

Oliver Optic

Watch and Wait

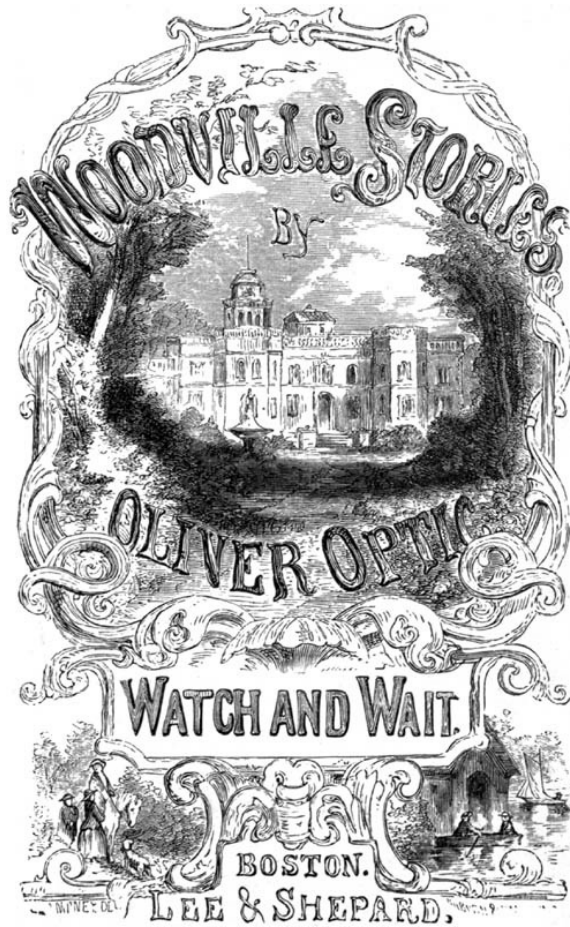


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CYD HAS A BAD FIT. Page 196.





WOODVILLE STORIES

BY

OLIVER OPTIC

WATCH AND WAIT.

BOSTON.
LEE & SHEPARD.

WATCH AND WAIT;

OR,
THE YOUNG FUGITIVES.

A Story for Young People.

BY
OLIVER OPTIC,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOAT CLUB," "ALL ABOARD," "NOW OR NEVER," "TRY
AGAIN," "POOR AND PROUD," "LITTLE BY LITTLE," "RICH AND
HUMBLE," "IN SCHOOL AND OUT," "THE SOLDIER BOY,"
"THE RIVERDALE STORY BOOKS," ETC.

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TO
WALTER F. POPE

This Book

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY HIS UNCLE.

THE WOODVILLE STORIES.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

LIBRARY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

BY OLIVER OPTIC.

1. RICH AND HUMBLE.
2. IN SCHOOL AND OUT.
3. WATCH AND WAIT.
4. WORK AND WIN.
5. HOPE AND HAVE.
6. HASTE AND WASTE.

PREFACE.

However much the author of "WATCH AND WAIT" may sympathize with that portion of the population of our country to which the principal characters of the story belong, he is forced to acknowledge that his book was not written in the interests of the anti-slavery cause. His young friends require stirring incidents of him, and the inviting field of adventure presented by the topic he has chosen was the moving spring which brought the work into existence; and if the story shall kindle any new emotion of sympathy for the oppressed and enslaved, it will have more than answered the purpose for which it was intended, and the writer will be all the more thankful for this happy influence.

As a story of exciting adventure, the writer hopes it will satisfy all his young readers; that they will love the gentle Lily, respect the manly independence of Dan, and smile at the oddities of Cyd; and that the book will confirm and increase their love of liberty and their hatred of tyranny. If the young fugitives were resolute, even to shedding the blood of the slave-hunter, they had forgiving and Christian hearts, in which there was neither malice nor revenge; and in this respect, if in no other, they are worthy exemplars for the young and the old.

With this explanation, I give the third volume of the Woodville Stories into the hands of my young friends, bespeaking for it the same favor which has been bestowed upon its predecessors.

WILLIAM T. ADAMS.

DORCHESTER, August 15, 1864.

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WATCH AND WAIT.

WATCH AND WAIT; OR, THE YOUNG FUGITIVES.

CHAPTER I.

THE PLANTATION OF REDLAWN.

