and walk and ride alternately; some of us riding one way, and some the other.

The old mule, named Fly, is a worn-out, ancient patriarch, who, having worked all his days without seeing any particular use in it, is now getting rather misanthropic in his old age, and obstinately determined not to put one foot before the other one bit faster than he is actually forced to do. Only the most vigorous urging can get him to step out of a walk, although we are told that the rogue has a very fair trot at his command. If any of the darky tribe are behind him, he never thinks of doing any thing but pricking up his ears, and trotting at a decent pace; but, when only girls and women are to the fore, down flop his ears, down goes his head, and he creeps obstinately along in the aforementioned contemplative manner, looking, for all the world, like a very rough, dilapidated old hair-trunk in a state of locomotion.

Well, I don't blame him, poor brute! Life, I suppose, is as much a mystery to him as to the philosophers; and he has never been able to settle what it is all about, this fuss of being harnessed periodically to impertinent carts, and driven here and there, for

no valuable purpose that he can see.

Such as he is, Fly is the absolute property of the girls and women, being past farm-work; and though he never willingly does any thing but walk, yet his walk is considerably faster than that of even the most agile of us, and he is by many degrees better than nothing. He is admitted on all hands to be a *safe* beast, and will certainly never run away with any of us.

As to the choice of excursions, there are several, – one to our neighbor Bowens to see sugar-making, where we can watch the whole process, from the grinding of the cane through the various vats and boilers, till at last we see the perfected sugar in fine, bright, straw-colored crystals in the sugar-house. We are hospitably treated to saucers of lovely, amber-colored sirup just on the point of crystallization, – liquid sugar-candy, – which, of course, we do not turn away from. Then, again, we can go down the banks of the river to where our neighbor Duncan has cleared up a little spot in what used to be virgin forest, and where now a cosey little cottage is beginning to peep through its many windows upon the river-view. Here a bright little baby – a real little Florida flower – has lately opened a pair of lovely eyes, and is growing daily in grace and favor. In front of this cottage, spared from the forest, are three great stately magnolias, such trees as you never saw. Their leaves resemble those of the India-rubber tree, – large, and of a glossy, varnished green. They are evergreen, and in May are covered with great white blossoms, something like pond-lilies, and with very much the same odor.

The trees at the North called magnolias give no idea whatever of what these are. They are giants among flowers; seem worthy to be trees of heaven.

Then there are all sorts of things to be got out of the woods. There are palmetto-leaves to be pressed and dried, and made into fans; there is the long wire-grass, which can be sewed into mats, baskets, and various little fancy articles, by busy fingers. Every day brings something to explore the woods for: not a day in winter passes that you cannot bring home a reasonable little nosegay of flowers. Many of the flowers here do not have their seasons, but seem to bloom the year round: so that, all the time, you are sure of finding something. The woods now are full of bright, delicate ferns that no frosts have touched, and that spring and grow perennially. The book of Nature here is never shut and clasped with ice and snow as at the North; and, of course, we spend about half our time in the open air.

The last sensation of our circle is our red-bird. We do not approve of putting free birds in cages; but Aunt Katy brought to one of our party such a beautiful fellow, so brilliant a red, with such a smart, black crest on his head, and such a long, flashing red tail, that we couldn't resist the desire to keep him a little while, just to look at him. Aunt Katy insisted that he wouldn't take it to heart; that he would be tame in a few days, and eat out of our hands: in short, she insisted that he would consider himself a fortunate bird to belong to us.

Aunt Katy, you must know, is a nice old lady. We use that term

with a meaning; for, though "black as the tents of Kedar," she is a perfect lady in her manners: she was born and brought up, and has always lived, in this neighborhood, and knows every bird in the forest as familiarly as if they were all her own chickens; and she has great skill in getting them to come to her to be caught.

