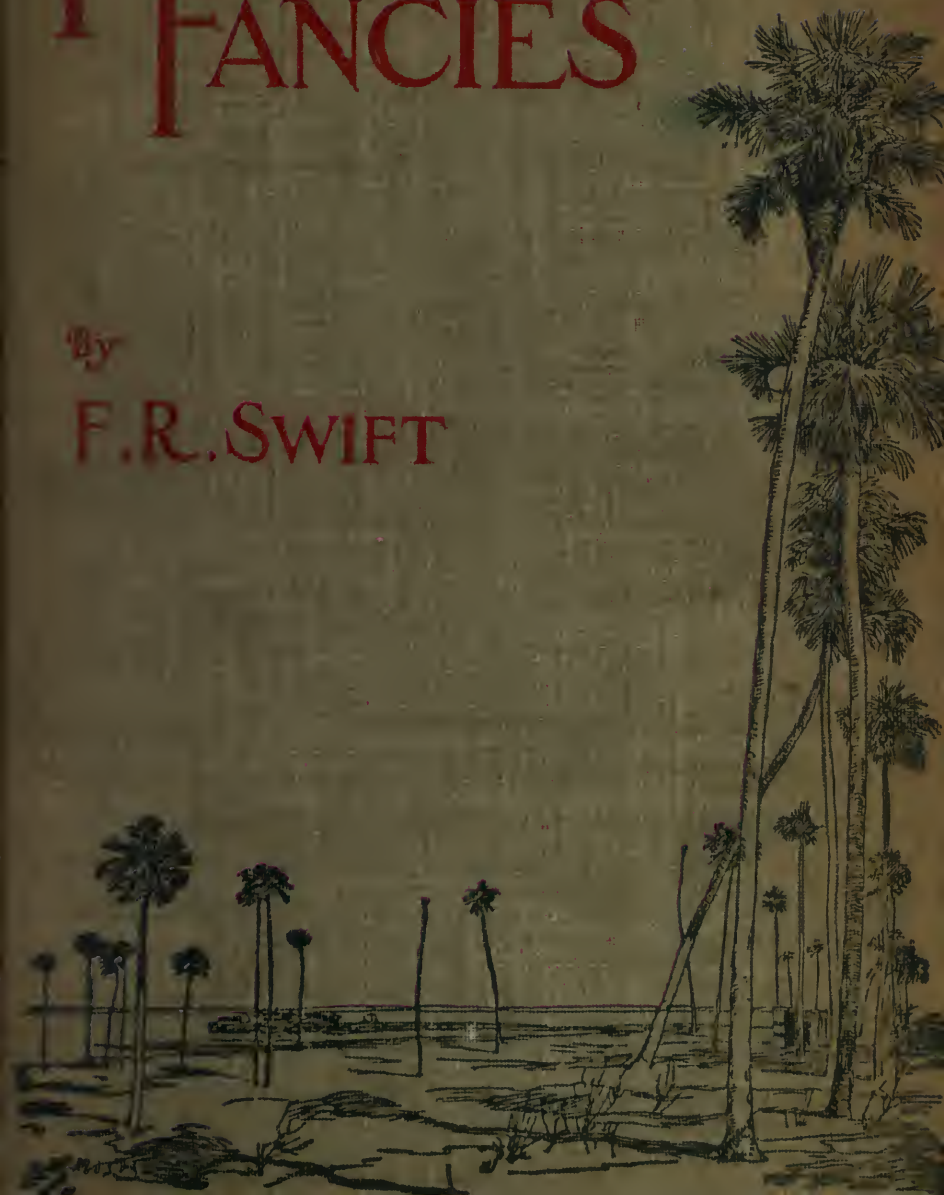
# FLORIDA FANCIES

By

F. R. SWIFT



A "SNAP-SHOT" AT A SLEEPY 'GATOR

# FLORIDA FANCIES

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F. R. SWIFT

WITH DRAWINGS BY

ALBERT E. SMITH

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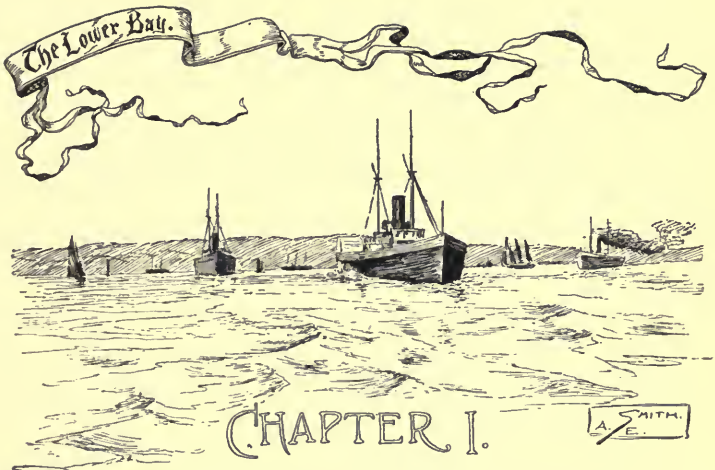
# ILLUSTRATIONS




# CHAPTER I.

DOWN the little watery lane out into the big sea road the Clyde liner crept. Then the puffing, snorting, spunky tug let go and spurted away. She looked like a little toy boat, and when she blew a good-by salute the "Clyder" responded with a scornful dignity and a basement basso which put to sleep all other noises.

It was a crisp, clear, cold November afternoon; an ideal day. Yet, as we rounded the Battery and I looked back at fast-fading and fair New York, I could hardly repress a sigh of regret.

Then we squared away into the lower bay, out to the wide wide sea, and for half a year I

turned my back upon the pleasures and the pains of life in old New York.

It was rather early for the Southern season, and the passengers were few. The only one I got well acquainted with was a Vermonter. He reminded me very strongly of the leading character in *A Trip to Chinatown.* He had—or he said he had, anyway—a case of "trotting" consumption. I supposed he meant "galloping," and argued the question with him, but he would n't have it. He said he was a horseman, and would n't have a galloping disease any more than he 'd have a galloping horse.

He was the most methodical man regarding that disease I ever saw. He had been ordered South for his health, and he kept a regular account of what the doctor told him to do. That doctor evidently believed he had all the patent-medicine diseases in the world as well as consumption. It was evident to me that a very large

dose of Keeley cure would be the best thing on earth for that physician.

The Vermonter, whose name was Morgan, had made about twenty calls on the doctor and at each call a new disease had been discovered. Talk about Columbus! At the twentieth visit it was decided that consumption was the trouble. Then Mr. Morgan, who seemed to be an easy-going sort of individual, was started South.

Directions and prescriptions for the other nineteen diseases were brought along, too, and it kept that man busy keeping books so as not to miss any of his appointments with them. When he slept I know not, because I know the dyspepsia medicine was taken every half-hour. Then there was a kidney disease which kept him pouring stuff every twenty minutes. He asked me to look him over, and I told him I thought he had castoria, but as there was nothing for it on board he did n't add it to his collection.

Poor Morgan! I saw him later in a recumbent position in a low-down undertaker's shop in Jacksonville. The undertaker feelingly referred to him as "his job." "That 's always the trouble," he said; "these fellows wait till they are almost dead with consumption and then they come down here expecting us to make brick houses out of them in a few weeks.

The climate did n't help him. He kept falling lower and lower and finally fell down an elevator shaft and punctured his skull. And you people up North will lay it to the climate."

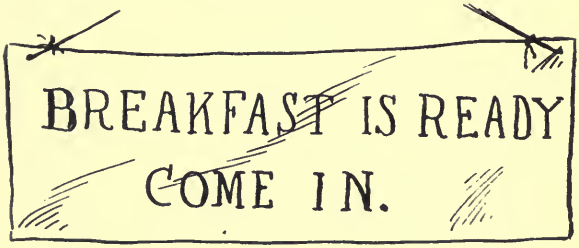
The first stop was at Charleston. Of all the "morgued" towns in Uncle Sam's domain this one takes the highest medal. Its sidewalks are bad and its streets are awful, though it 's a city of sixty thousand people. Ask a man the right time and he 'll interrogate you as to whether you want slow time, fast time, railroad, or steamboat time. That 's what they asked me, and I told my informant that I 'd scrub along without any of them. Charleston has n't got over the war and the earthquakes yet. And, by the way the people talk, they never will. They sit there with folded hands waiting for either another war or another earthquake; and I think if one or the other would come it would do them good. Then they 'd all move away and the town would wake up a little.

But at the present it 's the most dilapidated kind of a town you or I ever struck. They have patched up their old houses with mortar and tried to make them look pleasant; but they are the most melancholy kind of patches you ever saw. Mortar and melancholy never did look well together anyway.

Just imagine any town in the North with a

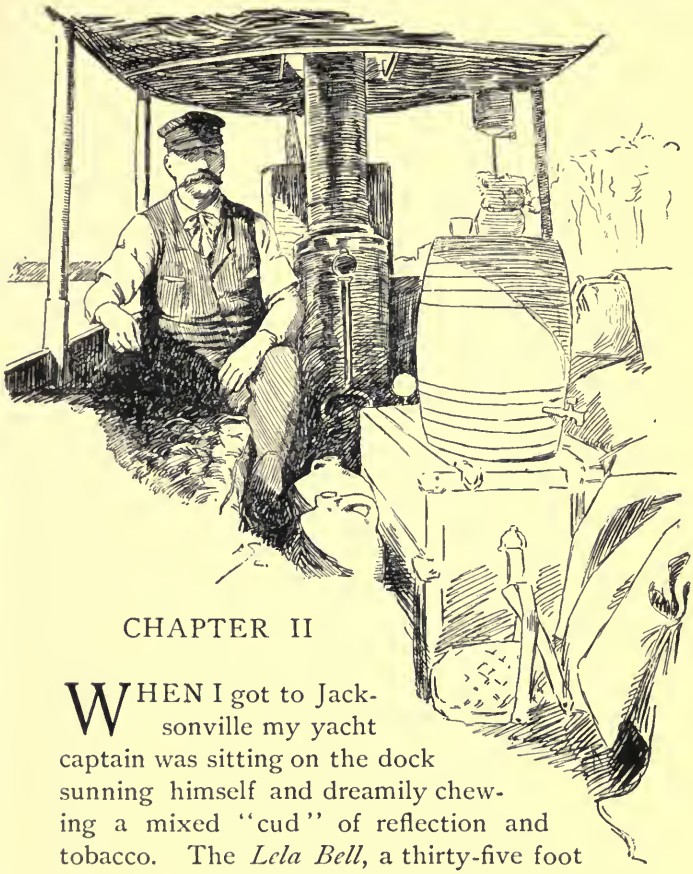
sign out like this in front of one of its largest dry goods stores:


Another sign pleased me. It was hanging in a restaurant window. This is it:




The only man in Charleston who seemed to have any life was the purser of our boat, and he made a bee-line run for a telegraph office as soon as we struck the dock. But he was peculiarly situated. The fact is his wife was sick. At noon the day we left New York she had given birth to a baby boy; at two o'clock she had given birth to a baby girl. The returns were not all in, the doctor thought, but the purser had to skip for his boat, as it left at

three, and he was in a brown study until we got to Charleston. He looked sad when I met him coming back from the telegraph office, so I guess it was triplets.

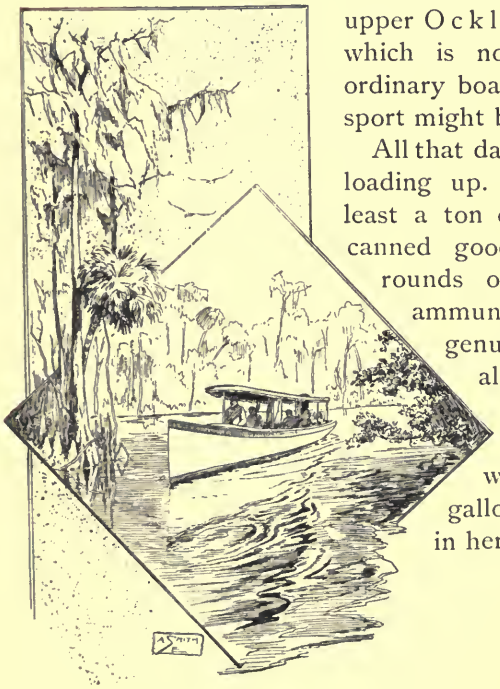


## CHAPTER II

WHEN I got to Jacksonville my yacht captain was sitting on the dock sunning himself and dreamily chewing a mixed "cud" of reflection and tobacco. The *Lela Bell*, a thirty-five foot naphtha launch, lay floating on the water like a duck at high tide. She had been primed and prinked till she shone like a bevelled-edge French plate mirror.

She is the only type of boat I could possibly have used on a Florida expedition. For years I had been aching to see what the country was like away from civilization. I wanted to do the St. John's River clear down to the Okechobee swamp if possible, hundreds of miles from where it is naturally navigable.

I wanted to find out the truth of some of the big alligator, bear, and deer stories. Then I wanted, incidentally, to get material and game so that I could come back and tell bigger ones. Then I surmised that on the upper Ocklawaha River, which is not navigable to ordinary boats, considerable sport might be had.



All that day we were busy loading up. There was at least a ton of groceries and canned goods, a thousand rounds of all kinds of ammunition, a lot of genuine pills, and also a lot of wet stuff to go with them. Then we put eighty gallons of naphtha in her tank and fifty

more in boxes in the rowboat we towed, and away we went the next morning for Palatka, seventy-five miles away.

And now as to the crew. There 's the captain, a funny mixture of a Pennsylvania Dutchman and a New England Yank, red-headed and full of fire, but good-natured all the time.

But oh, the cook! Shall I forget her? Never! And echo answers just the same. Delmonico never did better than this "fair, fat, and forty" widow. Perhaps it was that only sauce in the world—hunger; perhaps it was the climate; most "perhapsly" it was the cooking, but I gained twenty pounds in a week. And the captain gained more, for the cook weighs good 180, and he 's going to marry her. And I 'm sorry I did n't ask her myself.

How in the world she ever got up those dainty and delicious dishes 'way out there in the wilds is a mystery to me. I got her in Jacksonville at an intelligence office. She seemed to take a fancy to me at once. She said I was the living picture of her husband, who had been dead five years. I kindly and gently told her that I was not in the living-picture business as a regular thing, but if it afforded her any satisfaction to think so I would let her.

I told her what was wanted of her and she seemed to take it as a matter of course.

She would accept me as an employer, she said. "I 've lots of references, sur, in me trunk, and shure they are from the best of families." I thought that rather funny, as I had never engaged servants before, but told her to keep them there—that I guessed there would be no policeman on our beat, and rather surmised that she would behave herself.

And she was a treasure. I shall never forget her or her costume. I have the fortune, or misfortune, whichever you call it, to be a yachtsman. I also have a friend named — well, never mind, but we 'll call him "Billy." He 's a Wall Street broker, and lately dropped from the great army of bachelors and joined the benedicts. His wife is one of those ultramarine, æsthetic type of girls, speaks five languages with fluency, and rides a bicycle with ease. Now, if there is anything "Billy" detests it is a Jenness-Miller kind of costume, and his wife rather affects it. I invited them on the yacht last year shortly after their return from the bridal tour. I was looking for a fight the minute Mrs. "Billy," we 'll call her, stepped

on board. Well, to cut it short, "Billy" won, and someway a certain bloomer costume was left behind and it got mixed with my Southern traps. Then the cook found it, and she thought it was built for her and appropriated it. But that was n't the worst of it. She ran into a pair of my hunting leggings and thinking they were a part of the costume strapped them on. You can imagine how a "fair, fat, and forty" Irish widow would look.

Then there was the cabin-boy. We called him a cabin-boy. I don't know where it came in, but he gloried in the title, and I let him have it, though I could n't find the cabin. The *Lela Bell* has a naphtha engine in her capable of pushing her ten miles an hour. She only draws about two feet and is as comfortable a boat as one could wish. At night the cabin-boy gets his fine work in, and with thick portières makes three compartments out of the boat for sleeping purposes.

The boy was a thorough "Cracker," and proud of the name. A white-livered, chalky

specimen of the genus *homo*, slow of speech and slow of action. "Cracker" is a term for a born and bred Floridian. They all look as if they had a lead-pipe mortgage on a life endowment of malaria. Pale-faced and sickly looking, they are not in any respects pleasing, and are continually having the "shakes." I told one man I thought it was wrong for him to be "shaking" so much, as it injured, in my opinion, the morals of the community.