One soft summer evening, when Woodville was crowned with the glory and beauty of the joyous season, three strangers presented themselves before the Grant family, and asked for counsel and assistance. The party consisted of two boys and a girl, and they belonged to that people which the traditions of the past have made the "despised race;" but the girl was whiter and fairer than many a proud belle who would have scorned her in any other capacity than that of a servant; and one of the boys was very nearly white, while the other was as black as ebony undefiled. They were fugitives and wanderers from the far south-west; and the story which they told to Mr. Grant and his happy family will form the substance of this volume.

The plantation of Colonel Baylie Raybone was situated on one of the numerous bayous which form a complete network of water communications in the western part of the parish of Iberville, in the State of Louisiana. The "colonel," whose military title was only a courtesy accorded to his distinguished position, was a man of immense possessions, and consequently of large influence. His acres and his negroes were numbered by thousands, and he was largely engaged in growing sugar and rice. The estate on which he resided went by the name of Redlawn. His mansion was palatial in its dimensions, and was furnished in a style of regal magnificence.

The region in which Redlawn was situated was a low country, subject to inundation in the season of high water. The sugar plantation was located on a belt of land not more than a mile in width, upon the border of the bayou, which, contrary to the usual law, was higher ground than portions farther from the river. The lower lands were used for the culture of rice, which, our young readers know, must be submerged during a part of the year.

A short distance from the splendid mansion of the princely planter was a large village of negro huts, where the "people" of the estate resided. As Colonel Raybone was a liberal and progressive man, the houses of the negroes were far superior to those found upon many of the plantations of the South. They were well built, neatly white-washed, and no doubt the negroes who dwelt in them regarded it as a fortunate circumstance that they were the slaves of Colonel Raybone.

Along the front of the negro hamlet, and of the mansion house, ran the public highway, while in the rear of them, and at a distance of nearly half a mile, was the bayou, which was generally called the "Crosscut," because it joined two larger rivers. At the foot of a gravel walk, leading from the mansion down to the bayou, was a pier, upon which was built a tasty summer house, after the style of a Chinese pagoda, so that the planter and his family could enjoy the soft breezes that swept over the surface of the stream. There they spent many of their summer evenings; and truly it was a delightful place.

Fastened to the pier were several small boats, including a light wherry, and a four-oar race boat. Moored in the middle of the stream lay a large sail boat, in which the planter often made long trips for pleasure; for, by the network of rivers with which the bayou was connected, he could explore a vast tract of country, and even reach the Red River on the north, and the Gulf of Mexico on the south.

The family that dwelt in the "great house," as the negroes called the mansion, were Colonel Raybone, his wife, and two children. The planter himself was a genial, pleasant man, when nothing disturbed him; but he was quick and impulsive, and exacted the homage due to his position from his inferiors. Mrs. Raybone was an easy, indolent woman, who would submit to injury rather than endure the effort required to redress it.

Master Archibald Raybone, his older child, was a youth of fifteen, and was as much like his father as Miss Edith, a young lady of fourteen, was like her mother. Archy, as he was familiarly called by black and white, was fond of having his own way; and, as long as it did not conflict with that of his imperious father, he was indulged to the fullest extent. Miss Edith was fond of repose, and could not even speak French or play upon the piano, because it was too much trouble to obtain these accomplishments, though private tutors had labored sedulously for several years to meet the exigencies of the case.

Besides those who were properly members of the family, there was a small army of servants, ranging from the purest white to the blackest black; all slaves, of course. There were cooks, laundresses, waiters, valets, lackeys, coachmen, body-servants, and lady's-maids; every kind of servitor which ingenuity could devise or luxury demand. Master Archy had a body-servant, and Miss Edith had a lady's-maid. As these individuals are important personages in our story, we must give our young friends a better idea of who and what they were.

The body-servant of the son and heir was a youth of sixteen. He was nearly white, his complexion being very slightly tinted with the yellow hue of the mulatto. He was tall of his age, and exceedingly well formed. As the servant and companion of Master Archy, of course it was necessary that he should make a good appearance; and he was always well dressed, and managed his apparel with singularly good taste and skill. His name was Daniel; but his graceful form and excellent taste in dress had caused his name to be corrupted from "Dan," by which short appellation he had formerly been called, into "Dandy," and this was now the only name by which he was known on the plantation.