Well, our red-bird was named Phœbus, of a kind that Audubon calls a cardinal-grossbeak; and a fine, large, roomy cage was got down for him, which was of old tenanted by a very merry and rackety cat-bird; and then the question arose, "What shall we do with him?" For you see, girls, having a soft place in our heart for all pets, instead of drowning some of our kittens in the fall, as reasonable people should, we were seduced by their gambols and their prettiness to let them all grow up together; and the result is, that we have now in our domestic retinue four adult cats of most formidable proportions. "These be the generations" of our cats: first, Liz, the mother; second, Peter, her oldest son; third, Anna and Lucinda, her daughters. Peter is a particularly martial, combative, obnoxious beast, very fluffy and fussy, with great, full-moon, yellow eyes, and a most resounding, sonorous voice. There is an immense deal of cat in Peter. He is concentrated cathood, a nugget of pure cat; and in fact we are all a little in awe of him. He rules his mother and sisters as if he had never heard of Susan Anthony and Mrs. Stanton. Liz, Anna, and Lucinda are also wonderfully-well-developed cats, with capital stomachs. Now comes the problem: the moment the red-bird was let into his cage, there was an instant whisk of tails, and a glare

of great yellow eyes, and a sharpening of eye-teeth, that marked a situation. The Scripture tells us a time is coming when the lion shall lie down with the lamb; but that time hasn't come in Florida. Peter is a regular heathen, and hasn't the remotest idea of the millennium. He has much of the lion in him; but he never could lie down peaceably with the lamb, unless indeed the lamb were inside of him, when he would sleep upon him without a twinge of conscience. Unmistakably we could see in his eyes that he considered Phœbus as caught for his breakfast; and he sat licking his chops inquiringly, as who should ask, "When will the cloth be laid, and things be ready?"

Now, the party to whom the red-bird was given is also the patron-saint, the "guide, philosopher, and friend," of the cats. It is she who examines the plates after each meal, and treasures fragments, which she cuts up and prepares for their repast with commendable regularity. It is she who presides and keeps order at cat-meals; and forasmuch as Peter, on account of his masculine strength and rapacity, is apt to get the better of his mother and sisters, she picks him up, and bears him growling from the board, when he has demolished his own portion, and is proceeding to eat up theirs.

Imagine, now, the cares of a woman with four cats and a bird on her mind! Phœbus had to be carefully pinned up in a blanket the first night; then the cage was swung by strong cords from the roof of the veranda. The next morning, Peter was found perched on top of it, glaring fiendishly. The cage was moved along; and

Peter scaled a pillar, and stationed himself at the side. To be sure, he couldn't get the bird, as the slats were too close for his paw to go through; but poor Phœbus seemed wild with terror. Was it for this he left his native wilds, – to be exposed in a prison to glaring, wild-eyed hyenas and tigers?

The cats were admonished, chastised, "scat" – ed, through all the moods and tenses; though their patroness still serves out their commons regularly, determined that they shall not have the apology of empty stomachs. Phœbus is evidently a philosopher, – a bird of strong sense. Having found, after two or three days' trial, that the cats can't get him; having clusters of the most delicious rice dangling from the roof of his cage, and fine crisp lettuce verdantly inviting through the bars, – he seems to have accepted the situation; and, when nobody is in the veranda, he uplifts his voice in song. "What cheer! what cheer!" he says, together with many little twitters and gurgles for which we have no musical notes. Aunt Katy promises to bring him a little wife before long; and, if that be given him, what shall hinder him from being happy? As April comes in, they shall build their nest in the cage, and give us a flock of little red-birds.

Well, girls, we are making a long letter; and this must do for this week.

A WATER-COACH, AND A RIDE IN IT

Monday, Feb. 26, 1872

DEAR girls, wouldn't you like to get into that little white yacht that lies dancing and courtesying on the blue waters of the St. John's this pleasant Monday morning?

It is a day of days. Spring has come down with all her smiles and roses in one hour. The great blue sheet of water shimmers and glitters like so much liquid *lapis lazuli*; and now the word comes in from our neighbor, the owner of the pleasure-yacht, "Wouldn't you like to go sailing?"

Of course we should! That is exactly what we *do* want. And forthwith there is a running and a mustering of the clans, and a flapping of broad palmetto-hats; and parties from all the three houses file down, and present themselves as candidates for pleasure. A great basket of oranges is hoisted in, and the white sails spread; and with "Youth at the prow, and Pleasure at the helm," away we go, the breezes blowing manfully at our sails. The river is about five miles from shore to shore, and we have known it of old for a most enticing and tricksy customer. It gently wooes and seduces you; it starts you out with all manner of

zephyrs, until you get into the very middle, two miles from land on either side, when down goes your limp sail, and the breeze is off on some other errand, and you are left to your reflections. Not immediately did this happen to us, however; though, when we came to the middle of the river, our course was slow enough to give plenty of opportunity to discuss the basket of oranges. We settle it among us that we will cross to Doctor's Lake. This name is given to a wide bayou which the river makes, running up into the forest for a track of about nine miles. It is a famous fishing and hunting region, and a favorite and chosen abode of the alligators. At the farther end of it are said to be swamps where they have their lairs, and lay their eggs, and hatch out charming young alligators. Just at the opening where the river puts into this lake are the nets of the shad-fishers, who supply the Jacksonville market with that delicious article. We are minded to go over and fill our provision-baskets before they go.