He said he did n't know; he 'd never had a drink out of it yet and he 'd been shaking all his life.

Then he shook some more.

And I broke a record for him.

It is no doubt the fault of the country. Most of the people live back from civilization, away in the swamps, where the malaria must be something terrible when one lives there the year round. I have never seen a genuine "Cracker" yet but

"CRACKER" CABINS

what had the same dead-white color, and I have seen him with children ranging from one to fifteen years old and they all looked the same. A scientific man I met once claimed that in the case of the children it was caused by their appetite for the fine sand of the country, he insisting that they ate it.

## CHAPTER III

Don't know the place,
Forgotten the date.

COULD I but word-paint you the picture before me I should feel sure of my career. But it 's impossible; no painter could produce upon canvas the beauty of a dying day in tropical Florida. I think it must be either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. I 've been away from railroads, from post-offices, and from

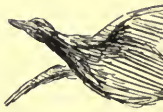
all civilization for three weeks. You, up in the frozen North, with evidence of culture and a plenty of people, railroads, and steamboats on every hand, can hardly realize that I 've not seen a living soul outside of my crew for twenty-one days. It 's fifty miles to the nearest settlement across country, and we are only three hundred miles south of Jacksonville, but one hundred miles from Sanford, the nearest post-office on the river.

To the east, west, north, and south a watery prairie. Dotted here and there by straight, stiff rows of palmettos, by bunches of cabbage palms, and by oases of weeds, it presents a sight worth many a day's journey. Miles on miles of water everywhere. The setting sun shines down upon one vast lake.

We are tied up for the night to a big bunch of prairie grass. The music of a Florida evening is beginning. The shrill call of the coot, the scream of the blue heron, and the trolley trill of the raft duck are commingled. Then from a distance comes the evening and hoarse cry of the alligator and the weird whispers of the hoot-owl.

Calm and still as a summer night is this inland lake; a Christmas quiet and a Christmas peace reign. The red sun glistens down upon the waters, bespeaking another beauteous day.

For five weeks it has been that way: a beautiful sunrise, a beautiful sunset, and a beautiful sun day. Not a suspicion of a cloud or a sign of rain in thirty-five days. Every day of the thirty-five has been a perfect Northern June day. With the thermometer reaching toward the eighties every day and a couple of blankets necessary every night, what more could one desire for a midwinter night's dream!



When they told me that it would be a "mighty hard job" to get below Sanford on the St. John's River they told me the truth, and it 's the first time I 've been told the truth in five winters in Florida. I had charts galore, compasses in plenty, and information more than I wanted. There was water, they thought, but it would be hard to keep in the channel, which is only twenty feet wide. But they did n't tell enough. The fact is that the St. John's River was very high, having risen over seven feet in a week. Florida is flat land, with hardly a hill in all the State bigger than a New England schoolhouse. Consequently, the seven feet of water had to go somewhere and it has just overflowed the prairie.

Whereas, formerly, you only had to follow the channel, now you have to pick it out of a continual inland lake, miles and miles in width. That 's fun, is n't it?

That accounts for the fact that we are lost to-night, and compasses, charts, and information don't help us an inch.

It took us two days to get out of the place, which I opine to be Puzzle Lake on the chart, fifty miles below Sanford.

And it 's rightly named.

We finally got down as far as it was possible to go, and we ran on the way back with a three-mile-an-hour current, which is, as the captain puts it, "dead easy." I have one red mark in this world, anyway, and that is that I have carried my private yachting signal farther south on the St. John's River than any yachtsman or sportsman has ever been. What that honor amounts to, I don't know. Guess it won't bring me any medals. It took patience, perseverance, and push to get that far. Every day was a day of

fighting forward. Day after day we had to cut our way through pond-lilies and weeds as tough as a rope.

Many a day we made less than eight miles. Such work tells on an engine, and if that broke down it meant weeks before we could get back to civilization.

It 's a lazy kind of life we lead. We go

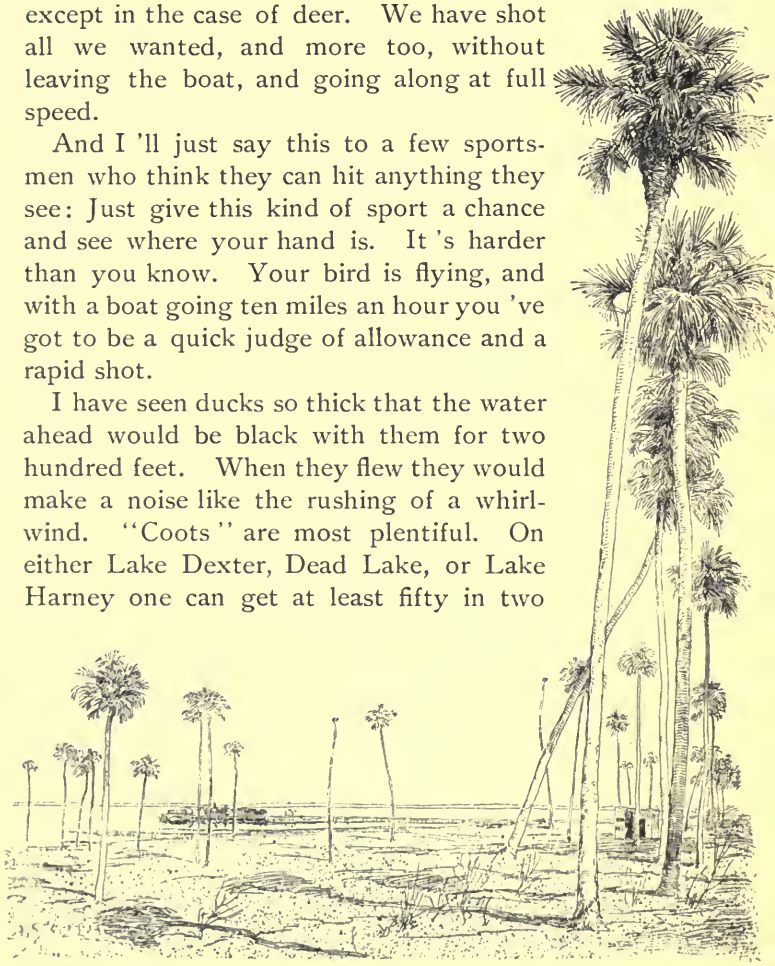
to bed with the sun, or at the latest by six o'clock, and sleep soundly until 6 A.M. You see there 's no opera houses, no concerts,—in fact nowhere to go. For days sometimes we could n't get off the boat going through the swampy country, as there would be four feet of water even in the forests. Game down here is plenty; but you 've got to get out in the wilds and know where to go for it. As for us,

A TRAPPER'S CAMP ON THE ST. JOHN'S

we have n't moved or turned aside for it, except in the case of deer. We have shot all we wanted, and more too, without leaving the boat, and going along at full speed.

And I 'll just say this to a few sportsmen who think they can hit anything they see: Just give this kind of sport a chance and see where your hand is. It 's harder than you know. Your bird is flying, and with a boat going ten miles an hour you 've got to be a quick judge of allowance and a rapid shot.

I have seen ducks so thick that the water ahead would be black with them for two hundred feet. When they flew they would make a noise like the rushing of a whirlwind. "Coots" are most plentiful. On either Lake Dexter, Dead Lake, or Lake Harney one can get at least fifty in two



hours' time any morning. Then come the raft duck, a few mallards, and some stray canvas-backs.

Snipe and quail are plentiful, and geese abound.

But, talking about game, don't let the alligator idea get hold of you. Most Northern people who have never been South are possessed of the idea that Florida is flooded with the brutes. But it 's not. A few years ago when the alligator bag, alligator satchel, and alligator purse were the reigning fad, the poor devils were hunted night and day for their skins and their teeth. A "Cracker" hunter thought nothing of bringing in forty skins for a day's hunt. At that time on the Ocklawaha River one could readily see three or four hundred on a day's trip. Now, if you see three or four you 're lucky.

## CHAPTER IV

THERE 'S a tall, handsome, blond-haired-looking Connecticut individual, the even tenor of whose luxurious life will be rudely broken into when I return. Last summer when we went yachting together in one of the six trunks and four bandboxes which accompanied him he had a beautiful array of shoes of a black, a white, and a dusky brown color with patent inside and outside two-inch rubber soles. They were marvels to look at, and I admired them so much that he presented me with a pair of the dusky browns.

Every time I put them on they got me into trouble. Those rubber soles on a wet deck are like so much sweet oil under you. The other day as we were spinning along up a side creek I dropped a thirty-eight calibre rifle-ball into a big twelve-foot alligator taking a snooze on the bank. The captain ran the boat in and I made a jump for the bank, rifle in hand.

But fate and those shoes said otherwise. Those rubber soles flew under me in the soft mud and back I went into twenty feet of water. Mr. 'Gator, who I thought was dead, woke up lively and ugly.

He dropped in after me.

Then I was in a pickle. I did n't want to stay down, for if I did I was booked for a watery ascension to the other world. If I ascended, the alligator would book me. The captain did n't dare shoot, for he might hit me, and then there would be trouble, sure.

I finally compromised by swimming to the other side of the creek, and the 'gator let me go and I let him go, which no doubt was a wise move for both.

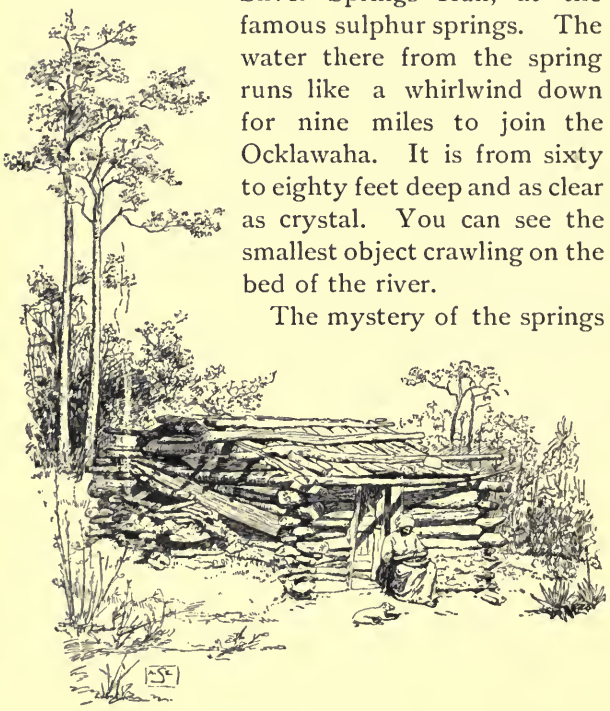
It was almost a relief when we turned from the big and broad St. John's into the narrow and sinuous Ocklawaha River. Say what you will, write what you will, telephone what you can, there 's no river in Europe that equals

that river for scenery. It 's a letter S all the way from the start to the finish of its 175 miles. I can testify to the fact that it has ninety-nine curves to every mile.

It is so crooked that it reminds me of what comedian Mark Murphy once said of Boston streets. "Be jabers," he exclaimed, "I started out one morning to see a friend and the turns were so sudden that I met meself coming back!"

The tall trees are draped with southern moss, and as the sun comes peering through, shedding its rays upon the weird scene you can only liken it to Stanley's description of an African forest. It is a muddy, turbid stream averaging about thirty feet in width. On the guide card describing it I think there are about sixty-seven stations; but don't get fooled, be-

cause there are only about four places on the entire river that you could possibly land at. The rest of the way is one continual swamp. Tall cypress trees covered with Spanish moss, mistletoe, and Florida morning-glories line both banks. It finds its source in some little lake near Leesburg, but it is not navigable for seventy-five miles of its course except by some tourist like myself. Navigation starts in on Silver Springs Run, at the famous sulphur springs. The water there from the spring runs like a whirlwind down for nine miles to join the Ocklawaha. It is from sixty to eighty feet deep and as clear as crystal. You can see the smallest object crawling on the bed of the river.

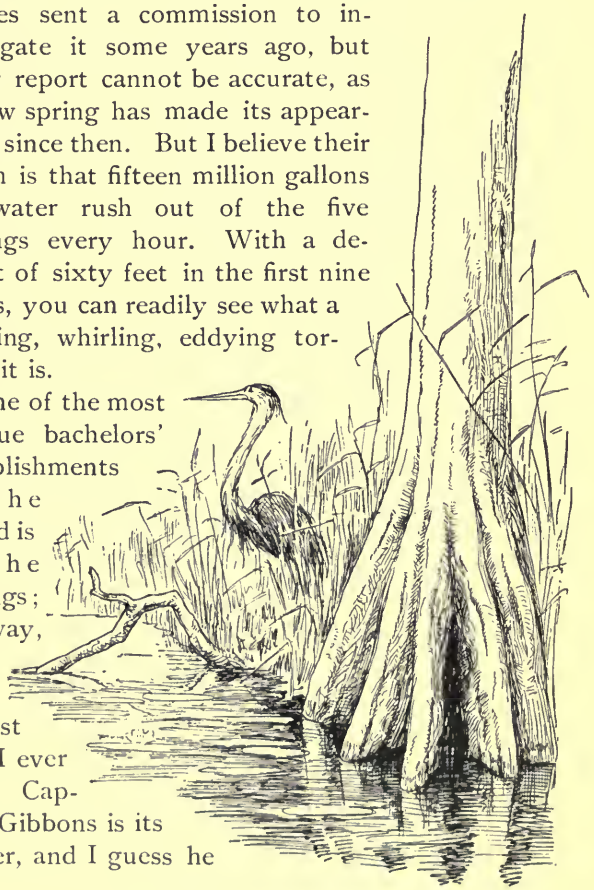


The mystery of the springs

A FLORIDA SWAMP

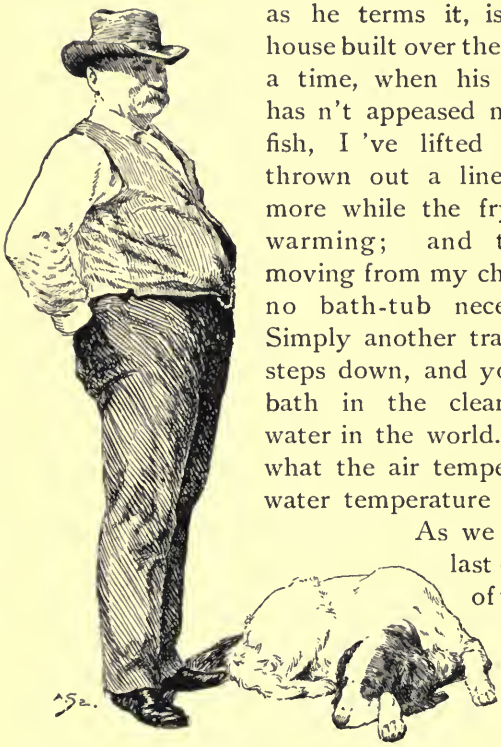
I believe has never been fathomed. It is one of the wonders of the world. The United States sent a commission to investigate it some years ago, but their report cannot be accurate, as a new spring has made its appearance since then. But I believe their claim is that fifteen million gallons of water rush out of the five springs every hour. With a descent of sixty feet in the first nine miles, you can readily see what a rushing, whirling, eddying torrent it is.

One of the most unique bachelors' establishments in the world is at the springs; anyway, it 's the oddest one I ever saw. Captain Gibbons is its owner, and I guess he



owns everything worth having around the springs. The land on both sides of the docks and wharves is his, so you see he has a lead-pipe cinch on the water.

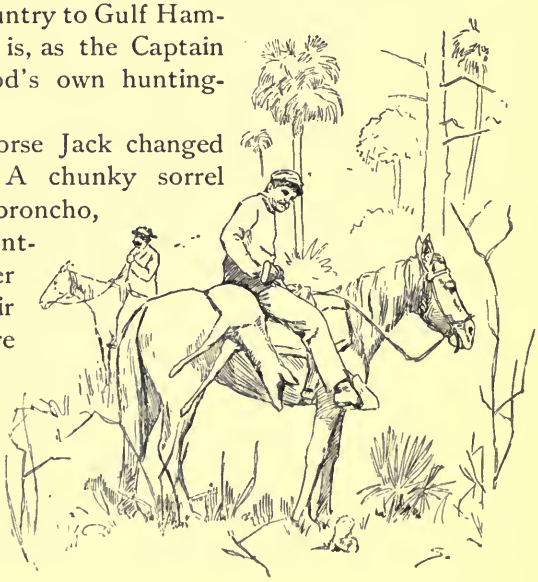
Tall, broad-shouldered, stout of frame and stout of heart, he is the perfect type of a Southern gentleman. His "ranch," as he terms it, is a two-story house built over the water. Many a time, when his colored cook has n't appeased my hunger for fish, I 've lifted a trap-door, thrown out a line, and caught more while the frying-pan was warming; and this without moving from my chair. There 's no bath-tub necessary there. Simply another trap-door, three steps down, and you can have a bath in the clearest, cleanest water in the world. No matter what the air temperature is, the water temperature never varies.