Dandy was a boy of good parts. He could read and write, and had a better understanding of the ordinary branches of knowledge than his young master, for Archy was always attended by his body-servant when engaged in his studies. Though no efforts had been wasted upon the "chattel," he had learned the lessons better than the son and heir, upon whose education a small fortune had been lavished. Dandy was quick to see and comprehend what Archy had to have explained to him over and over again. Though the slave was prudent enough to conceal his attainments, he was wise enough to profit by the opportunities which were afforded to him. In the solitude of his chamber, while his young master slept, he diligently used the books he had privately secured for study. And the instructions of the tutor were not wasted upon him, though he often seemed to be asleep during the lessons. He listened and remembered; he pondered and reasoned.

Dandy's mother was dead. She had been a house servant of Colonel Raybone. It was said that she had become refractory, and had been sold in New Orleans; but the son had only a faint remembrance of her. Of his father he knew nothing. Though he had often asked about him, he could obtain no information. If the people in the house knew any thing of him, they would not tell the inquisitive son. Such was Dandy, the body-servant of Master Archy. He led an easy life, having no other occupation than that of pleasing the lordly young heir of Redlawn.

Miss Edith's lady's-maid was whiter and fairer than her young mistress. The keenest observer could detect no negro characteristic in her looks or her manner. So fair and white was she, that her mistress had given her the name of "Lily." And yet she was a slave, and that which made her fascinating to the eye had given her a value which could be estimated only in thousands of dollars. Of her father and mother Lily knew nothing. One of her companions in bondage told her that she had been bought, when a child, on board of a Red River steamboat. That was all she knew, and all she ever was to know. Those who are familiar with the slave system of the South can surmise who and what she was.

Miss Edith was indolent, but she was sour and petulant, and poor Lily's daily life was not a bed of roses. All day long she had to stand by her exacting young mistress, obey her slightest gesture, and humor all her whims. Though she was highly valued as a piece of property by her owner, she had only one real friend in the wide world--a cold, desolate, and dreary world to her, though her lot was cast in the midst of the sweet flowers and bright skies of the sunny south--only one friend, and that was Dandy. He knew how hard it was to indulge all the caprices of a wayward child; how hard it was to be spurned and insulted by one who was his inferior in mind and heart.

Dandy had another friend, though the richest treasures of his friendship were bestowed upon the fair and gentle Lily. A wild, rollicking, careless piece of ebony, a pure negro, was his other friend. He was a stable boy, and one of the crew who pulled the four-oar race boat, when Master Archy chose to indulge in an excursion upon the water. His master, who in his early years had made the acquaintance of the classics, had facetiously named him Thucydides--a long, hard word, which no negro would attempt to utter, and which the white folks were too indolent to manage. The name, therefore, had been suitably contracted, and this grinning essence of fun and frolic was called "Cyd"--with no reference, however, to the distinguished character of Spanish history. But Cyd was a character himself, and had no need to borrow any of the lustre of Spain or Greece. He shone upon his own account.

With this introduction to Redlawn, and those who lived there, our readers are prepared to embark with us in the story of the young fugitives.



CHAPTER II.

THE EDITH GOES DOWN TO GREEN POINT.

"Shove off!" said Master Archy, in the most dignified manner, as he sunk upon the velvet cushions in the stern sheets of the four-oar boat.

"Shove off!" repeated Dandy, who, as coxswain of the boat, was charged with the execution of the orders delivered by his imperial master.

Cyd, who was the bow oarsman, opened his mouth from ear to ear, displaying a dual set of ivories which a dentist would have been proud to exhibit as specimens of his art, and with a vigorous thrust of the boat-hook, forced the light craft far out into the stream, thus disturbing the repose of a young alligator which was sunning himself upon a snag. Cyd was fond of the water, and had no taste for the various labors that were required of him about the house and stable. He was delighted with the prospect of a sail on the river; and being a slave, and not permitted to express his views in the ordinary way, he did so by distending his mouth into a grin which might have intimidated the alligator on the log.

"Toss!" added Dandy; and up went the four oars of the rowers.

"Let fall!" and with a precision which would have been creditable to the crew of a commodore's barge, the blades struck the water as one.

"Give way!" and the boat dashed down the stream, impelled by the vigorous strokes of the dusky oarsmen.

The crew were boys of sixteen, or thereabouts, selected from the hands on the plantation with reference to their size and muscular development. They were clothed in white duck pants, blue cotton frocks, trimmed with white, and wore uniform straw hats, encircled by black bands, upon which was inscribed, in gilt letters, the name of the boat, "Edith," in compliment to the young boatman's sister.