Now we near the opposite shore of the river. We see the great tuft of Spanish oaks which marks the house of the old Macintosh plantation, once the palmiest in Florida. This demesne had nine thousand acres of land, including in it the Doctor's Lake and the islands therein, with all the store of swamps and forests and alligators' nests, wild-orange groves, and palmetto-jungles. It was a sort of pride of territory that animated these old aboriginal planters; for, of the whole nine thousand acres which formed the estate, only about five hundred ever were cleared, and subject to cultivation. One of these days we are projecting to spend a

day picnicking on this old plantation, now deserted and decaying; and then we can tell you many curious things in its history. But now we are coming close alongside the shad-nets. We find no fishermen to traffic with. Discerning a rude hut on the opposite side of the bayou, we make for that, expecting there to find them. We hail a boy who lies idly in a boat by the shore.

"Halloo, my fine fellow! Can you tell us where the people are that tend that net?"

"Don't know," is the reply that comes over the water.

"Can you sell us any fish?"

"Got a couple o' trout."

"Bring 'em along." And away we go, rippling before the breeze; while the boy, with the graceful deliberation which marks the movements of the native population, prepares to come after us.

"I don't believe he understood," said one.

"Oh, yes! He's only taking his time, as they all do down here. He'll be along in the course of the forenoon."

At last he comes alongside, and shows a couple of great black-looking, goggle-eyed fish, which look more like incipient cod or haddock than trout. Such as they are, however, we conclude a bargain for them; and away goes our boy with fifty cents in his pocket. What he can want of fifty cents in a hut on the other side of Doctor's Lake is a question. Can he trade with alligators? But he has a boat; and we foresee that that boat will make a voyage across to the grocery on the opposite point, where whiskey,

pork, and flour are sold. Meanwhile we looked at the little rude hut again. It was Monday morning; and a string of clothes was fluttering on a line, and a good many little garments among them. There is a mother, then, and a family of children growing up. We noticed the sheen of three or four orange-trees, probably wild ones, about the house. Now we go rippling up the bayou, close along by the shore. The land is swampy, and the forests glister with the shining, varnished leaves of the magnolias; and we saw far within the waving green fans of the swamp-palmetto. The gum-trees and water-oaks were just bursting into leaf with that dazzling green of early spring which is almost metallic in brilliancy. The maples were throwing out blood-red keys, – larger and higher-colored than the maples of the North. There is a whir of wings; and along the opposite shore of the bayou the wild-ducks file in long platoons. Now and then a water-turkey, with his long neck and legs, varies the scene. There swoops down a fish-hawk; and we see him bearing aloft a silvery fish, wriggling and twisting in his grasp. We were struck with the similarity of our tastes. He was fond of shad: so were we. He had a wriggling fish in his claws; and we had a couple flapping and bouncing in the basket, over which we were gloating. There was but one point of difference. He, undoubtedly, would eat his fish raw; whereas we were planning to have ours cut in slices, and fried with salt pork. Otherwise the fish-hawk and we were out on the same errand, with the same results.

Yet at first view, I must confess, when we saw him rise with a

wriggling fish in his claws, he struck us as a monster. It seemed a savage proceeding, and we pitied the struggling fish, while ours were yet flapping in the basket. This eating-business is far from pleasant to contemplate. Every thing seems to be in for it. It is "catch who catch can" through all the animal kingdom till it comes up to man; and he eats the whole, choosing or refusing as suits his taste. One wonders why there was not a superior order of beings made to eat us. Mosquitoes and black-flies get now and then a nip, to be sure; but there is nobody provided to make a square meal of us, as we do on a wild turkey, for example. But speaking of eating, and discussing fried fish and salt pork, aroused harrowing reflections in our company. We found ourselves at one o'clock in the middle of Doctor's Lake, with the dinner-shore at least five miles away; and it was agreed, *nem. con.*, that it was time to put about. The fish-hawk had suggested dinner-time.