As we rounded the last curve in sight of the Captain's, there was a sound of artillery. The

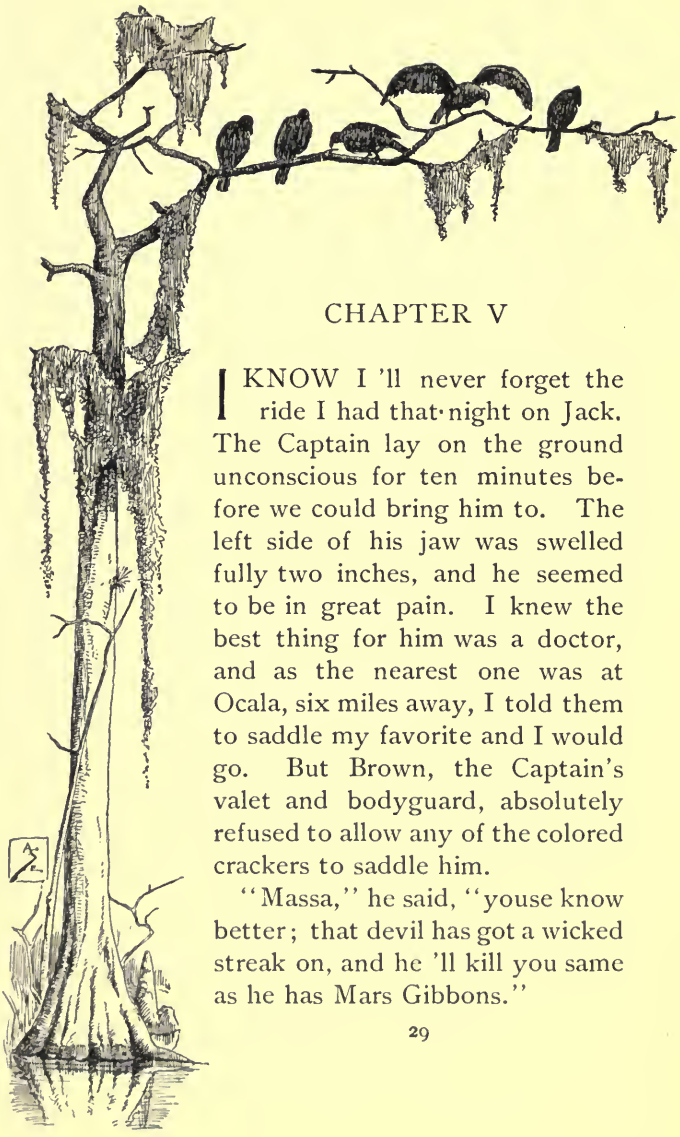
Captain had gathered all Silver Springs' population there, armed them with shotguns, and they were saluting us. I should n't have been a bit surprised if he 'd had a few brass bands around.

But the afternoon brought bad luck. The Captain had been looking forward to my visit for some time. Men had been sent out hunting for the trail of the deer and the roost of the wild turkey. Orders had been issued to all the population to keep their shotguns home and let the birds alone till after my visit. Then we were going to put the launch on wheels and cart her across country to Gulf Hammock, which is, as the Captain puts it, "God's own hunting-ground."



But my horse Jack changed the plans. A chunky sorrel devil of a broncho, trained for hunting, he never turns a hair when you fire over him and will follow the dogs through the thickest

woods ever known. I call him mine because I always use him when there. The Captain had saved him up for three weeks for me. He had been fed on the fat of the land and no man had thrown a leg over him in that time. Naturally, he was feeling very frisky, and when the Captain mounted him to show him off to me he threw him, badly bruising the Captain and shattering his jaw.



## CHAPTER V

I KNOW I 'll never forget the ride I had that night on Jack. The Captain lay on the ground unconscious for ten minutes before we could bring him to. The left side of his jaw was swelled fully two inches, and he seemed to be in great pain. I knew the best thing for him was a doctor, and as the nearest one was at Ocala, six miles away, I told them to saddle my favorite and I would go. But Brown, the Captain's valet and bodyguard, absolutely refused to allow any of the colored crackers to saddle him.

"Massa," he said, "youse know better; that devil has got a wicked streak on, and he 'll kill you same as he has Mars Gibbons."

Now, as far as riding an equine, the Captain was my beau-ideal of a horseman. He sat his horse, saddle or no saddle, and he was flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. He had been a Confederate cavalry captain in the war and many said in the four years he had grown to his horse and slept and eaten in the saddle. He never bothered with the reins, but always guided his horse with his knees and voice.

And as far as I was concerned, my life had been too busy a one to learn horsemanship. Put me on a dress-parade horse or start me out on a sachet-bag hunt, and I should be a sorry spectacle for any kind of foreign gods. But get me out in the wilds with Jack and he could n't throw me, no matter how wicked he was feeling; and that is a pretty good test with a wild Western stallion under you.

And so, with blood up and the confidence of a fairly young youth, I saddled him myself and with a jump was on his back. Before the darkies had opened the gate Jack had made a running jump and cleared the fence. Talk about Sheridan's ride! For the first mile that broncho kept me guessing and holding on. He tried his old trick of bending his knees and stopping suddenly, but it did n't work. The ride was through pine woods and what I expected I got in the first mile. Jack simply ran

me into a tree and tried to sweep me off by brushing against the trunk; but it was another old trick of his and I was ready for him. I just leaned over as he struck that tree and hit him one crack with the butt end of a loaded whip.

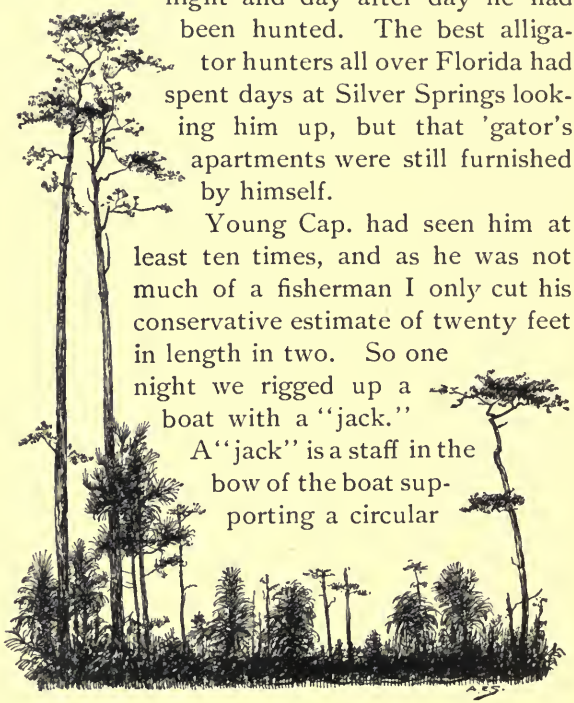
That seemed to be proof positive to him that I was not an "easy" boss and without more ado he landed me in Ocala inside of fifteen minutes.

The doctor said it would be weeks before the Captain would be around again, and so, after a week of nursing and hunting around Silver Springs, I decided to take a run on the upper Ocklawaha in an attempt to get to Leesburg through a chain of lakes.

But I had one little adventure before I left which came near placing me where I should have had to dictate this story to a silver-winged type-writer in the other world. Cap. Jr., a chip of the old block, proposed that we go out "jacking" some night. Up in Maine we go "jacking" for deer, but this was to be a case of spearing for fish and one particular alligator. Now this particular one was a tradition. I always scouted traditions, and as I did n't want to break my rule this time I went scouting after this one.

There was a certain spot about three miles

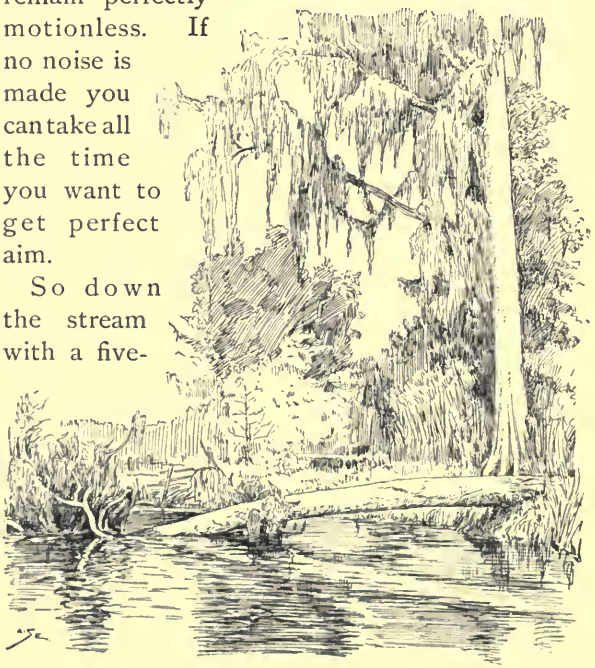
down the run where this alligator loafed by day and by night. In age he was placed at about a hundred and in size anywhere from sixteen feet to thirty. According to Bradstreet's and other reports, he had been shot at and hit at least a thousand times, but never bothered to wink more than one eye and depart. Night after night and day after day he had been hunted. The best alligator hunters all over Florida had spent days at Silver Springs looking him up, but that 'gator's apartments were still furnished by himself.



Young Cap. had seen him at least ten times, and as he was not much of a fisherman I only cut his conservative estimate of twenty feet in length in two. So one night we rigged up a boat with a "jack." A "jack" is a staff in the bow of the boat supporting a circular

wire basket filled with selected pitch-pine sticks. When fired it gives a bright light and is used to dazzle both deer and alligators.

If perfect quiet is kept, a deer seeing the bright light will come to the banks of the stream, and in a measure it hypnotizes him. And so it is with alligators. You can let your boat drift within ten feet of them and they will remain perfectly motionless. If no noise is made you can take all the time you want to get perfect aim.



So down the stream with a five-

mile current we floated. We had rigged up a fishing spear. They are three-pronged barbed steel forks imbedded in the end of a twelve-foot pole. The other end of the pole is fastened to a rope which is tied in a loose knot around your wrist.

The harpoonist stands up at the bow of the boat, and though it takes considerable skill we landed about twenty-one big fish, mostly pickerel and trout ranging from three to eight pounds. Then, as we were nearing our place, I gave up my fork to young Cap. and loaded my Winchester. I was just pushing the last bullet in when I heard a swish. Away went the harpoon, and with the help of a yell from the harpoonist it buried itself in what I could plainly see was a monster alligator just crossing the stream.

"You fool, you!" I shouted in my excitement; "let go the pole; that fellow will drown us." But I was too late. Mr. 'Gator had tautened on it, and the rope knot was fast round Cap.'s wrist.

"Cut it, cut it!" I shouted. But by that time Cap. had all he could do to hang on to the boat. Then Mr. 'Gator, who saw he was fastened, was in for fight. With a rush he came head on at the boat, then turned and hit it a vicious blow with his tail, breaking in the

side, knocking out the lighted pine-knots, and making a blazing funeral pyre out of young Cap., who was trying gallantly to rid himself of his prize.

Then the darky oarsman lost his head. With a yell like a war-dancing Comanche he jumped out of the boat and swam for the shore. But he did the best thing after all to help us out. As I was in the stern seat I could not shoot for fear of the rower, who was bobbing around like a sewing-machine shuttle in motion.

Then with a clear field I just held that rifle towards that tradition and without aiming let him have it. He was so near and so big that I could n't miss him, and the shots came so thick and so fast that they stunned him. The boat was filling with water, putting out the fire, and the current pushing us into a bend in the shore. Cap. and I made one jump for the nearest tree as the boat sank in sixty feet of water.

Then Mr. Alligator began to get his second wind. But by this time Cap. had loosened the knot and taken a couple of hitches around the tree with the rope, and as the big brute was badly wounded, we judged he was our meat.

But we were in a pickle. A wounded alligator is the worst thing to tackle on this earth, and as my rifle was at the bottom of the river.

we were helpless. It was two men up a tree sure, but in an hour all Silver Springs was on the way down the run with any old watery conveyance they could pick up. The "darkey" had not stopped running till he got there and the entire village was alarmed. A few shots

more settled the alligator, and to-day I use him for a grip. He measured fourteen feet seven inches from nose to tip of tail, which is a mighty big alligator these days, no matter what they tell you.

There 's only one bigger that I know of and he 's way up in Lake Griffin, and I hope to

LOOKING AT HIS TEETH

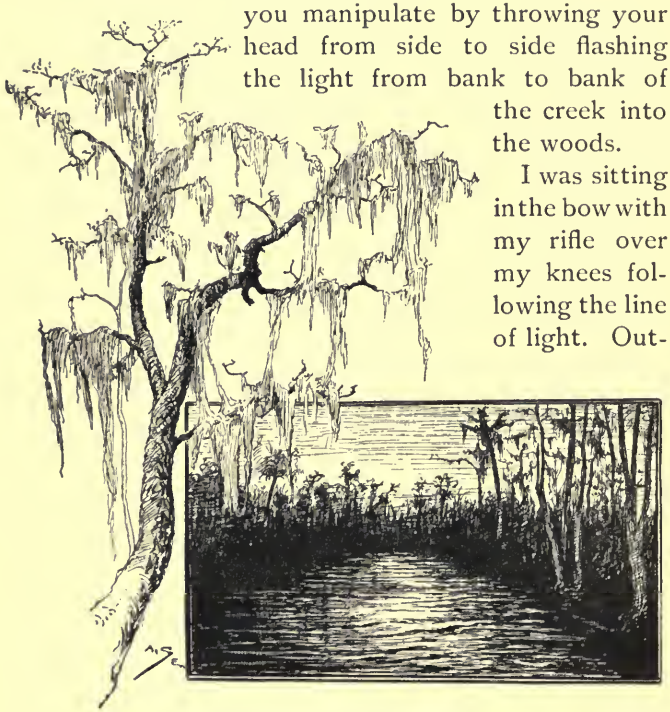
gather his scalp next year, as it will be my third year after him.

I went "jacking" once more, but gave it up after that, as it disgusted me. It 's well enough for pot hunters, but it strikes me as a mighty tame and cowardly sort of sport. It was in a fourteen-mile creek near Dead Lake; I had for guide and oarsman a typical J. Fennimore Cooper hunter. I believe that man could scent a deer a mile off with the wind against him. He knew every foot of forest and stream for twenty miles. There was n't a spot, wet or dry, in that region that he could n't take you to, the darkest night. He knew the haunt of the Hooping Crane as well as the feeding-ground of the finny Goggle-eye; he could follow a deer's track as easily as you and I could go up Broadway in a cable car.

I think he must have copied his costume from a Cooper hero, and his gun was old and antiquated enough to have been carried by one of them; but when it went to his shoulder, aged and rusty as it was, something had to come.

The night was one of those dark cloudy ones with a damp chill in the air that went clean through you. As we went across the lake the mist commenced to rise like rain, reversing the rule. With muffled oars we crept into the

creek, and then stopped to warm up with quinine pills and the usual accompaniment. As I was to do the shooting, I adjusted the latter-day style of "jack," which is a bull's-eye lantern fastened on your head by a broad leather strap. The bull's eye must come in the centre of your forehead, and then it makes a sort of a semi-searchlight out of you. This you manipulate by throwing your head from side to side flashing the light from bank to bank of the creek into the woods.



I was sitting in the bow with my rifle over my knees following the line of light. Out-

side of that range I could not see my hand before me, yet that guide rowed me at least twenty miles that night though creeks, little watery alleys, and small lakes, yet never made one mistake.

Silent and speechless he rowed on and on. It was midnight before the noiseless dip of his oars slackened. Then we both gazed through the darkness at two glaring balls of fire low down on the west bank. I flashed my light on them and taking careful easy aim pinked that alligator with a forty-four right between the eyes. There was a sudden bellow, a splash, and a dash of water in our faces, and the white under-hide of that fellow was floating down the stream.