The Edith was a magnificent craft, built in New York, and fitted, furnished, and ornamented without regard to cost. Colonel Raybone had a nephew who was a passed-midshipman in the navy, who, while on a visit to Redlawn, had instructed the crew in the elements of boating. The black boys did not regard their labors as work, and took so much pride in making themselves proficient in their duties, that they might well have challenged comparison with the best boat club in the country.

Master Archy was very dignified and magnificent as he reclined in the stern of the beautiful craft. He said nothing, and of course the coxswain, who sat behind him, was not privileged to say any thing. It was his duty to speak when he was spoken to, and with a keen eye he watched the progress of the boat, as she cut her way through the sluggish waters of the bayou.

Dandy, as we have before remarked, was a youth of quick parts, and under the scientific instruction of Mr. Midshipman Raybone, he had thoroughly mastered the art of boating, not only in its application to row boats, but also in reference to sailing craft; and there was no person on the place more skilful in the management of the schooner than the body-servant of Master Archy.

The Edith flew on her course, frightening from their repose the herons and the alligators that were enjoying the sunshine of the bright spring morning. Master Archy did speak sometimes, but this morning he was unusually taciturn. He seemed to be brooding over something: those who did not know him might have supposed that he was thinking; but the son and heir of Redlawn did not often give himself up to meditation in its higher sense. It was more likely that he was wondering what he should do next, for time hung heavy on his hands. He had nothing to do but amuse himself, and he had completely exhausted his slender ingenuity in devising new amusements.

"Stop her," said he, languidly, after the boat had gone about two miles.

Dandy obeyed the order without a question, and the Edith soon floated listlessly on the water, waiting the pleasure of her magnificent owner.

"Back to the pier," added Archy; and under the orders of her skilful coxswain, she was put about, and darted up the river on her return.

The shining ebony face of the great Athenian philosopher's namesake looked glum and discontented. He was not satisfied with the order; but not being a free agent, he was cruelly deprived of the luxury of grumbling. Roaming in the cane-brake, or sunning himself on a log like the juvenile alligators, while Master Archy took his walk, or even pulling the boat, was much more to his taste than rubbing down the horses and digging weeds out of the gravel walks in front

of the mansion. The order to return, therefore, was a grievous disappointment to him; for the head gardener or the head groom would be sure to find a job for him that would last all day.

Master Archy did not know his own mind; and he did not have the same mind for a great while at a time. Cyd supposed he had thought of something that would please him better on the estate. No doubt if the surfeited young devotee of pleasure had permitted his dark companions to think for him, they might have invented a new pleasure; but he seldom spoke to them, and they were not allowed to speak to him, except in a case of emergency.

The boat reached the pier, and was brought alongside the landing steps, in a style that was above criticism. Poor Cyd was disgusted and indignant at the idea of having his day spoiled in this capricious manner. If he had been born under the free skies of New England, he would, no doubt, have remonstrated; but his social position and the discipline of the boat did not permit him to utter even a word of disapprobation. But Cyd was needlessly disturbed in the present instance, for his lordly master had no intention of abandoning the cruise, though if he had been so condescending as to say so when he ordered the Edith to return, he would have saved her crew all the bitter pangs of disappointment which they had endured during the retrograde passage.

"Cyd!" said Master Archy, when the boat came up to the steps, and the rowers had tossed their oars.

"Sar!" replied Cyd, exploding the word as though he had been a member of Monsieur Crapeau's class in French elementary sounds, and with a start which seemed to shake every fibre in his wiry frame.

"Do you know where my boxing gloves are?"

"Yes, Massa Archy; in de gym-shum," answered Cyd, again exhibiting his ivories, for the case began to look slightly hopeful.

"In the what?" demanded Archy, a languid smile appearing upon his face.

"In de gym-shum," said Cyd, taking advantage of this faint smile, and exploding the two syllables with all the vigor of a pair of healthy lungs.

"In the gymnasium, you black rascal!"

"Yes, Massa Archy, dem's um---in de gym---shum. Dat's jes what I say, massa----in de gym-shum."

"Go up and get them; and mind you don't keep me waiting all day," continued Archy, who was not equal to the effort of making the boy pronounce the word correctly.

Cyd darted off with a speed that promised the best results.

"I feel stupid to-day, and I think a bout with the gloves will do me good," yawned Archy, with a hideous gape, as he stretched himself at full length upon the velvet cushions, with his feet hanging out over the water.

"Perhaps it would, sir," replied Dandy, to whom the remark was supposed to be addressed.

"We will go down to Green Point," added he.

"Yes, sir."