And now came the beauty of the proceeding. We drove merrily out of Doctors Lake into the beautiful blue middle of the St. John's: and there the zephyrs gayly whispered, "Good-by, friends; and, when you get ashore, let us know." The river was like a molten looking-glass, the sun staring steadfastly down. There is nothing for it but to get out the oars, and pull strong and steady; and so we do. It is the old trick of this St. John's, whereby muscular development is promoted. First two gentlemen row; then a lady takes one oar, and we work our way along to the shore; but it is full four o'clock before we get there.

As we approach, we pass brisk little nine-year-old Daisy, who is out alone in her boat, with her doll-carriage and doll. She has been rowing down to make a morning call on Bessie, and is now returning. Off on the end of the wharf we see the whole family watching for our return. The Professor's white beard and red fez cap make a striking point in the tableau. Our little friend Bob, and even baby and mamma, are on the point of observation. It is past four o'clock, dinner long over; and they have all been wondering what has got us. We walk straight up to the house, with but one idea, – dinner. We cease to blame the fish-hawk, being in a condition fully to enter into his feelings: a little more, and we could eat fish as he does, – without roasting. Doubtless he and Mrs. Fish-hawk, and the little Fish-hawks, may have been discussing us over their savory meal; but we find little to say till dinner is despatched.

The last hour on board the boat had been devoted to a course of reflections on our folly in starting out without luncheon, and to planning a more advised excursion up Julington Creek with all the proper paraphernalia; viz., a kerosene-stove for making coffee, an embankment of ham-sandwiches, diversified with cakes, crackers, and cheese. This, it is understood, is to come off to-morrow morning.

Tuesday Morning, Feb. 27. – Such was to have been my programme; but, alas! this morning, though the day rose bright and clear, there was not a breath of wind. The river has looked all day like a sheet of glass. There is a drowsy, hazy calm over every

thing. All our windows and doors are open; and every sound seems to be ringingly distinct. The chatter and laughing of the children, (God bless 'em!) who are all day long frolicking on the end of the wharf, or rowing about in the boats; the leisurely chip, chip, of the men who are busy in mending the steamboat wharf; the hammer of the carpenters on the yet unfinished part of our neighbor's house; the scream of the jays in the orange-trees, – all blend in a sort of dreamy indistinctness.

To-day is one of the two red-letter days of our week, – the day of the arrival of the mail. You who have a driblet two or three times a day from the mail cannot conceive the interest that gathers around these two weekly arrivals. The whole forenoon is taken up with it. We sit on the veranda, and watch the mail-boat far down the river, – a mere white speck as she passes through the wooded opening above Jacksonville. She grows larger and larger as she comes sailing up like a great white stately swan, first on the farther side of the river till she comes to Reed's Landing; and then, turning her white breast full toward Mandarin Wharf, she comes ploughing across, freighted with all our hopes and fears. Then follows the rush for our mail; then the distribution: after which all depart to their several apartments with their letters. Then follow readings to each other, general tidings and greetings; and when the letters are all read twice over, and thoroughly discussed, come the papers. Tuesday is "The Christian Union" day, as well as the day for about a dozen other papers; and the Professor is seen henceforward with bursting pockets, like a very

large carnation bursting its calyx. He is a walking mass of papers.

The afternoon has been devoted to reflection, gossiping, and various expeditions. B. and G. have gone boating with Mr. – ; and come home, on the edge of the evening, with the animating news that they have seen the two first alligators of the season. That shows that warm weather is to be expected; for your alligator is a delicate beast, and never comes out when there is the least danger of catching cold. Another party have been driving "Fly" through the woods to Julington Creek, and come back reporting that they have seen an owl. The Professor gives report of having seen two veritable wild-turkeys and a blue crane, – news which touches us all tenderly; for we have as yet had not a turkey to our festive board. We ourselves have been having a quiet game of croquet out under the orange-trees, playing till we could see the wickets no longer. So goes our day, – breezy, open-aired, and full of variety. Your world, Mr. Union, is seen in perspective, far off and hazy, like the opposite shores of the river. Nevertheless, this is the place to *read* papers and books; for every thing that sweeps into this quiet bay is long and quietly considered. We shall have something anon to say as to how you all look in the blue perspective of distance.