It had been a clean "kill," and after picking him up we took some more pills and kept on.

It was hours after that before we had luck again. We were just leaving the creek for the lake on the campward journey when a rushing sound startled me. I flashed the light to the bank where the sound came from and there, standing full in front of me, head upraised as if defying fate, was a magnificent buck. I had shot deer before, but never in so close a range. He could not have been over fifteen feet from me, and I could feel my hand shake a little as I lifted my gun.

I choked the feeling down and sighted for his head. There he stood in all his beauty; a monarch of a Florida forest. A feeling of awe came over me in the stillness of the night and the silence of the woods; no sound except the trickle of the water as it swished against the oar blades. I could see the drops of dew on the gun barrel as, with finger on the trigger, I waited. Dazed and motionless, he seemed to wait his death like a hero waiting for execution. Then a feeling of pity at murdering so crept over me and I dropped my gun and turned to the guide.

"I 'm blamed if I 'll shoot at him," I said; "bring on an old cow alligator and I 'll do it, but I can't kill that fellow."

With the sound of my voice the deer was away, and that 's the last "jack" hunting I 'll ever do.

## CHAPTER VI

IT was a hot January day when the last salvo of the Silver Springs colored contingent was fired and the first bend in the river hid us from sight. We were on our way toward the untravelled and unhunted region of the upper

Ocklawaha. The thermometer had a high-water mark of ninety, and both the sun and the mercury were bulls. The first nine miles was down the Silver Springs Run and away in a rush and whirl we went. With a pouring torrent of a boiling sulphur current, with a full head of steam and a curve in the river every hundred feet, there was danger enough to please any man. Then, too, the big unwieldy Ocklawaha boats were due. The narrowness of the stream would not allow us to pass, and it was necessary to turn into some little creek or bay. But we were in luck. In forty-five minutes the nine miles was made and just as we rounded Hell Gate Island into the upper river the Lucas line boat loomed ahead, with the opposition boat only twenty feet behind.

It was once again the rivalry of the Mississippi boats in the old Mark Twain days. The two had been nip and tuck all night long. They were now hugging each other for a spurt in the fairly open water of the last mile run. Then there would be fun. The leading boat now had the right of way and puffed along like a fat king with the asthma. The trailer could do nothing but trail, for she could n't pass the leader without pushing her into the woods. The passengers on the decks were

IN CAMP ON THE OCKLAWAHA

howling and clasping each other's hands with excitement.

As I thought, it was a good alligator day. They were just commencing to break away from their long winter sleep in the mud. At noon we stopped for lunch. It had been a thirty-mile run through cypress woods out into an open meadow. In that three-hour run we had counted twenty-six alligators. Either my aim was poor or they were a Bowery lot, for I only got four.

In the afternoon for miles and miles our course lay through this snaky river, bordered with tall grass and ferns. Game, as we left civilization, became plentiful and we had no difficulty in bagging a dozen ducks. Hundreds

in a flock they flew and I picked them off with a rifle, sighting the ones flying directly over the stream so that our "Cracker" cabin "kid" could gather them in as we skipped along.

Innumerable and multi-colored birds flew

screeching away at the sound of the engine.

Magnificent specimens of the blue heron were there; one could even get a view of an egret, a rare bird in Florida now; then a pair of big hooping cranes streamed away, followed by a crew of saintly-white herons. Many of the birds were new to me, and I have in front of me a monkey-faced albino owl I captured that day, the first I ever saw.

Then that poor despised bird, the Florida limpkin, was in plenty. Talk about your early-in-the-year chicken or Philadelphia squab, there 's no meat so delicious as a properly cooked limpkin. It 's a water-bird built like a small stork, of a light brown color. It 's a shame, however, to shoot them. They can't hear and don't see very far, so they make despicable pot shots. They travel in pairs. I shot one that evening just as we landed and the piteous, almost human cry of its mate, who hovered around all night, gave me the nightmare.

Our stopping-place was the first elevation we had seen that day, and it was a relief to get away from that fifteen miles of meadow prairie. It was sloped down to the water covered with pine and cypress trees and morning-glory vines in full flower. I judged, from a few bones and

an old time Indian cooking-pot, that it was a big Indian burial mound.

We built a big fire to keep away wildcats and snakes, and slept under the waving cypress and the moaning pine that night. The moon silvering through the trailing southern moss cast me into a reminiscent mood. It was about theatre-time on Broadway. What was the weather? Probably snowing and blowing great guns, while I lay rolled up cosy and warm in a blanket. Had Jack made up with his wife yet?

Was Dick still smitten on the Casino ballet girl, and who was at the club? Then somnolence overcame reminiscence and silence reigned but for the uneducated snore of the cook in the boat below.

At night I was rudely and violently assailed by my crew and awoke dreaming that a horde of limpkins in the guise of elephants were using me as an asphalt pavement. Wild yells greeted me, and for a second I thought I was in the bottom of the other world's sea of fire. The southern moss drooping from the trees almost to the ground had caught fire and the woods were ablaze with light. From branch to branch the fire leaped like forked lightning and for hundreds of feet in the air it looked like Dante's inferno. My blanket was ablaze from fiery moss, and my hair and clothes were singeing. I made one jump for the water, where the Captain and young Cap. had preceded me. Then we gave the boat a push and out into the stream she floated with the current.

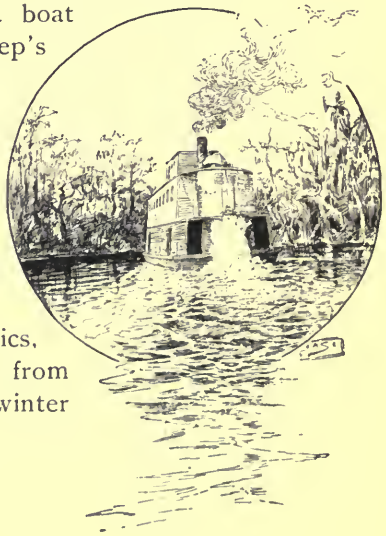
At longer range it was a magnificent spectacle, but we finished the rest of the night in the boat lower down the stream.

We got away early the next morning. The stream kept "shallowing," and many a keel track we left in that mud. The weeds, too, were thick and at noon we had n't made over

five miles. It was laborious work as the boat had to be stopped every ten minutes to clean the wheel. We were about to tie up at noon when a series of unearthly whistles shook me into the shivers. I was watching what I thought was a deer ahead fording the river, but I dropped my gun in amazement.

Again it sounded, and I counted five, the signal of a steamer in distress. I had heard and read of all kinds of apparitions but never of a steamer's ghost. There never had been a steamer through this narrow, shallow stream. That was an impossibility. Then what could it be?

I climbed to the top of the cabin house and could distinctly see, a mile away through a break in the trees, a boat I recognized in a sheep's tail-shake. It was the *Alligator*, owned by Dr. Moore, of Philadelphia. That explained everything. Dr. Moore has a fad. And he can't seem to get over it. His fad is hunting for Indian relics, and he 's chased them from coast to coast. Every winter



for years I have met him in some out-of-the-way place on his digging expeditions in Florida. And as long as he 's alive I suppose he 'll keep right on at the same old game. He 's rich enough, so I shan't stop him.

As for myself, I hunted with him one day, but it was too monotonous. It struck me as being a very dead kind of sport. I felt at the end of the day as if I wanted to stick up one of the Indian skulls and shoot at an eye-hole to see if it would n't wink once more. The Doctor has published several large-sized works nobly illustrated with pictures of an only good Indian's bones. The books are not intensely exciting and the largeness is in their size and not in circulation.

The *Alligator* is a small-sized edition of an Ocklawaha steamer, about sixty feet long and twelve wide. She was built expressly for the Doctor and only draws a foot and a half of water, loaded. The Doctor appears in Florida about September, bringing with him his cook, his steward, his engineer, and captain. Then he hires his waiters and other help in Palatka, including about twenty colored gentlemen to do the excavating.

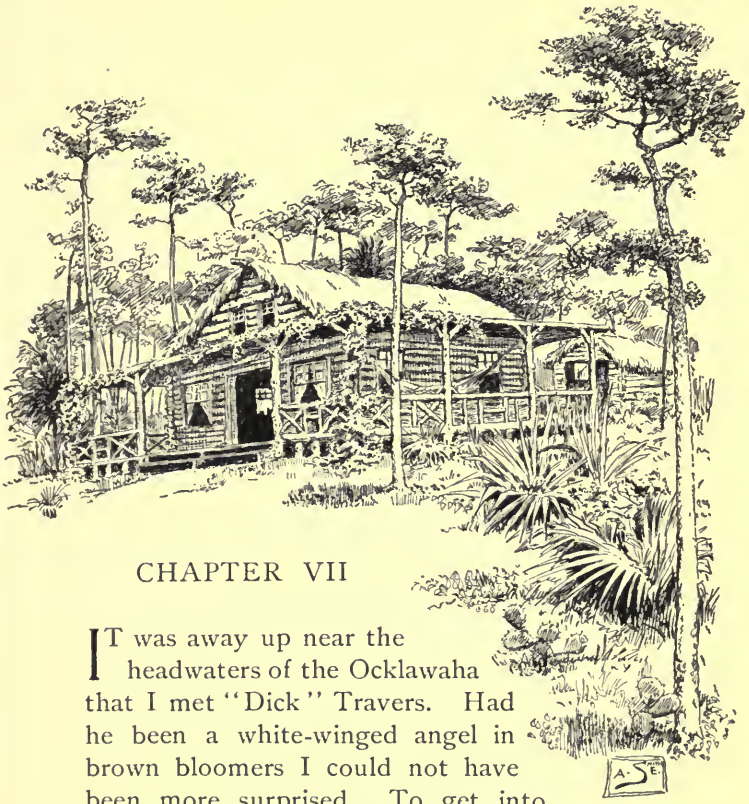
I suppose the Doctor is the best Indian mound hunter in the world. I never could tell how he ever trailed them as he was shy on dogs

and the two he did have seemed to be poor mongrel brutes, and no use for sport. He seemed to sniff them from afar, but that don't look probable, as the relics had been *passé* too long. What he ever did with his game was a mystery to me. There was a photograph factory on board, but no tallow dip or phosphate store. And I know he told me once that he got seven thousand pieces out of one mound.

So we kept on for another mile and came upon the relic hunter and his boat in distress. The water had deepened and the current was running strong. The bow of the boat had lodged up against one bank, the current had struck the stern, which married the other bank, and there she was, stuck fast.

The *Lela Bell* went into business as a tug boat, and after an hour's pulling we got the *Alligator* off. Then, as we were both booked for the same way, we joined hands. For two weeks we were together, and as the Doctor had some friends with him who played the usual Philadelphia game of poker, I passed many an enjoyable evening. We parted company about ten miles from Lake Griffin, as the Doctor sniffed a mound. The *Lela Bell* had one setback. That was near Leesburg. Five years before a railroad had been built. It ran over the river and had the usual drawbridge. But

as no boat had ever been through it in all those five years the draw was n't in the best opening mood. It took a wrecking train and forty men to get it open. It also took four days, but as the railroad company sent down a special train every morning to take me anywhere I wished, I did n't mind it much. As it cost them about one thousand dollars, I don't suppose that corporation thinks much of exploring expeditions in general and damns that one of mine in particular.



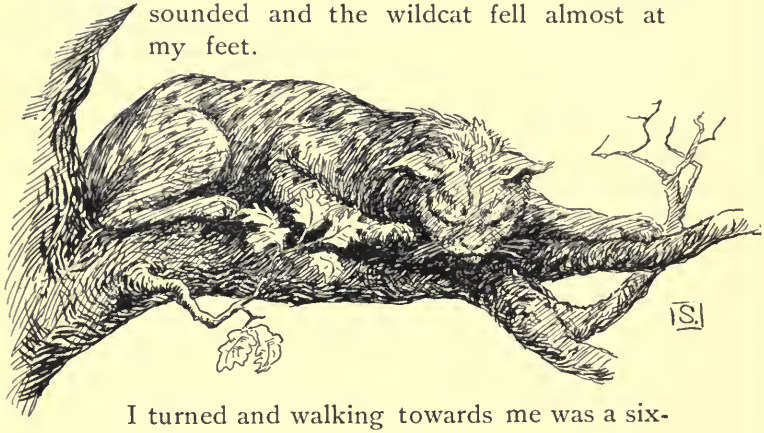
## CHAPTER VII

IT was away up near the headwaters of the Ocklawaha that I met "Dick" Travers. Had he been a white-winged angel in brown bloomers I could not have been more surprised. To get into Lake Eustis I had to go through a rather wide stream, very properly named Dead River because of its sluggishness, and I tied up to a cypress tree on its banks one afternoon. In the night there was trouble around those woods somewhere among the menagerie, and

the scream of a wildcat in particular annoyed me.

In the morning I started out to hunt his "catship," and finally located him in a tree. I had two charges of buckshot in my gun and the bulk of one of them made that animal howl, but he hung grimly to the tree.

I raised my gun to let him have the second barrel when the sharp crack of a rifle-shot sounded and the wildcat fell almost at my feet.



I turned and walking towards me was a six-foot athletic specimen of a man.

"Excuse me," he remarked, "but that fellow has been bothering my sleep for some time and I thought I ought to have a chance at him."

I could see in a second he was n't a "Cracker" or a Floridian, either. He wore a corduroy hunting-suit, demonstrating a tailor's tape-line

and a tailor's tact. Then he shook hands and introduced himself with the grace and ease of a man of the world accustomed to good society.

"Come over to my bungalow," he said; "breakfast is about ready, and as a New Yorker you are doubly welcome."

What is there in this wide world of ours that rubber-stamps New York or Chicago upon a man? I had settled it in my mind that he was from the metropolis when he broke out with the invitation.

"What in the world are you doing here?" I queried.

"Oh, it 's a long story; let 's wait till after we eat," he remarked.

By this time we had reached a sort of a clearing on the edge of a little lake secreted away in the woods. It was truly a romantic spot and one any Bertha Clay girl would gush over.

In among the stately pines on the edge of the lake was his "bungalow." It was a two-room cottage built of pine logs, the roof thatched with palms. An attempt at ornamentation had been given to the structure both inside and out, and it had a very picturesque effect.

There was a small hut back of it, and I could see two or three men around a big gasoline stove seemingly busy preparing

breakfast. He called to one of them and sent him after the body of the wildcat and to another, who was evidently his valet, to bring fresh water and towels. The room we entered was filled with evidences of refinement and good taste. Here and there were scattered articles of virtu and of value, and on the walls were a few very good water-colors and a sprinkling of etchings.

Over the big open fireplace was a deer's head mounted on a panel, and above were a pair of racing sculls tied with a broad blue ribbon. "Yes," he said, answering my gaze, "I was in Yale in '92."

The breakfast was served by the valet and it was as neat and natty a meal as I ever sat down to. The coffee was delicious, the omelette was a dream, and the fresh rolls fit for a king. I registered myself there for a week at "Dick's" urgent invitation, and we got to be very good friends. He showed me a creek I could get the boat through, and we tied her to an improvised dock his men had made in front of the hut, which he had named "Wildcat Cabin."

It was the end of the week before he grew communicative as to his hermitage, miles away from all sign or sound of man. One night just after supper we sat out on the bank watching the fish as they jumped out of the water. I

was discussing a *crême de menthe* while he was sipping coffee. I had noticed that although he could mix any kind of drink from a Manhattan to a "Jim Rickey," still he never tasted the products of his skill.

"Do you know," he remarked abruptly, "that if I was to drink that green stuff it would make me sick as a dog?"

"Why, what 's the trouble?" I queried.

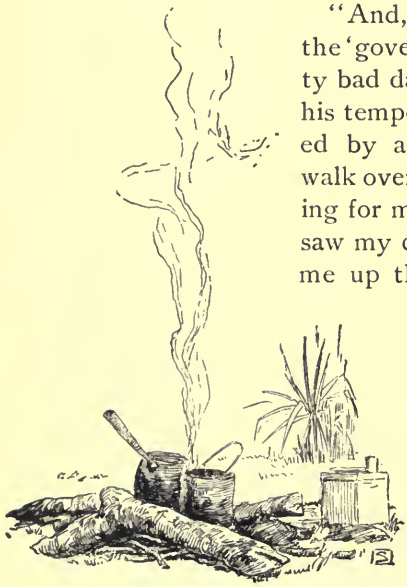
"Why, old man,"—for he had grown as familiar as that in the few days,—"I 'll tell you, and that 's just what brings me here.