The conversation ended here, the young magnate of Redlawn closing his eyes and gaping by turns for the next ten minutes, till Cyd, puffing like a grampus, appeared on the steps.

"Here's de glubs, Massa Archy," said he, as he handed them to the attentive coxswain.

"Where's the other pair, you black rascal?" roared Archy, springing up from his recumbent posture.

"I only fotched ober de one pair, massa," replied Cyd, with an exceedingly troubled expression.

"Cyd, you are a fool!"

"Yes, Massa Archy," answered the black boy, who seemed to be perfectly willing to grant the position.

"What do you suppose I want of one pair of gloves!" continued Archy, angrily, as he seized one of the oars, and aimed a blow at the head of the culprit, which, however, Cyd was expert enough to dodge. "Go and get the other pair; and if you are gone half as long as you were before, I'll have you flogged."

The eye of Dandy kindled for a moment,--for the same blood flowed in the veins of both,--as he listened to the brutal words of his young master.

"That boy is a fool!" said Archy, as he settled down into his reclining posture again. "He needs a whipping to sharpen his understanding."

Dandy wholly and entirely dissented from this view; but of course he was not so impolitic as to state his views. In ten minutes more, Cyd reappeared with another pair of boxing gloves; but these were not the right ones. They were too

large either for Dandy or his master, and the poor boy was solemnly assured that he should be whipped when they returned from the excursion. The coxswain was then sent, and during his absence, Archy amused himself in pointing out the enormity of Cyd's conduct, first in bringing one pair, and then bringing the wrong pair of gloves.

Dandy returned in fifteen minutes, and after snarling at him for being so long, Master Archy gave the order for the boat to push off. All the forms were gone through with as before, and again the Edith darted down the bayou. After a pull of five miles down the Crosscut, they reached another and larger river. Green Point was the tongue of land between the two streams, and here Master Archy and his coxswain landed.



CHAPTER III.

MASTER ARCHY RECEIVES AN UNLUCKY BLOW.

Green Point was a very pleasant place, to which the luxurious occupants of the mansion at Redlawn occasionally resorted to spend a day. The land was studded with a growth of sturdy forest trees. Formerly it had been covered with a thick undergrowth of canes; but these, near the Point, had been cut away, and the place otherwise prepared for the visits of the grand people.

The day was cool and pleasant for that locality, and perhaps the magnificent son and heir of the planter of Redlawn felt that a little sharp exercise would be beneficial to him. He never performed any useful labor; never saddled his own pony, or polished his own boots; never hoed a hill of corn, or dug up a weed in the garden. He had been taught that labor was degrading, and only suited to the condition of the negro.

Master Archy, therefore, never degraded himself. His indolence and his aristocratic principles were in accord with each other. Though he actually suffered for the want of something to do, he was not permitted to demean himself by doing any thing that would develop the resources of the fruitful earth, and add to the comfort of his fellow-beings. I am quite sure, if the young seignior had been compelled to hoe corn, pick cotton, or cut cane for a few hours every day, or even been forced to learn his lessons in geography, grammar, and history, he would have been a better boy, and a happier one.

Idleness is not only the parent of mischief, but it is the fruitful source of human misery. Master Archy, with every thing that ingenuity could devise and wealth purchase to employ his time, was one of the most unhappy young men in the country. He never knew what to do with himself. He turned coldly from his boats to his pony; then from the pony to the gymnasium; then to the bowling alley; and each in turn was rejected, for it could not furnish the needed recreation.

Master Archy landed at Green Point, and he was fully of the opinion that he could amuse himself for an hour with the boxing gloves. For the want of a white companion of his own age, he had been compelled to practise the manly art of self-defence with his body-servant. Perhaps also there was some advantage in having Dandy for his opponent, for, being a slave, he would not dare to give as good as he received.

Dandy had taken lessons in the art with his young master, and though he was physically and "scientifically" his superior, he was cunning enough to keep on the right side of Master Archy, by letting him have the set-to all his own way. It was no easy matter to play at fisticuffs with the young lord, even with gloves on, for his temper was not particularly mild when he was crossed. If he happened to get a light rap, it made him mad; and in one way or another he was sure to wreak ample vengeance upon the offender. Dandy was therefore obliged to handle his master with extreme care.

Yet Archy had a fantastic manliness in his composition, which enabled him to realize that there was no credit in beating an unresisting opponent. Dandy must do some thing; he must bestow some blows upon his capricious companion, but he had learned that they must be given with the utmost care and discretion. In a word, if he did not hit at all, Master Archy did not like it; and if he hit too hard, or in a susceptible spot, he was mad.