Meanwhile, we must tell the girls that Phœbus has wholly accommodated himself to his situation, and wakes us, mornings, with his singing. "What cheer! what cheer!" he says. Whether he alludes to the four cats, or to his large cage, or to his own internal determination, like Mark Tapley, to be jolly, isn't evident.

Last week, Aunt Katy brought a mate for him, which was christened Luna. She was a pretty creature, smaller, less brilliant, but gracefully shaped, and with a nice crest on her head. We regret to say that she lived only a few hours, being found dead in the cage in the morning. A day or two since, great sympathy was expressed for Phœbus, in view of the matrimonial happiness of a pair of red-birds who came to survey our yellow jessamine with a view to setting up housekeeping there. Would not the view of freedom and wedded joys depress his spirits? Not a bit of it. He is evidently cut out for a jolly bachelor; and, as long as he has fine chambers and a plenty of rough rice, what cares he for family life? The heartless fellow piped up, "What cheer! what cheer!" the very day that he got his cage to himself. Is this peculiar? A lady at our table has stated it as a universal fact, that, as soon as a man's wife dies, he immediately gets a new suit of clothes. Well, why shouldn't he? Nothing conduces more to cheerfulness. On the whole, we think Phœbus is a pattern bird.

P. S. – Ask the author of "My Summer in a Garden" if he can't condense his account of "Calvin's" virtues into a tract, to be distributed among our cats. Peter is such a hardened sinner, a little Calvinism might operate well on him.

PICNICKING UP JULINGTON

Mandarin, Fla., Feb. 29, 1872

THIS twenty-ninth day of February is a day made on purpose for a fishing-party. A day that comes only once in four years certainly ought to be good for something; and this is as good a day for picnicking up Julington as if it had been bespoken four years ahead. A bright sun, a blue sky, a fresh, strong breeze upon the water, – these are Nature's contributions. Art contributes two trim little white yachts, "The Nelly" and "The Bessie," and three row-boats. Down we all troop to the landing with our luncheon-baskets, kerosene-stove, tea-kettle, and coffee-pot, baskets of oranges, and fishing-reels.

Out flutter the sails, and away we go. No danger to-day of being left in the lurch in the middle of the river. There is all the breeze one wants, and a little more than the timorous love; and we go rippling and racing through the water in merry style. The spray flies, so that we need our water-proofs and blankets; but the more the merrier. We sweep gallantly first by the cottage of your whilom editor in "The Union," and get a friendly salute; and then flutter by D – 's cottage, and wave our handkerchiefs, and get salutes in return. Now we round the point, and Julington

opens her wide blue arms to receive us. We pass by Neighbor H – 's, and again wave our handkerchiefs, and get answering salutes. We run up to the wharf to secure another boat and oarsman in the person of Neighbor P – , and away we fly up Julington. A creek it is called, but fully as wide as the Connecticut at Hartford, and wooded to the water on either side by these glorious Florida forests.

It is a late, backward spring for Florida; and so these forests are behindhand with their foliage: yet so largely do they consist of bright polished evergreen trees, that the eye scarcely feels the need of the deciduous foliage on which the bright misty green of spring lies like an uncertain vapor. There is a large admixture in the picture of the cool tints of the gray moss, which drapes every tree, and hangs in long pendent streamers waving in the wind. The shores of the creek now begin to be lined on either side with tracts of a water-lily which the natives call bonnets. The blossom is like that of our yellow pond-lily; but the leaves are very broad and beautiful as they float like green islands on the blue waters. Here and there, even in the centre of the creek, are patches of them intermingled with quantities of the water-lettuce, – a floating plant which abounds in these tracts. Along the edges of these water-lily patches are the favorite haunts of the fish, who delight to find shelter among the green leaves. So the yachts come to anchor; and the party divides into the three row-boats, and prepares to proceed to business.