"You know after I left college I entered my father's brokerage firm as assistant manager. Of course, I had had my fling at Yale, but not more of a 'throw' than most young men, and I was still in with the boys' set at New York. You know what that is. It 's a case of two or three weeks on a friend's yacht in Summer and a week's or ten days' time in the Adirondacks in the Fall.

"Then there 's the summer-hotel trip, the about-town trips, the clubs, and the stag parties. I don't think I indulged more freely than the ordinary, but the 'governor,' who is one of the old school prohibition pushers, gave me a very large case of conversation many a time. But then he always made up for it the next day with an addition to my allowance,

and I never treasured up much of what the dear old fellow said.

"One night, however,—it 's just six months ago to-night, by the way,—I came home for the first time in my life a little bit 'shaky.' I had been to a supper given by a very close friend of mine who was going to be married the next day. He belonged to my college society, and was in the Yale crew with me. Naturally, we had a pretty jolly time talking over old scrapes and college wrinkles.



"And, as luck would have it, the 'governor' had had a mighty bad day in Wall Street, and his temper was hardly sweetened by a two or three hours' walk over the carpet while waiting for me. Heavens, when he saw my condition did n't he rip me up the back though! If I had been the lowest of the low sewer drunkards he could n't have piled it on thicker.

"'Now,' he said, in conclusion, 'I 'm not going to have you around New York in this beastly condition.

Take this check, fill it out with what you want for a year, then go and get out into the woods somewhere away from everybody and be a man again.'

"You could have blown me over with a fan-wave before, but this rather straightened me and I tried to argue the point. But the more I tried the worse I was off. 'No,' he finished. 'Do what I say. Fill your mind with good substantial reading like Dickens and Thackeray. Get some real instruction into your poor befuddled noddle. Read that great masterpiece, *Lorna Doone*, and above all imitate and emulate the great John Ridd and the heroes of the old-time writers.'

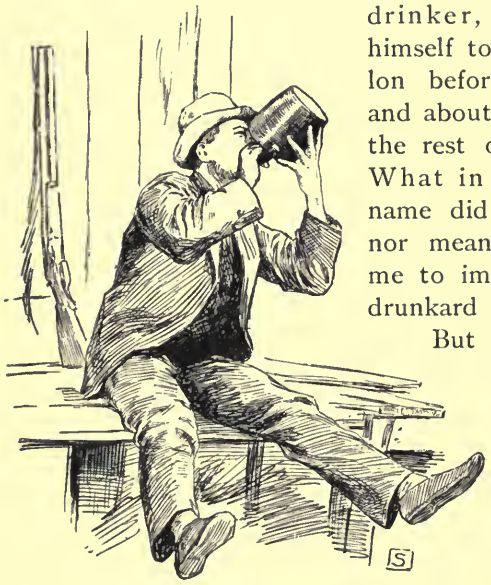
"Well," continued Dick, "I left for the West the next day without again seeing the 'governor' and I finally drifted to Florida and here. Somehow I could n't get those last words out of my mind, and they kept running through me like one of those 'ad' couplets you see in an elevated train. 'Emulate and imitate John Ridd, Dickens and Thackeray, and chase their heroes with an example.'

"So I bought every copy of these people's works I could find in sight. I bought them in all kinds of bindings and in all kinds of shapes. When I got here first I had half a ton of them. But,"—and Dick gazed reflectively out

over the lake,—"they 're all feeding the fish down there now.

"I started in with the great John Ridd in *Lorna Doone*. I read about him in four or five kinds of bindings. Then I started in to emulate him. He was put forth as a notoriously sober man, and I noticed that his favorite drink was old ale. Then I sent to town for a cask of it and hunted through the book to see what John's limit was.

"Great Golden Gates alive! As a moderate drinker, he limited himself to half a gallon before breakfast and about a gallon for the rest of the day. What in Heaven's name did the governor mean by asking me to imitate such a drunkard as that for?



But I shut my teeth and sailed in. Now I 'd never been accustomed to taking a drink be-

fore breakfast and that half-gallon business was too much for me. It spoiled my appetite for all day and I got thin, restless, and nervous.

"After a week I gave that up and took to Thackeray. I noticed that his heroes seemed to favor old clarets and old burgundies. Thackeray was, if you remember, a stickler for the age of his claret. So I sent to New York and got as near to his post-mark as I could and waded in; but there again I was dazed. Half a dozen bottles at a sitting seemed to be easy work with them, and the rest of the stuff they drank as 'chasers' I suppose would give the toughest Blackwell's Isle 'bum' the tremens.

"So I let Thackeray go to the bottom of the pond and find what he did n't seem to use in his books—water. Then I waded into Dickens, but it was worse than ever. The Lord must have given those 'old timers' brass stomachs, copper rivetted and iron shingled. By this time I was disgusted and discouraged with the old masters altogether and ready to give up. 'There must be something the matter,' I said to myself. 'It can't be possible that my stomach is weak.'

"Finally, one day I struck an idea. The trouble was that I did n't eat the same food

they did. I must not alone drink with them, but I must eat also.

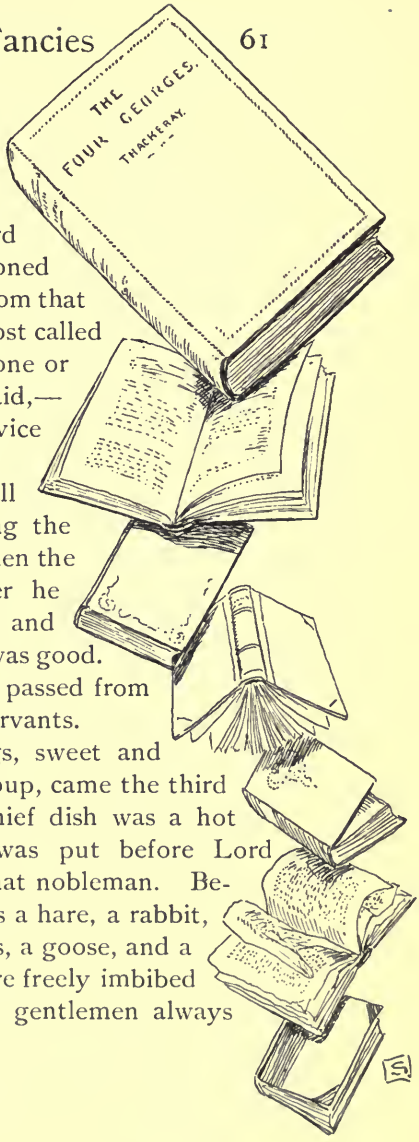
"There happpened to be one book of Thackeray's left, *The Four Georges*, and I hunted through for a sample meal. I found it on page 216. This is it:

" 'When Lord Sparkish, Tom Neverout, and Colonel Alwit, the immortal personages of Swift's polite conversation, came to breakfast with my Lady Smart at eleven o'clock in the morning, my Lord Smart was absent at the levee. His Lordship was at home to dinner at three o'clock to receive; and we may sit down to this meal like the Barmecide and see the fops of the last century before us. Seven of them sat down to dinner and were joined by a country baronet who told them they kept court hours. These persons of fashion began their dinner with a sirloin of beef, a fish, a shoulder of veal, and a tongue. My Lady Smart carved the sirloin, my Lady Answerall helped the fish, and the gallant Colonel cut the shoulder of veal. All made a considerable inroad on the sirloin and the shoulder of veal with the exception of Sir John, who had no appetite, having already partaken of a beefsteak and two mugs of ale, besides a tankard of March beer, as soon as he got out of bed. They drank claret, which the master of the house said should

always be drunk after fish; and my Lord Smart particularly recommended some excellent cider to my Lord Sparkish, which occasioned some brilliant remarks from that nobleman. When the host called for wine, he nodded to one or other of his guests and said,—"Tom Neverout, my service to you."

. . . "'Wine and small beer were drunk during the second course. And when the Colonel called for beer he called the butler Friend, and asked whether the beer was good. Various jocular remarks passed from the gentlefolks to the servants.

"'After the puddings, sweet and black, the fritters and soup, came the third course, of which the chief dish was a hot venison pasty, which was put before Lord Smart, and carved by that nobleman. Besides the pasty there was a hare, a rabbit, some pigeons, partridges, a goose, and a ham. Beer and wine were freely imbibed during this course, the gentlemen always



pledging somebody with every glass which they drank; and by this time the conversation between Tom Neverout and Miss Notable had grown so brisk and lively that the Derbyshire baronet began to think the young gentlewoman was Tom's sweetheart, on which Miss remarked that she loved Tom like pie. After the goose, some gentlemen took a dram of brandy, "which was very good and wholesome," Sir John said. And now having had a tolerably substantial dinner, honest Lord Smart bade the butler bring up the great tankard full of October to Sir John. The great tankard was passed from hand to hand and mouth to mouth, but when pressed by the noble host upon the gallant Tom Neverout, he said, "No, faith, my Lord, I like your wine, and won't put a damper upon a gentleman. Your honor's claret is good enough for me." And so, the dinner over, the host said, "Hang saving, bring us up ha'porth of cheese."

"'The cloth was now taken away and a bottle of burgundy was set down, of which the ladies were invited to partake before they went to their tea. When they withdrew the gentlemen promised to join them in an hour. Fresh bottles were brought, the "dead men," meaning the empty bottles, removed, and you hear, "John, bring clean glasses," my Lord Smart

said, on which the gallant Colonel Alwit said, "I 'll keep my glass, for wine is the best liquor to wash glasses in." '

"Just think," continued Dick, "those are the people my father wanted me to emulate. I read that menu over again, studied it front and back, did about seven sums in arithmetic with it, and decided to go out of the emulating business and save what was left of my constitution. I had n't written a line home, but a week ago I mustered up nerve and wrote the governor, explaining matters in detail. I asked him if he wanted to kill me. I pointed out that it was somewhat unfair to my stomach to try and test it that way. Then, in closing, I sent him page 216 of *The Four Georges*, and asked him to bring some friends and I 'd get up that meal for him if he wanted it, but that I would draw the line, myself, as I was rather particular."

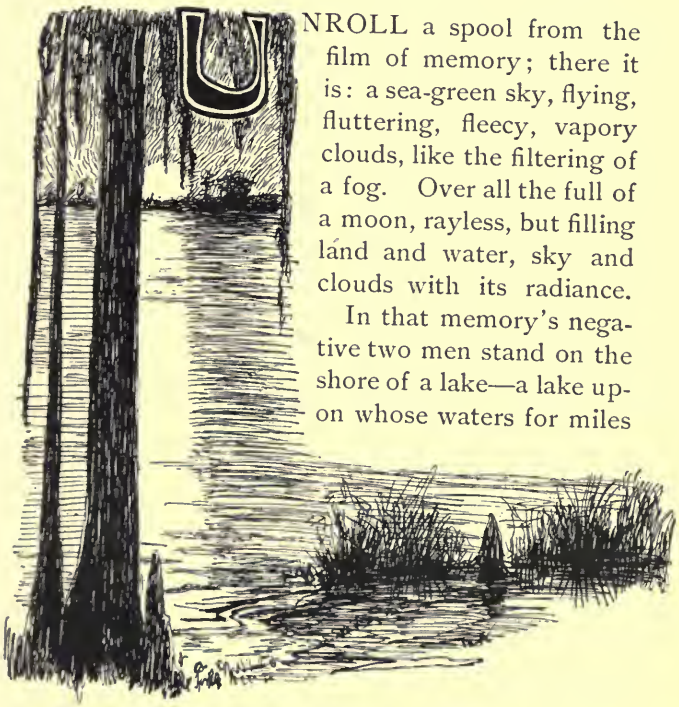
Just as Dick finished, the valet, who had been sent to Leesburg, returned with a dispatch. Dick opened it, smiled, and without a word handed it to me. It was surely laconic enough. It said:

RICHARD TRAVERS,
Leesburg, Fla.
Damn your dinner. Come home.
R. N. TRAVERS.

"I don't know," said Dick, as we turned in for the night, "but what after all a course of Thackeray would beat all the Keeleys on top of earth."

TRAPPER DAVIS'S PRIZE

## CHAPTER VIII



UNROLL a spool from the film of memory; there it is: a sea-green sky, flying, fluttering, fleecy, vapory clouds, like the filtering of a fog. Over all the full of a moon, rayless, but filling land and water, sky and clouds with its radiance.

In that memory's negative two men stand on the shore of a lake—a lake upon whose waters for miles

from either shore floats the long-stemmed, broad-leaved pond-lily, the open water seemingly but a narrow strip, but for miles in width it is clear water. Its banks are bordered with clumps of Florida cypress with here and there a long stretch of palm trees, their tall tops reaching moonwards, as still as the "eternal silence of the hills." Then, amidst the lilies and the lettuce were little brown, floating islands anchored firmly by a vegetable cable, looking for all the world like the arm-thick rope of a fishing-bank's schooner. Even the big yellow buds of the pond flowers had closed their petals in a seemingly eternal sleep.

Clear-proofed in the picture is my companion, but how different from my boyhood's dream of a trapper. Short, chunky, with a long, thick beard reaching to his waist, and dressed in a suit of patched overalls and a long overcoat, he shattered all my youthful ideals. Then, to climax the costume, he wore a broad-brimmed battered old straw hat and a pair of $1.87 Irish brogans.

"Well, Sam," I said, "I guess you 're wrong; there 'll be no concert to-night."

"Time enough," he answered grimly; "it 's not nine yet."

Silence again, then from across the lake five miles away a sound like the mooing of a calf

broke out. Louder and louder it grew, and then it died away amid the gray moss of the cypress. A triumphant chuckle from Sam, and then an answering bellow almost at our feet, sent Florida chills chasing up and down my back. It seemed so weird and uncanny that it made my teeth rattle.

"That 's the bull answering that cow over there," whispered Sam. "Now listen."

Then started a chorus that would defy description and beat all the Wagner bands in existence. The call had started and from every little island, from every little cove, an answer came. Bellow after bellow resounded, and it seemed as if the lake was full of alligators. It was an unearthly and never-to-be-forgotten concert. After twenty minutes it stopped as suddenly as it began and peace and the moon reigned.

Camp and camp followers had all been shifted. To a lay mind like mine it 's a very good policy when you go bird-hunting to take a bird-dog instead of a deer or a coon canine. Why, then, is n't it just as good sense when you go alligator-hunting to take an alligator-man?

Every man has his specialty, just the same as dogs, and there 's not a dog "fouring," if I may use the term, who has n't a specialty. Now Collins, the former guide, was the best

deer-hunter Florida ever saw. But put him against an alligator and all his cunning and sagacity went to pot.

With Sam Davis water-hunting was his light and life. Two would sum up all the deer he ever killed, but his living for years had been made on alligator and other hides. As for land-hunting, he disliked it, and when the camp pantry was depleted he 'd rather row miles after ducks than walk three hundred yards for quail.

To the uninitiated it may seem that alligator-hunting is rather tame sport. But let me tell you it is n't. Most men who know the difference would rather face a hundred wound-

ed deer than one shot-tickled ten-foot 'gator. Why? Because the deer will invariably run, and Mr. 'Gator is mighty liable not to. And a spice of danger helps the sauce of any sport.

Well, to return from the digression and the lake front to the camp. Sam made a mental map of those "bellows" so as to "place them" next day, and bidding Pete, the colored cook, call us early, we turned in.

The next day was an ideal day for 'gators. The sun shone bright and there was just enough wind stirring to rustle the lilies and the lettuce and help drown the noise of the boat as it was threaded through them. A little light sixteen-foot flat-bottomed skiff was our boat—built to a point at both ends, and not over three feet wide at the centre. Thin cypress was its make-up, and fifty pounds was its weight. This last item, of course, was the most essential, as it had to be paddled in and out among the vegetation and the water-passes without a breath of noise.

For two hours we moved through devious watery ways, hugging the banks as closely as possible, without seeing anything but "signs." Then, from my shooting seat in front I turned to Sam, and saw his eyes glued to a tussock a quarter of a mile ahead. No word or motion outside of the silent sweep of the paddle came

from him. A sudden lifting of the eyebrows, that was all.