Our readers who are fond of manly sport will readily perceive that Dandy was in the position of the frogs,—that what was fun to Archy was death to him, in a figurative sense. He did not have much fondness for the manly art. He had no moral views on the subject, but he hated the game for its own sake.

With the two pairs of gloves in his hands, Dandy followed his young lord till they came to a smooth piece of ground, under the spreading shade of a gigantic oak. Master Archy then divested himself of his white linen sack, which his attentive valet hung upon the trunk of a tree. He then rolled up his sleeves and put on the gloves. He was assisted in all these preparations by Dandy.

"Come, Dandy, you are not ready," said he, petulantly, when he was fully "mounted" for the occasion.

"I am all ready, sir," replied Dandy, as he slipped on the other pair of gloves.

"No, you are not," snarled Archy, who, for some reason or other, was in unusually bad humor. "Do you think I will box with you while you have your jacket on?"

"I can do very well with my jacket on," replied Dandy, meekly.

"No, you can't. I can whip you in your shirt sleeves. I don't want to take any advantage of you. Off with your jacket, and put yourself in trim."

Dandy obeyed, and in a few moments he was the counterpart, so far as dress was concerned, of his master.

"Now stand up to it like a man, for I'm going to give you a hard one to-day," added Archy, as he flourished with the gloves before his companion.

There was a faint smile upon his countenance as he uttered these words, and Dandy saw signs of unusual energy in his eyes. He evidently intended to do some "big thing," and the sport was therefore more distasteful than ever to the body-servant, whose hands were, in a measure, fettered by his position.

Dandy placed himself in the proper attitude, and went through all the forms incident to the science. At first Master Archy was cool and self-possessed, and his "plungers" and "left-handers" were adroitly parried by the other, who, if his master intended to win a decided triumph on the present occasion, was determined to make him earn his laurels. But Dandy did little more than avoid the blows; he gave none, and received none.

"Come, stand up to it!" shouted Archy, who soon began to be disgusted with these tame proceedings. "Why don't you exert yourself?"

"I do, sir; I have done my best to ward off your blows," replied Dandy.

"I will give you something more to do, then," added Archy, and sprang to his game with redoubled vigor.

As a matter of prudence, Dandy permitted himself to be hit once on the side of the head. This encouragement was not lost upon Archy, and he increased his efforts, but he could not hit his rival again for some time. After a few moments his "wind" gave out, and operations were suspended. When he had recovered breath enough to speak, he proceeded to declare that Dandy had no spirit, and did not try to make the game exciting.

"I have done my best, sir," replied Dandy.

"No, you haven't. You haven't hit me yet, and you haven't tried to do so."

"Yes, sir, I have."

"Don't contradict me. Now we will try again."

They commenced once more, and immediately Dandy, in order to gratify his master, gave him a pretty smart blow upon the end of his nose. He hoped this would satisfy the grumbler, and bring the sport to a happy termination. As usual, the blow excited the pugnacity of Master Archy; and setting the rules of the art at defiance, he rushed upon his companion with all the impetuosity of his nature.

Dandy simply stood steady, and warded off the blows of his infuriate master; but in spite of his exertions he was hit several times in the breast and face, and even "below the belt," for he did not deem it prudent to give another blow. Archy reared and plunged like an angry steed, till he had exhausted himself; but his temper had not yet spent itself. He sat down upon the ground, and rested himself for a moment, then, throwing away the gloves, proposed to finish the contest with the naked fists.

"I would rather not, Master Archy," replied Dandy, appalled at the idea.

"Throw away your gloves, and come on!" said Archy, brandishing his fists.

"I hope you will excuse me, Master Archy. I don't want to be pounded to a jelly."

This was certainly complimentary, but there was still a burning sensation lingering about the nose of the young planter, where that member had been flattened by his fellow-pugilist.

"No whining; come on!" repeated Archy; and certain malicious thoughts which rankled in his heart were manifest in his eyes.

"If you please, Master Archy, I will keep my gloves on, and you may play without any."

"Do you think I will do that?" sneered Archy. "I am willing to take as good as I send. Off with your gloves!"

"But only consider, sir, if any thing should happen. If I should hit you by accident----"

"Hit, then!" cried Archy, angrily, as he sprang forward, and planted a heavy blow upon the cheek of the body-servant before the latter had time to place himself in the attitude of defence, though he had thrown away his gloves in obedience to the mandate of his master.