We have some bustle in distributing our stove and tea-kettle

and lunch-baskets to the different boats, as we are to row far up stream, and, when we have caught our dinner, land, and cook it. I sit in the bow, and, being good for nothing in the fishing-line, make myself of service by holding the French coffee-pot in my lap. The tea-kettle being at my feet on one side, the stove on the other, and the luncheon-basket in full view in front, I consider myself as, in a sense, at housekeeping. Meanwhile the fishing-reels are produced, the lines thrown; and the professional fishermen and fisherwomen become all absorbed in their business. We row slowly along the bobbing, undulating field of broad green bonnet-leaves, and I deliver myself to speculations on Nature. The roots of these water-lilies, of the size of a man's arm, often lie floating for yards on the surface, and, with their scaly joints, look like black serpents. The ribbed and shining leaves, as they float out upon the water, are very graceful. One is struck with a general similarity in the plant and animal growths in these regions: the element of grotesqueness seems largely to enter into it. Roots of plants become scaly, contorted, and lie in convolutions like the coils of a serpent. Such are the palmetto-shrubs, whose roots lie in scaly folds along the ground, catching into the earth by strong rootlets, and then rising up here and there into tall, waving green fans, whose graceful beauty in the depths of these forests one is never tired of admiring. Amid this serpent-like and convoluted jungle of scaly roots, how natural to find the scaly alligator, looking like an animated form of the grotesque vegetable world

around! Sluggish, unwieldy, he seems a half-developed animal, coming up from a plant, – perhaps a link from plant to animal. In memory, perhaps, of a previous woodland life, he fills his stomach with pine-knots, and bits of board, wherever he can find one to chew. It is his way of taking tobacco. I have been with a hunter who dissected one of these creatures, and seen him take from his stomach a mass of mingled pine-knots, with bits of brick, worn smooth, as if the digestive fluids had somewhat corroded them. The fore leg and paw of the alligator has a pitiful and rather shocking resemblance to a black human hand; and the muscular power is so great, that in case of the particular alligator I speak of, even after his head was taken off, when the incision was made into the pectoral muscle for the purpose of skinning, this black hand and arm rose up, and gave the operator quite a formidable push in the chest.

We hope to see some of these creatures out; but none appear. The infrequency of their appearance marks the lateness and backwardness of our spring. There! – a cry of victory is heard from the forward boat; and Mademoiselle Nelly is seen energetically working her elbows: a scuffle ensues, and the captive has a free berth on a boat, without charge for passage-ticket. We shout like people who are getting hungry, as in truth we are. And now Elsie starts in our boat; and all is commotion, till a fine blue bream, spotted with black, is landed. Next a large black trout, with his wide yellow mouth, comes up unwillingly from the crystal flood. We pity them; but what are we to do? It is

a question between dinner and dinner. These fish, out marketing on their own account, darted at our hook, expecting to catch another fish. We catch them; and, instead of eating, they are eaten.

After all, the instinct of hunting and catching something is as strong in the human breast as in that of cat or tiger; and we all share the exultation which sends a shout from boat to boat as a new acquisition is added to our prospective dinner-store.

And now right in front of us looms up from the depth of a group of pines and magnolias a white skeleton of a tree, with gnarled arms, bleached by years of wind and sun, swathed with long waving folds of gray moss. On the very tip-top of this, proudly above all possibility of capture, a fish-hawk's nest is built. Full eighty feet in the air, and about the size of a flour-barrel; built like an old marauding baron's stronghold in the middle ages, in inaccessible fastnesses; lined within and swathed without with gray moss, – it is a splendid post of observation. We can see the white head and shoulders of the bird perched upon her nest; and already they perceive us. The pair rise and clap their wings, and discourse to each other with loud, shrill cries, perhaps of indignation, that we who have houses to dwell in, and beef and chickens to eat, should come up and invade their fishing-grounds.

The fish-hawk – I beg his pardon, the fish-eagle; for I can see that he is a bird of no mean size and proportions – has as good a right to think that the river and the fish were made for him as we; and better too, because the Creator has endowed him

with wonderful eyesight, which enables him, from the top of a tree eighty feet high, to search the depths of the river, mark his prey, and dive down with unerring certainty to it. He has his charter in his eyes, his beak, his claws; and doubtless he has a right to remonstrate, when we, who have neither eyes, beaks, nor claws adapted to the purpose, manage to smuggle away his dinner. Thankful are we that no mighty hunter is aboard, and that the atrocity of shooting a bird on her nest will not be perpetrated here. We are a harmless company, and mean so well by them, that they really might allow us one dinner out of their larder.

We have rowed as far up Julington as is expedient, considering that we have to row down again; and so we land in the immediate vicinity of our fish-eagle's fortress, greatly to his discontent. Wild, piercing cries come to us now and then from the heights of the eyry; but we, unmoved, proceed with our dinner-preparations.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.