I looked and looked again, but could see nothing, while onward we slowly crawled. Then the waving grasses parted a little on the tussock, and the black-knobbed line of an alligator's back showed. It was hard to tell whether he was asleep or "sunning," as the head was turned from us.

Nearer and nearer we got, until at sixty yards the gun came to my shoulder; my feet spread to cling to the sides of the boat and steady her. I ran along that alligator's "top line note" with my sight and held it back of the head. A turtle turtled with a noisy flop from the bank. Mr. 'Gator moved forward and I let him have five drams and three quarters of a dozen of double-B shot. It stunned him for a second, but like a lightning flash he was in the water, and my second barrel had missed him clean and clear.

And so it went on all that day with only a half-hour interval for a lay off in the pine woods and lunch. But with no better success. Fate, shooting, or some hoodoo was against us. We returned to camp empty-boated.

For two days more we did that self-same thing. And the wonder of it was we could n't either of us tell where the fault lay. It was n't

HIS LAST SLEEP

in the quantity of alligators surely, for in that time we had square fair shots at no less than twenty-five of the brutes. It was n't in my shooting entirely, for I had thrown down my gun twice in the last two days and for half a day Sam had poured and pounded shot into them.

The third night I had fairly made up my mind to quit, but the little English blood still left in me fought that resolve. We both lay gloomily gazing at the fire, mentally studying over every shot and the situation. We felt sure we had three or four dead alligators in that lake. Two of them we had rowed up to, thinking to slide them into the boat, but both of them had life enough left to flop off into the water and get away. Then, if they were very nearly dead, they would still cling to the bottom, and it would be three or four days before they rose to the surface, and their skins would then be practically useless.

If you want to get an alligator, it must be a clean, cold kill; leave him enough breath to move and he 'll beat you out. He may recover in five minutes and if you don't take your axe and cut his spinal bone in two before that time, you 'll have trouble on your hands. I have seen with my own eyes an alligator, five hours after he was to all appearances dead, and after

the commercial part of his clothing had been removed, break a man's back with one blow of his tail.

Alligators, if they have attained a length of nine feet or over, are apt to be very ugly members of watery society, if wounded. And there are many instances on record of their attacking boats forty and even fifty feet long, just because there are a few men on board, and the alligators are shy a meal. Old alligator-hunters, men who have been in the business for years, rarely if ever shoot at a big alligator. They let him slide for two reasons. One is that it is dangerous to attack them, as they are hard to kill and when wounded are liable to make a wild rush for the shooter, and then there 's trouble ahead. The other reason is that an alligator's skin depreciates in commercial value after it reaches seven feet in size.

A seven-foot skin is worth a dollar to any trapper, while a twelve-foot 'gator's hide brings only thirty-five or forty cents. As the trapper has to pay the freight and as it takes three or four times as long to bother with them, the experienced Florida alligator-farmer is generally rather shy on them.

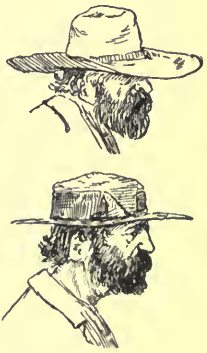
And so we lay and mused.

"Sam," I said finally, "did n't you tell me some fairy story about a gang of trappers coming down this way somewhere last summer and getting over two hundred skins out of a lake, cleaning it out?'

"Yes," he remarked moodily, "but this ain't the lake, because it ain't cleaned out."

Just then, as if to emphasize the remark, a low moaning sound with a distinct quavering note of pain in it megaphoned across the lake. "There," said Sam, "there 's that big fellow near the cypress that you put a charge into at twenty yards."

"Sam," I said, "I 'll tell you just what. Have you noticed that all the alligators we 've seen in this lake have been big ones? This is the lake that 'gang' cleaned up, and they 've left us the top-notch lot."



And so we decided it was, and changed ammunition and tactics. I had a regular elephant rifle with me, a big-bore Sharps 40–50, and I cleaned it up. The first alligator we sighted the next morning was, as we made it a hundred yards away, over twelve feet long. He was "sunning," with his head down and only the knobby ridge of his back showing. We got up within twenty

yards of him and Sam laid down his paddle and picked up his gun. It was a hard shot, as I had to guess at the place, but I let go, and Sam followed with both barrels. For a second he was stunned, then with a lightning jump he was in the water.

"Look out!" Sam yelled as he seized the paddle, "there he comes." And sure enough the water was bubbling like a boiling spring as he rose to the surface. Sam, meanwhile, was backing away for life, while I stood up in the boat, ready with the elephant bore.

The 'gator looked as big as a steam yacht to me, but not half so pretty. After gauging the situation, he made a vicious rush. Then I seemed to freeze to granite. I knew that one blow of his tail would smash our boat to splinters, and once in the water one of us, at least, was doomed.

On he came, lashing the water to a soapy foam. I kept my gun well down and at ten yards I let go. I heard the crack of his breaking skull as the bullet went straight and true between the eyes; then a slight shock that tumbled me to my seat, and it was only a dead alligator, and he lay floating feet upwards to the smiling sun.

We were satisfied that day, and we tied a rope to him and towed him to camp, three

miles away. He measured twelve and a half feet long. My first bullet had entered his back, and even at that distance had not penetrated but a few inches. Then it had flattened out like a piece of putty. Sam's buckshot had simply angered him. At twenty yards, with five drams of powder, not one had gone through his skin. Slight marks were there, showing that the shots had been true. That was all.

For two weeks we followed up this campaign, and at the end of that time we had thirty skins, not one of them under eight feet. In that time we had seen all the alligator life possible. It was the latter part of February, their breeding season, when they all come out from their winter naps and face the world again. We had seen a cow alligator fighting to the last, defending its young from a hungry father alligator; we had seen and watched their clumsy love-making; and, greatest of all, we had been fascinated for hours by a terrific battle between two giant specimens for the possession of a fair, but I 'm afraid a rather frail, female, as, while the two were fighting, another carried her off. We had no more adventures until the last tragic one. But that 's food for another chapter.


# CHAPTER IX.

THIRTY CENTS, that was his name; at least, that was the best I could do for him, poor fellow. He was a little Seminole Indian boy who had strolled into our camp way down among the everglades, where I had been hunting deer. The boy was short and slim, with wavy black hair and, for a wonder, a clean face. Young as he was, and although he did n't own a gun, he was the best bird-shot I ever saw. Pete, the cook, could n't fire a gun without shutting his eyes, so I asked the boy to come along with us for the hunt and keep us in birds and rabbits.

The Indian camp was n't far away; a jug of "jig water" gained the consent of the chief, and "Thirty Cents" completed the quartet necessary for our alligator hunt.

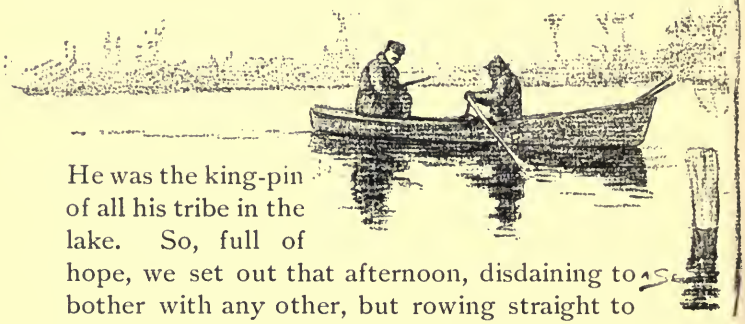
TROUBLE AHEAD

And he proved to be a valuable acquisition. Trained from his babyhood to woodland, tramped since his childhood from place to place, taught to hunt before he was ten, he knew the book of nature and the map of Southern Florida from A to Z. I asked him his name, but it was too strong for me. It seemed to commence at T and then speculate among the alphabet until it got all the letters, and then double up and climax on S. So, as a compromise, I called him "Thirty Cents." He smiled, and "it went." The boy became quite attached to me before the last day of our alligator hunt. I told Sam the next morning to take the launch, as the Indians were then camped twenty miles away, and find out whether I could take the boy North for the summer. "Meanwhile," I said, "I 'm going over to get that big 'gator, with the help of the boy."

Said Sam: "He 's over fourteen foot long; he 's wounded, and he 's a bad one."

How I wish now I had been wise and heeded his advice!

My heart was set on that 'gator. It was one I had shot at three times. Twice I had missed him, but in the first day's shoot I knew I had nailed him with buckshot. I had had a first-class chance to "size him up" and I knew that fourteen feet, at least, was his measure.



He was the king-pin of all his tribe in the lake. So, full of hope, we set out that afternoon, disdaining to bother with any other, but rowing straight to his island home. I knew that if he was n't there, he would come up not over fifty or a hundred yards from there, as he was wounded and must have air. At any other time than the breeding season alligators are very migratory. At night they are liable to be twenty-five miles away from their haunts of the morning, and it 's not unusual for them to travel all summer this way.

So for two solid hours we lay hidden like two Moseses in the bulrushes, but no 'gator. Then, looking back a mile away across the lake, we noticed a long black streak coming toward us. Nearer and nearer it came. At three hundred yards I could see he was n't my meat, as he was only about ten feet long, so I shook my head at the Indian.

He nodded and whispered low: "Him she 'gator, coming to meet big one."

That alligator came within twenty feet of our boat. She saw us plainly, stopped for a second, and her big eyes rolled over us and our outfit. But we sat immovable, and she moved on and climbed the tussock not over forty feet away, and, after looking us over again, actually went to sleep.

Another half hour I was cramped and stiff and sore, and had just made up my mind to move, when a little bubble came spouting up to the top of the lake, not far from the boat. The boy's eyes glistened, and he pointed. Then a rush of bubbles, and both of our guns were sighted at the spot. Just a broad brown snout — and then two shots rang out simultaneously.

There was no whispering then. "Get out!" I yelled; "we 've missed him." The Indian grasped the situation in a second. The bow of the canoe was on the tussock, and if he came for us we had no sea room.

We had no more than backed into the lake than, with an onward rush, he was at us. The Indian's eyes stuck out like glass ones in a stuffed figure, but he deftly turned the boat aside, and the 'gator just brushed us. I fired, but missed him again. Then ensued one of

the strangest sights I ever saw. Down he went, with a whirl of foam, and was up in a minute, forty feet away. He made another rush, but in a direct line from us. This time we both fired, and down he went again. He stayed down fully five minutes. Up he came, with a swirl and a dash, jumping straight in the air, seven feet of him, or half his body, clearly out of water. Crack again went the guns, but he was so like lightning that there was hardly hope of hitting him in a vital spot. He whirled and whizzed about in a frenzy of rage, but instead of rushing towards us again, made for the island, tearing it half in two.

"Him blind," yelled the Indian, as we fired and loaded again. The first charge of buck-shot had evidently put out both his eyes. This time he stayed down fifteen minutes, the water for a twenty-foot circle over him covered with bubbles, showing that he was hard hit and breathing rag-time. "Thirty Cents" evidently got tired of waiting, for he paddled to the spot, and reaching over the side of the boat, pushed down an oar and prodded him with it.

In a second the scene was changed. With a cannon-ball rush the 'gator had come to the surface directly at the side of the boat, and with one slap had broken it to pieces, and we were flopping in the water.

I remember how my life seemed to biograph itself before me. Then I struck out for shore, the Indian a few yards ahead swimming for life itself. I saw him turn his head to see that I was safe, and then he yelled something, but I could n't catch it. I heard the alligator breathing hard close behind and then I thought my time had come.

Then all the stories Sam had told of how the beasts all preferred black meat to white, came to me. I gruesomely wondered in that short moment whether it was the same with red, and whether he would pass me by. We had gained a little on the alligator by this time, as being blind he had to be guided by the noise. But now he had straightened out and as he was headed directly for me and as the shore was five hundred yards away, I knew there was no hope. A sudden thought struck me. I stopped my noisy swimming, lay over on my back and floated, moving enough to get me out of line.

It was none too quick. The alligator rushed on, almost brushing me as he passed. I heard a yell of agony, and "Thirty Cents" had crossed the ford to the happy hunting-grounds in the forest of the great beyond.

I swam to one of the tussocks, and by lying flat it held me up. Still I was n't safe. The

alligator might come back, but I judged if let alone he 'd had enough. For an hour I lay there; the sun set and darkness came on. I was wet through and shivering with the cold, for be it known all nights in Florida are chilly. But the welcome chug! chug! of the *Lela Bell* soon came across the waters, and half an hour later I was gazing sullenly and moodily into the camp-fire.

Pete, the cook, sobbed like a woman in hysterics, but Sam took it more quietly. An unexpressed purpose was in both our minds. "Yes," he said, voicing my own thoughts, "we 'll have to build a raft, cover it with rushes, lay near, and catch that cuss."

That night we built the raft and the next morning found us close to the place again. It was a clean live shot I made this time, and signalling for Pete with the launch we towed him back upon the raft.

Pete's joy was as hysterical as his sorrow. He danced around the carcass, sticking knives and fire-brands into it, yelling at the same time all the cuss words in his vocabulary. In the afternoon we skinned him and counted six bullets that had passed through the skin and flattened just inside. He measured fourteen feet ten inches from nose to tip of tail and must have weighed nearly eight hundred pounds.

After supper, while Sam and I were packing a few things preparatory to a run to the Indian camp the next day, to convey the news and explain matters, colored Pete came rushing towards us brandishing a knife in one hand and holding part of a coat in the other.

"Say, Massa," he said, "ain't you all 'uns goin' to bury him?"

"Bury that alligator, you fool," I said; "no, let the buzzards have him."

"No, no, boss," he said. "Bury Marse Thirty Cents. I dun cut dat 'gator's belly out and he 's in there. Here 's his coat."

Sam and I looked at each other and both shuddered. It was more than we had bargained for, and we told Pete to go ahead while we got a coffin ready. Two big cracker boxes lengthened out made his last bed. We tore the tent to pieces to cover it and pad it. Then with burnt wood we made some paint and gave it the conventional color.

By this time Pete had got through and brought us all that was left of the boy's shattered, bruised, and broken body. We placed him reverently in the box, and at midnight we buried him.

Darkness was over all. By the light of pitch-pine torches, we placed him in a grave under a cypress tree.

It was two days afterward that we came back from the Indian camp. Chief "Spotted Face," as I had nicknamed him, grunted a little, but a large-sized jug of "jig water" and a few bottles of the same consistency seemed to satisfy his scruples, and all the comment he made was: "Boy big fool to monkey with big 'gator."

Meanwhile Pete had not been idle. With all a negro's love of the spectacular he had, with the help of a hundred buzzards, cleaned all the meat from that alligator's carcass and, bracing it up with a stout sapling, had placed it as a monument at the head of the grave of poor "Thirty Cents."

Fastened to the bones with a wire was a big placard reading:

HERE 'S THIRTY CENTS

HE WAS A GOOD INDIAN

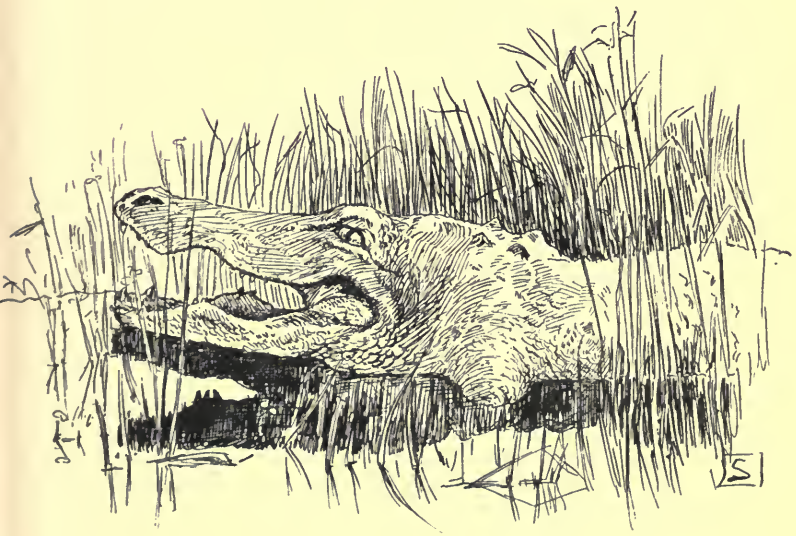
This is the alligator's bones that killed him.