For a few moments, Dandy defended himself from the impetuous assault of the young gentleman, who displayed a vigor and energy which he had never before exhibited. The consequences of any "accident" to his master were sufficiently apparent and he maintained his coolness until an unlucky blow on the nose caused that member to bleed, and at the same time produced a sharp and stinging pain.

Dandy had been politic and discreet up to this time, but the sharp pain roused a feeling of resentment in his nature. He had borne all he could, and no longer acting upon the defensive alone, he assumed the aggressive. Both parties

were angry now, and for a moment, each did his best, which shortly brought the combat to a disastrous conclusion.

Dandy's arm, which had before been prudentially soft and nerveless, suddenly hardened into solid muscle, and one of his heavy blows came full and square upon the region of Archy's left eye. The young lord of the manor reeled as though a tornado had struck him, and fell heavily upon the ground.

The blow was a hard one, and it fired his southern blood still more. He leaped up, and seizing a large stick which lay upon the ground, he rushed towards his unhappy servant, with the intention of annihilating him upon the spot. Dandy's senses came to him when he saw Archy fall, and he was appalled at the result of the conflict. He had struck the blow upon the impulse of a momentary rage, and he would have given any thing to recall it.

"I didn't mean to do it, Master Archy! Forgive me!" pleaded he, as he retreated to avoid the uplifted club.

Archy was so furious that he could not speak, and Dandy was compelled to run for his life.



CHAPTER IV.

DANDY DETERMINES TO WATCH AND WAIT.

Fortunately for Dandy, Master Archy was not as "long-winded" as some orators of whom we have read, and, unhappily, heard; and therefore we cannot say to what extent his passion would have led him on the present occasion. There was no fear of consequences to deter him from smiting his bondman, even unto death. If he had killed him, though the gentle-hearted might have frowned or trembled in his presence, there was no law that could reach him. There was no dread of prison and scaffold to stay his arm, and what his untamed fury prompted him to do, he might have done with impunity. Even the statute made for the protection of the slave from his cruel master, would have been of no avail, for the want of a white witness to substantiate the facts.

Dandy ran away. It was all he could do, except defend himself, which might have resulted in further injury to his young master, and thus involved him deeper than before in the guilt of striking a blow in his own defence. With no particular purpose in his mind, except to avoid the blow of the club, he retreated in the direction which led him away from the point where they had landed. He ran at his utmost speed for a few moments, for the impetuosity of his master had wonderfully increased his fleetness. Master Archy's wind soon gave out, and he was no longer able to continue the chase. He abandoned the pursuit, and throwing himself upon the ground, vented his rage in a flood of tears.

Dandy did not deem it prudent to approach him while in this mood, and he seated himself on a stump at a point where he could observe his master's motions. Master Archy was not cruel or vindictive by nature, and Dandy hoped that a few moments of rest would restore him to his equilibrium. Archy's faults were those of his education; they were the offspring of his social position. He had been accustomed to have his own way, except when his will came in opposition to that of his father, which was very seldom, for Colonel Raybone was extremely and injudiciously indulgent to his children.

It was evident to his body-servant that something had gone wrong that morning with Master Archy. He had never before carried his fury to such an extreme. Though he was never reasonable, it was not often that he was so unreasonable as on this occasion.

Dandy watched him patiently till he thought it was time his passion had spent itself, and then walked towards him. Archy discovered the movement before he had advanced many steps; but without making a demonstration of any kind, he rose from the ground, and moved off towards the scene of the late encounter. As he passed the spot, he took his coat upon his arm, and made his way to the Point.

The unhappy servant was troubled and mystified by this conduct; and he was still more bewildered when he saw Archy step into the boat, and heard him, in sharp tones, order the boatmen to pull home.

"Dar's Dandy. Isn't he gwine to go home wid us?" said Cyd, who was even more mystified than the body-servant.

"No questions! Obey my orders, and pull for home," replied Archy, as he adjusted his shirt sleeves and put on his coat.

When he had arranged his dress, he threw himself upon the velvet cushions, and took no further notice of Dandy or the crew. His orders were, of course, obeyed. The bow oarsman pushed off the boat, and she was headed up the Crosscut. By this time, poor Dandy, who, notwithstanding the obliquities of his master's disposition, had a strong regard for him, reached the shore.

"I am very sorry for what has happened, Master Archy, and I hope you will forgive me," said he, in humble tones.

The imperious young lord made no reply to this supplicating petition.