The grey moss of the cypress reaches to the ground, the whispering wind of a Florida day

PETE'S SIX-FOOTER

sways it gently to and fro, brushing ever and anon that ghastly shaft, murmuring a requiem as plaintive and melancholy as ever was crooned o'er buried man.

And so we left him as the day broke.



## CHAPTER X

In the Piney Woods,
Gum Swamp, Florida.

THE dawn of a new day is just breaking, the thick mist from the river at our feet rises like a cloud, and the drip, drip, drip of it from the pine trees overhead forenotices us of another sunny, summery "Juney" day.

The red tint of the east grows stronger and the glare of the camp-fire grows pale. You can have your ten inches of snow, but give me a Florida sunrise in midwinter. A few palms and a deerskin for covering were all that comprised a bed last night, and I could n't have slept more luxuriously if I 'd been the Astor tramp.

Then there 's a growl from the coterie of dogs as the guide stretches himself preparatory to the work of another day. With an exception as to color, "Lige" Collins is the *beau idéal* of one of J. Fenimore Cooper's hunters and heroes. "Lige," however, is a very black brunette, as every inch of his six-foot form is colored. He has the reputation, and I guess he 's earned it, too, of having shot more deer than any other man in Florida.

It was n't, however, for that reputation that I "cottoned" to him. It was to try a new and novel way of hunting the kings and queens of the Florida woods. And that is to "slow trail" a deer. And though as a novelty it may be all right, still as a steady diet I don't think I rate it high myself, and after you 've

walked forty miles a day through woods and swamps, you 'll be of my opinion, I think.

Hitherto I 've hunted deer in every kind of way except this "slow trail" process, and I am willing to say after a three-days' trial any other "old way" will suit me after this. The "chief cook and bottle-washer" in a hunt of this kind is the dog, and it is a safe thing to assert that there 's not another dog like Mary Jane in all Florida, and it 's doubtful if there 's another "slow trail" dog in Florida anyway.

Mary Jane, or "Sleepy Jane," as I call her, is the most forlorn specimen of a pup you ever saw. She 's got a semi-paresis, half "dopey" look that gives you an idea she 's too tired to live, but does n't want to take the trouble to die. As to color, she 's a sort of cross between a liver-pad and a bilious pill. Then, for a change, though she 's as skinny as a skeleton, still all her bones don't show, as half her ribs have been punched in by a deer,

and there 's a lot of innocuous desuetude on one side of her body. Then she got mixed up with another deer who deprived her of part of her interior department and the string stitches the guide sewed her up with show for a foot along the other side of her body. Take her all in all and with one broken leg, her chances for a prize in a beauty show would n't be high.

But that dog would fool you. She certainly gave me a higher regard for "doganity," if I may coin the word. As every sportsman knows, the usual way to hunt deer with dogs is for them to "open out" and yell their lungs out the minute you strike a trail, and then you follow as close as possible on horseback.

But Jane's work was different. At seven o'clock the first morning we struck a deer trail. Jane did n't even wink an eyelash. She just stood there waiting for us to come up, looking for all the world as if she were going to sleep. Then for five mortal hours we followed that "pup." Over hill and dale, through wood and swamp we chased, crossing, turning, "back tracking" at the whim of what I made up my mind was a cur. At twelve o'clock, with every bone in my body aching, with a brown colored thirst, and a gun that seemed to weigh a hundred pounds, it struck me that I was the victim of some alleged joke. Mary Jane, who

had kept just twenty yards ahead of us all the time, waited as if for us to come up. There was a little bit of a wag to her tail and she did n't move on as we got up to her.

"There 's the deer," whispered the guide.

Then he walked over toward a clump of palmettos and for a second my breath stopped short, for a big buck jumped out and was twenty yards away in two jumps. Then I caught myself and at forty yards I stopped his capers with a load of double-O buckshot.

The crack of the gun, and what a transformation! "Jack," a big black hound that had been kept back all the time, made a leap forward and Mary Jane was with him. There was a combined howl and away they went. What was my consternation to see that deer jump away with a sort of a forked lightning gait. At a hundred yards I let him have another barrel, but was wide of the mark.

By this time the dogs had settled down to business and not a howl was heard. In a minute they were out of sight and hearing. For two miles we tracked that deer by the blood on the palmettos, but it was hours afterwards before we finally heard the dogs, who had him cornered in the swamp. For a Florida deer, he was a big one, weighing about one hundred and eighty pounds.

That was the longest trail we had, the rest of them being from two to three hours. But "Sleepy Jane" never made a miss. Once she started on the scent, she never left it till she struck the deer. It was a pretty good camp, as we brought away six deer. Of quail and duck we shot only enough to keep the camp, though there was another camping party who boasted of a hundred and sixty quail in one day. As they could n't eat them, and as they would spoil before they could sell them, I can hardly see the sense of it.

. . . . . .

These Florida fancies are fleeting forms of the fading camp-fire now. Florida has started a new chapter in her history, and to many its future looks dark and drear.

"The Freeze" is now the book-mark for every Floridian. Everything dates from or before that. In one night chaos had come and King Cold reigned. Fifty million dollars' worth of oranges is safely estimated as the price of that one "cold snap." Men who were worth $100,000.00 that night were automobiled down hill to the $.00 cross-roads the next day.

Then the banks that had been cheerfully loaning money on forthcoming oranges and placing mortgages on flowery and fruitful

estates commenced to feel the strain and it reminded one of a rapid-fire gun as they burst all over the State.

Yet, fighting for their lives and their homes, with hearts full of hope, they commenced again, but fate or the Gods seemed to forbid.

Frost after frost followed year after year, and either put back or destroyed the trees. Go with me, then, back to these scenes of former days. In every little village and hamlet we passed in our journeyings of these years agone, wreck and ruin reign. Mouldering and crumbling to the sand beneath, are its houses and its stores; doorless, windowless, and empty are its churches; untended, unfenced, and weed-grown are its graveyards.

What the outcome will be, 't is hard to predict. I venture to say that one half the houses in Florida's small villages are empty and deserted and fast falling to pieces. Many and many a $20,000 plantation has been sold for the bare price of railroad tickets to a Northern State. Incalculable suffering was the price of that freeze, and let us hope that the Great One above has given strength and courage to the many thousands who in new homes and new places have the struggle of life to begin again.

A FLORIDA CEMETERY

# "JACK" STANLEY

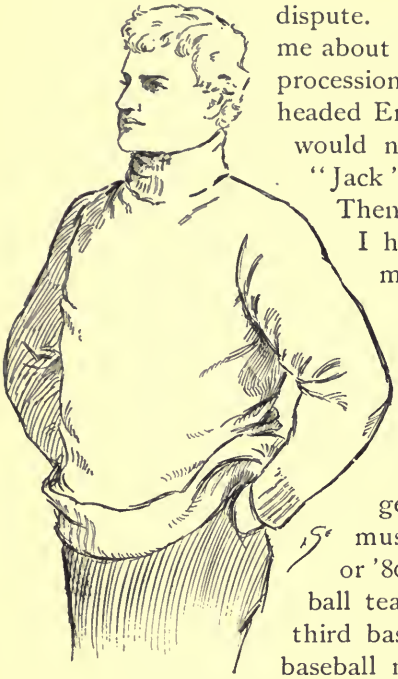
## A ROMANCE OF THE CUBAN WAR

# "JACK" STANLEY

## A ROMANCE OF THE CUBAN WAR

## CHAPTER ONE.

"JACK" STANLEY was my boyhood chum. How we came to assimilate, I know not, for we lived as far apart as the limits of Hartford would let us. And as for the social scale, there, also, was the same inequality. "Jack" was leader of the Asylum Hill coterie, the boys of the *bon-ton* district, while I was boss of the North End "gang." I rather think, though, that our friendship dated from a certain baseball game when "Jack" and I, as leaders of our respective nines, got into a



dispute. I believe "Jack" licked me about three times in very close procession, but I had a lot of bull-headed English blood in me and I would n't admit the fact, and "Jack" got tired.

Then we shook hands, though I had a broken jaw and as many black eyes as I could carry.

I think we were not over fifteen years old, but from that day we were inseparable. We entered High School together. Let 's see, that must have been about '79 or '80. We were in the football team, and "Jack" played third base, and I caught, on the baseball nine. The next year, I remember, the Chinese government entered a job lot of princes as scholars. They formed a baseball nine called the "Orientals," and "Jack" was elected captain and I manager of the team.

We had a lot of fun with them, too. They were the most excitable devils I ever saw, and kept "Jack" and me in hot water all that sum-

mer. Between times they played cards, and they would n't be satisfied until they had mastered the delicacies of the great American game of poker.

As they had pocket-money to refrigerate, neither Mr. Stanley nor myself objected, and memory rather tells me that as teachers we were a "howling" success. At least, I think that was our impression.

At that time "Jack" was a big, curly-headed six-footer, and the very *beau idéal* of an athlete. After three years our ways drifted apart. "Jack" had his life cut out for him. After High School he was booked for Yale. Then he was to make the tour of the world before he settled down to life work.

With me it was different. I had to cut out my own way. Life was yet before me and I must make what I could out of it without help and without influence. "Jack" and I would meet, though, every chance we got. He, naturally, was a big favorite everywhere. Big-hearted, big-bodied, he towered above them all and won his way at college without seeming to lift a finger. He was stroke oar in the crew, and I 'll never forget the hugging he gave me after the race that year, when Yale won by five lengths.

Then came the crash and the sudden change

in his fortunes. Stanley, Sr., committed suicide; "Jack's" mother followed to eternal rest the next day, and he was left to face the world alone, without a dollar. Ah, worse than that, for his father had left behind him, plundered, an estate he had charge of.

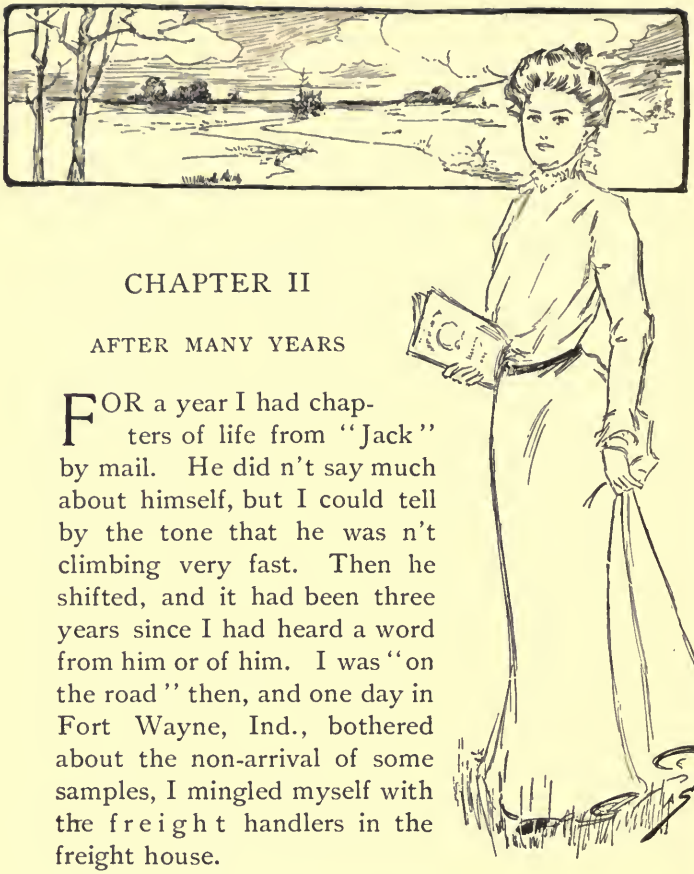
A few days after the double funeral we met in the old homestead on the hill for the last time. "Jack," to me, was a semi-Deity, but he always turned to his "chum" for advice, and it seemed only natural in this, his triple trouble. He was very quiet as we talked matters over. There were no tears, only a set, drawn look about the mouth and a sort of a stunned stare about the eyes.

"Old man, we 've been through many tough times together, but this is worst of all. I want you to do me a favor," he said, speaking quickly, as if afraid of himself. "Grace—I dare n't see her. She 'd make a baby of me, and it 's better not.

"Tell her," he continued, "that I release her. Tell her that if she does n't hear from me in three years to give up all thought of 'Jack.' I leave to-night on the midnight for the West."

Argument and entreaty were alike useless. He left on the express, and the next afternoon I called at Grace Grabert's house. I can't de-

scribe her to you; I never could describe a woman in cold type, nor cold words either, but to me she was the handsomest girl in all the world. She always had been, but "Jack's" image had made her sacred even in thought. I softened my message as best I could, but it was a broken-hearted woman I left that day, so long ago.



## CHAPTER II

### AFTER MANY YEARS

FOR a year I had chapters of life from "Jack" by mail. He did n't say much about himself, but I could tell by the tone that he was n't climbing very fast. Then he shifted, and it had been three years since I had heard a word from him or of him. I was "on the road" then, and one day in Fort Wayne, Ind., bothered about the non-arrival of some samples, I mingled myself with the freight handlers in the freight house.

"Out of the way there, sir!"

I knew the voice in a second. It was "Jack's." And he was the one-dollar-a-day motive power for a truck. I had grown big

and stout in the years agone, and he did n't know me at first. "I 'd like to punch your face for you," I yelled at him. He dropped the truck, rushed up and gave me a grip like a squeezing trip-hammer. Then he looked down at the fallen truck, glanced over his rough clothes, and turned white at the contrast from former days. "I could n't get anything else to do, old man," he remarked. "It was this or starve."

I made him quit the job then and there. I thrust fifty dollars into his hand. "Now, 'Jack,'" I said, "you 've lost your nerve. Get around town, push yourself into some new clothes, and meet me at the hotel in two hours. Then we 'll talk over old times and I 'll fix things some way."

Luck was with me. I had a letter of introduction to a prominent citizen, who proved to be the superintendent of the very road "Jack" was working for, and as the office of assistant superintendent was vacant, "Jack" got it that night. I had to do some tall hustling by wire, but Colonel Stevenson, who was manager of the Housatonic Railroad, helped me out with a wired fabrication which never hurt anybody, and "Jack" was fixed.

Six months afterward the superintendent and "Jack" went to Mexico to build a big

railroad. I had a hearty letter a few months later and I knew then that the tide was coming his way.

"Jack" was never much of a correspondent. One night, several years later, I was sitting in the office wondering what had become of him, when a boy handed me this despatch:

HARTFORD, CONN., June 16, 1890.

You said if I ever needed a friend, to call on you. I want you now. Will you come to see me to-morrow afternoon? GRACE.

What a flood of silver memories the name recalled! What a wave of feeling washed over me! "Jack" had sworn me to secrecy, and I had not even seen Grace since that parting, so many years ago

The colored girl that answered the bell the next afternoon said that her "missis" would see me in her boudoir. How well I remembered that little sitting-room! It seemed long ago—that day "Jack" and I were admitted there as Miss Grabert was convalescing after a long illness. Nothing was changed; even the sofa she had lain on, looking like a fairy, was still there.

Yes, she was changed. I noticed it as she crossed the room to greet me. Handsomer

than ever, some would say, I suppose. But to me she could n't be.

"You were 'Jack's' chum," she said.

"'Jack's' chum!" "'Jack's' chum!"

The words seemed to fill the room like a sad refrain. "Jack's" chum? I choked down a surging sob in my throat as I looked. And I wondered if there would have been one chance in all the world for me if I had n't been "'Jack's' chum!" Then she turned abruptly, and, with a suspicious moisture in her eyes, walked to the window.

Out across the green meadows the summer wind gently stirred the sheaves of corn; bordered by grassy banks, flowed the little stream where "Jack" and I had fished so often. Farther on in the distance, yet clear and distinct, arose the blue ridge of hills, the scene of many a hunting-day's sport. I walked to her side, and as we gazed the gray mist of many years seemed to part and the memory of many a happy day came back, pictured in the sunlight.

"I want you to read this," she said. It was a letter from "Jack," dated a week before from the City of Mexico:

City of Mexico, June 9, '90.

Friend Grace:

Is there hope for me? At last I can come

to you with a heart of hope, with a father's name cleared, with a conscientious feeling that I can give you your proper position in the world. I am independent now and am on my way to fortune ahead. In all these years have you forgotten me? Say but one word and I come to you; years and years I have been working and longing for this time. What is my fate? Not for one day have I forgotten you in all these years. Shall I come?

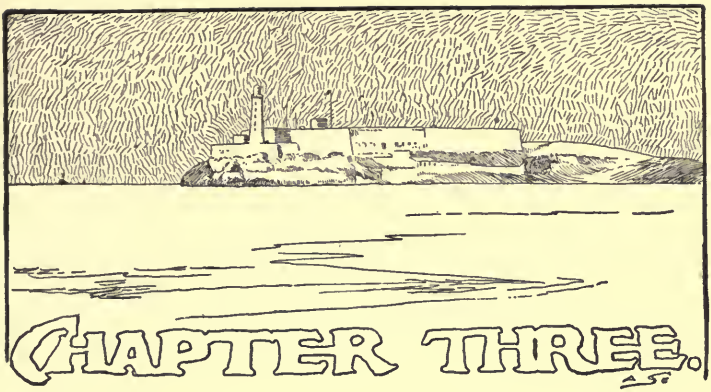
JOHN STANLEY.

I looked at her inquiringly, but she avoided me and I could see that there were tears. "I have written him," she said, "not to come. I 'm to be married to-morrow!

"You were 'Jack's' best friend," she continued. "He will think my letter so cruel. I want you to soften the blow and give him this for me." It was a handsome gold locket with her picture and a lock of hair in it. "Tell him," she said, "my word is plighted. It 's too late now!"

I was going south, anyway, in a week, and I took a run over to Mexico.

But "Jack" had disappeared and no one knew his destination.




## THE CUBAN WAR

THE months and years rolled on apace and still no sign or word from "Jack." But he could n't lose me for I was destined to come upon him in another unexpected place. I ran over to Havana at the time the Cubans were having their lone-handed fight with Spain, before "Uncle Sam" "mixed in."

And before I had been there an hour I was arrested by proxy.

Let me digress right here and give you a little advice. If at any time the cold necessity of an arrest confronts you, always have it done by proxy. It is the only really genteel way to have it done. There 's no trouble at all in it for you. Everything goes along quietly and the other fellow has all the hard work. You

see, if you go to the bother of getting arrested yourself, it's likely to be serious.

With me it happened thusly: I had room thirty-nine on the *Olivette*. I also had a friend, S. D. Stradley, of 653 Broadway, New York, who had room forty-one—the next one to mine. According to Spanish reports, two villains of the deepest dye occupied these rooms. I was slated in the official papers, in regular rogues'-gallery style, this way:

Weight, 150.
Age, 36.
Height, 5 ft. 10 in.
Hair, brown.
Eyes, gray.
Mustaches, heavy.
Feet, large.
Nose, prominent.
Profession, journalist.

This was a very fair description of myself, and when I looked it over I had to acknowledge it. But it happened that J. S. Farnum, of Macon, Ga., another passenger, answered to the same description, according to Spanish ideas. The difference was that he owned a brewery instead of being a journalist, that he weighed a hundred pounds more than I did, that his eyes were brown, and a few other things. Be that as it may, the police boarded

the *Olivette* as usual, and the passports were taken up to be sent to our hotels.

An hour later the hotel clerk handed me a passport, and looking it over I found that it was Mr. Farnum's. I explained the mistake, but did n't think anything else of it, as the clerk said undoubtedly Mr. Farnum had mine and that he would send over to the Hotel Ingleterra, where Mr. Farnum was stopping, and have the passports exchanged. Then I took a carriage and went out into the country to spend the day.

When I jumped out of the carriage again at night in front of the hotel, I thought everybody had gone crazy. There was a mingling of Spanish exclamations, of French swear words, and of English slang that was indescribable, and out of it I gleaned the fact that Mr. Farnum had been arrested by the police in my stead, as a dynamiter, a leader of insurgents, and everythng that was real bad. He had a passport in my name, and all the protestations in the world were useless, so he had to be locked up.

Everybody advised me to fly at once. But as that was impossible without wings, I faced the music. The mayor happened to be a friend of mine, and I started in to see what was the trouble. The inmate of room thirty-nine, who

was myself, had, it seems, a mysterious-looking blanket bag in his stateroom, loaded with dynamite, guns, pistols, and other deadly things.

As all I brought with me was a dress suit case and as that was filled with soiled shirts mostly, I knew the bag could n't be mine. With the help of some poor Spanish and a few frantic gestures, I found that a mistake had been made; that the bag had come on the *Olivette* a week before, and that the man, who was a journalist and in a way answered to my description, had gone into the country. It was supposed that I was the man, and as Farnum, who was arrested for me, happened to have in his pocket a pistol which had seven chambers and, therefore, was a match for the one in the bag, I was roped in by proxy.

They would n't let me look into the bag, but it 's my belief that there was nothing very "dynamity" in it, for it belonged to Richard Harding Davis, the author. He was in Cuba with Frederic Remington, the noted artist, and was the villain who occupied room thirty-nine. After a day's stop in Havana he had gone into the country, but when Richard got back to Havana I hope he had trouble on his hands right away.

As if to make amends, the officials invited me to a banquet to be given to General Campos

that evening. While his poor boy-soldiers were at the front chasing the elusive Gomez, Campos took life easy at his city palace and at the banquet table.

Perhaps I say this because I never thought much of Campos as a general, anyway. Campos is regarded in Spain as the greatest general that country ever produced. Where he gets his medals, I can't perceive. When he consented to sail for Cuba and take charge of the war, all Spain breathed easier and seemed to feel as if that ended the revolution. The Spaniards must be an easily deluded lot of people. I have carefully looked up the ex-Governor-General's history and I can't find anything to pin their faith on. History does not tell us of one decisive battle he ever won.

"Oh," you exclaim, "was n't the crowning glory of his life the conquering of the Cubans in the ten-years' war?" Perhaps it was, but it was mighty small glory, it strikes me. In 1868 a few hundred Cubans and negroes started a revolution. The war continued until 1878, with eight years of active fighting out of the ten. The rebellion gained strength until the insurgents had an army of 50,000 in the field. Then Campos ended the rebellion.

How?

Simply by a compromise! He granted the insurgents about all they asked for—freedom for the slaves, pardon for all rebels, restoration of all confiscated estates and representation for the Cubans by her own deputies in the Cortes at Madrid.

A great victory, was n't it?

And at what a cost! During the contest the Spanish losses aggregated 8000 officers and 200,000 privates, in battle and hospital and from the effects of climate. By adding to these figures some 15,000 troops left in Cuba after the capitulation and 34,000 Cubans under the command of Marshal Campos at the time of that capitulation (according to his personal statement), it will be seen that the force that Spain gradually pitched against the insurgents aggregated 257,000 men, beside 50,000 volunteers organized on the island. The number of Cubans killed in battle and otherwise is estimated at from 40,000 to 50,000.

And the money cost to Spain was $700,000,000.

Truly a great victory!

All these thoughts ran through my mind that banquet night, as Campos reeled off his flowery sentences. And I made up that same mind to get in one or two days on the other side of the house.

Maximo Gomez, the rebel leader, has my admiration. He was one of the generals who gave Campos such a "song and dance" in the ten-years' tinkering.

Gomez, I knew, was the idol of his troops. There was no separate tent for him. He slept with his soldiers on the hillsides. No extra fare reached his table. If his soldiers suffered he suffered, also, and when in battle he was at the head and front, leading his men.

So I secured a letter to him and, with the help of a Hotel Roma man-chambermaid, sewed it into my coat,—and just as easily wore the wrong coat the next day. I knew just where the rebels were, because I had a friend who was posted, and the afternoon found me about five miles beyond Marianna. I was halted by an insurgent scout a mile from camp and conducted to headquarters. Gomez and his staff were there, mounted, with, I should judge, a force of about six hundred cavalry. I realized then that I had left the letter, and for a minute the situation was ticklish. I explained as best I could, but I did n't blame Gomez for sniffing and retorting: "That may be all right, señor, but who will vouch for you?"

"I will, with my life, general!"

It was an aide-de-camp dressed in the uniform of a general who had turned just then and

discovered to me "Jack" Stanley! I did n't need any better voucher, and in a moment we were all friends. We did n't have much time to talk then. "Jack," or the General, I should say, told me that they were awaiting a column of Spaniards who were coming to reinforce the guard at Guanajay. Gomez had sent his main body on to sack that town, and then to retreat to the sea and cover the landing of an expected vessel with arms and ammunition.

It was growing dusk when the scouts ran in and there was a hurried mount, a rush of cavalry, and we were away like the wind for the column of Spanish infantry half a mile away. What a wild, weird rush it was! Never shall I forget that scene. The boys of Spain, for they were nothing else, held their guns firmly like brave soldiers, and at thirty yards a volley was fired that sent many of our men to their Cuban reservations in the other world.

But we were on them, and a wild onslaught it was. The Cubans, the white-haired head of Gomez at the front, fought like demons thirsty for blood, and though the enemy outnumbered us two to one, they turned and fled in confusion. No living power could have withstood that shock.

I don't know what in "great Scott" got into my Cuban pony, but the smell of war seemed

to suit him, and I was in among the staff with their trained cavalry horses.

Suddenly I heard the order to retreat given in Gomez's short, sharp-voiced tones, and as I turned I could see the reason. A couple of columns of reinforcements were coming down the hill at double-quick time, and the fleeing comrades were returning. I looked around for "Jack," but could n't see him. I heard the neigh of his horse and, looking back, saw it was riderless and motionless, but neighing piteously.

Despite the yells of my comrades, I turned back, and through the gathering gloom could just see Jack with one hand on the stirrup, trying vainly to crawl up into the saddle. His faithful jet-black companion seemed to realize the misery of the situation. All this I took in, in a second. Then I jumped down and, with a strength I never thought I possessed, pushed "Jack" in front of the saddle and leaped in myself.

Not a moment too soon, for with a wild yell the Spaniards were on us. But the black seemed to know by instinct what was needed and he flew like a Kansas cyclone, my own horse following. A few stray shots, a hole through my hat, and we were out of reach.

For a mile we kept on this way. Then I halted. "Jack" had fainted and blood from

a bullet wound in his side soaked through his uniform. I did n't dare stop any longer, and for miles we kept on. Then, feeling safe from pursuit, I guided the horses down under a rocky boulder near the seashore.

By this time "Jack" had revived, and, darkness having set in, I stripped him and, tearing his shirt, bound up the wound as best I could.

"It 's no use, old man," he said. "Guess I 'm done for this time." It looked so, but I lied with the best face I could, and by-and-by he fell into a stupored sleep which lasted until morning dawned.

What a long dreary night it was! Overhead the clouds hung dark and thick. The monotonous dash of the waves sounded like a requiem over our buried hopes. Now and then, I heard a faint sound as of some one walking near. I held my breath, because I knew it meant death for both, to be caught.

I did n't dare leave him. Towards morning he moved uneasily, as if in pain; then at the first gray streak of dawn he awoke. One could easily see it was his last day. The ashy pallor of death had already stamped its seal upon his face.

"What of Grace?"

Then I told him: Of her marriage, of the birth of a boy, how she had named him—John

—and it seemed to give new life as I said it. Then I told him of our last interview. He asked eagerly after the locket, and it pleased him that it was as near to him as Havana. By a last effort of will he had seemed to hold himself together, but when it was finished, a child could see he was going fast.

"Harry," he said, "it was my last battle. I 'm going now. Tell Grace I loved her to the last, and bury, b——."

A last gasp—the head fell heavy on my arm, and all was over. The sentence was unfinished, but I knew that if it was in my earthly power the locket would be buried with him.

That was his last thought.

Afar off from over the waters came the faint sound of a shot. It was the sunrise gun from Morro Castle's cannon.

Away across the red-sunned waters of the sea, one could faintly see the blood-and-gold flag of Spain climbing to the staff-head.

The sound of the sea seemed stilled in that silence. The end of the tide of life had come and with it the turn of the tide of the sea.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BURIAL

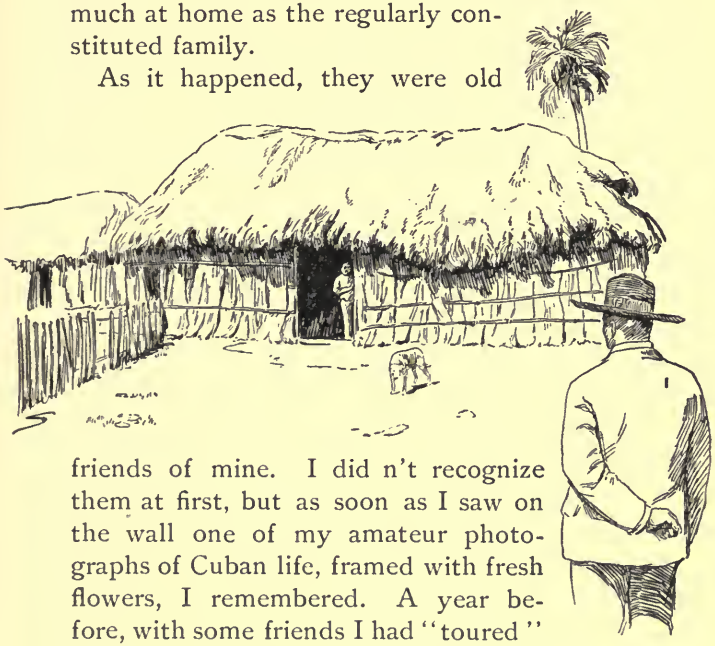
WHAT a gruesome, and yet grotesque, burial! I often wonder if, in all the centuries and ages of time, man was ever before buried like that. The scene is yet fresh before me, and will be till the last thread of life is cut.

I found the horses a mile away. Then I commenced to plan. I could n't leave "Jack's" body to the buzzards and, as the country was covered with strolling Spanish soldiers, it was death to be caught with it. My luck—which has ever been proverbial—was still with me, and I ran into one of those country Cuban homesteads. Four poles, the sides covered with mud, by courtesy called plaster, and a thatched roof made the house.

Three generations lived and slept in it. The grandfather and grandmother, hoary and yellow-parchmented with age, then the next two generations down to a crying babe in the mother's arms. Not to mention the litter of little pigs and the family supply of chickens,

which also occupied the same apartment. There was only one room, with the bare ground for a floor, and the chickens and pigs were just as much at home as the regularly constituted family.

As it happened, they were old



friends of mine. I did n't recognize them at first, but as soon as I saw on the wall one of my amateur photographs of Cuban life, framed with fresh flowers, I remembered. A year before, with some friends I had "toured" through this part and had taken several views of the hut and the combined "family," pigs and all.

What a hearty greeting it was! The Lord forgive me if I worked on those people's sympathies, but it was that or nothing. The head

of the second generation got out his cart and "Jack's" poor lifeless corpse, covered with sugar-cane, was conveyed to the hut. When I tried to tell them what I wanted it seemed as if the last tie that bound me to earth was broken. I knew that they were all risking their lives, what little home they had,—and it was just as much to them as the Vanderbilt marble palace is to its owners—that if they were caught it was the end of all to them.

But when I saw how willingly they helped me in all my plans it brought back new life and new belief in my heart. The only thing to do was to bury "Jack" under the hut. It was n't safe to dig a grave outside, for the Spanish headquarters were only a mile away. So I left them to their melancholy task and started for Havana. What I wanted was an English prayer-book and the locket. I had neglected to get from General Campos passes through the lines, but by the help of a tailor's bill with a signature on the end and of a poker face, I got through. Then, at Havana, I got from General Campos passes back.

It was ten o'clock at night before I returned to the hut. A six-foot grave had been dug and "Jack's" body, covered with flowers from the field, lay within it. I had secured an English prayer-book, and at midnight I read the

service for the dead. The picture of that burial seems sacrilegious, but when I think of the brave, strong, earnest hearts around that grave, who risked their lives to give my only friend a

burial, an emotion of sanctification is ever associated with the memory of that thatched hut.

Two mothers with babes in their arms, a horde of small children, and the grandparents, now nearing the end of a century of life, gathered round.

The roosters with their ill-timed crowing, the pigs with their curious but gruesome grunts, were there. The light was dim and poor, but

through my tears I struggled, and all that was mortal of John Stanley was earthed over with the clay of Cuban soil. There was no winding-sheet or shroud, but on top of the wild flowers I placed the black satin lining of my overcoat, which had been fastened to my saddle. It was the best I could do, and no man can do more.

So he sleeps. Away off in that sunny clime, far from home and friends, but with one heart ever turning, ever thinking of the hands that clasp a golden locket, Grace Grabert's last gift.