"Please to forgive me!" pleaded Dandy.

"Silence! Don't speak to me again till I give you permission to do so," was the only reply he vouchsafed.

Dandy knew his master well enough to obey, literally, the injunction imposed upon him. Seating himself upon the ground, he watched the receding boat, as the lusty oarsmen drove it rapidly through the water. The events of the morning were calculated to induce earnest and serious reflection. The consequences of the affair were yet to be developed, but Dandy had no strong misgivings. Archy, he hoped and expected, would recover his good nature in a few hours, at the most, and then he would be forgiven, as he had been before.

It is true, he had never before given his master an angry blow; but he had been grievously provoked, and he hoped this would prove a sufficient excuse. Archy had lost his temper, sprung at him with the fury of a tiger, and struck him several severe blows. His face was even now covered with blood, and his nose ached from the flattening it had

received. He could not feel that he had done a very wicked deed. He had only defended himself, which is the inborn right of man or boy when unjustly assailed. He had been invited, nay, pressed, to strike the blow which had caused the trouble.

Then he thought of his condition, of the wrongs and insults which had been heaped upon him; and if the few drops of negro blood that flowed in his veins prompted him to patience and submission, the white blood, the Anglo-Saxon inspiration of his nature, which coursed through the same channels, counselled resistance, mad as it might seem. As he thought of his situation, the tears came into his eyes, and he wept bitterly. The future was dark and forbidding, as the past had been joyless and hopeless. They were tears of anger and resentment, rather than of sorrow.

He almost envied the lot of the laborers, who toiled in the cane-fields. Though they were meanly clad and coarsely fed, they were not subjected to the whims and caprices of a wayward boy. They had nothing to fear but the lash of the driver, and this might be avoided by diligence and care. And then, with the tears coursing down his pale cheeks, he realized that the field-hands who labored beneath the eye of the overseer and the driver were better off and happier than he was.

"What can I do!" murmured he, as he rose from the ground, and walked back to the shade of the trees. "If I resist, I shall be whipped; and I cannot endure this life. It is killing me."

"I will run away!" said he, as he sat down upon a stump at some distance from the Point. "Where shall I go?"

He shuddered as he thought of the rifle of the overseer, and the bloodhounds that would follow upon his track. The free states were far, far away, and he might starve and die in the deep swamps which would be his only hiding place. It was too hopeless a remedy to be adopted, and he was obliged to abandon the thought in despair.

"I will watch and wait," said he. "Something will happen one of these days. If I ever go to New Orleans again, I will hide myself in some ship bound to the North. Perhaps Master Archy will travel some time. He may go to Newport, Cape May, or Saratoga, with his father, this season or next, and I shall go with him. I will be patient and submissive—that is what the preacher said we must all do; and if we are in trouble, God will sooner or later take the burden from our weary spirits. I will be patient and submissive, but I will *watch and wait*."

WATCH AND WAIT! There was a world of hope and consolation in the idea which the words expressed. He wiped away the tears which had trickled down his blood-stained face. WATCH AND WAIT was the only north star which blazed in the darkened firmament of his existence. He could watch and wait for months and years, but constant watching and patient waiting would one day reveal the opportunity which should break his bonds, and give him the body and spirit that God had bestowed upon him as his birthright.

Comforted by these reflections, and inspired by a new and powerful hope, he walked down to the river again. His step was elastic, and in his heart he had forgiven Master Archy. He determined to do all he could to please him; to be patient and submissive even under his wayward and petulant rule. He washed the blood from his face, and tried to wash away the rancor which his master's conduct had kindled in his soul.

Having made his peace with himself, his master, and all mankind, he sat down upon the stump, and took from his pocket a small Testament, which a pedler had dared to sell him for the moderate sum of five dollars. He read, and the blessed words gave him new hope and new courage. He felt that he could bear any thing now; but he was mistaken, for there was an ordeal through which, in a few hours, he was doomed to pass—an ordeal to which his patience and submission could not reconcile him.

While he was reading, he heard the dip of oars. Restoring the volume to his pocket, he waited the arrival of the boat. It was the barge of Archy; but the young gentleman was not a passenger. The crew had been sent down by Colonel Raybone to convey him back to the estate.

The blank looks of the crew seemed ominous of disaster. Even the brilliant ivories of the ever-mirthful Cyd were veiled in darkness beneath his ebony cheek. He looked sad and terrified, and before any of the crew had spoken a word, Dandy was fully assured that a storm was brewing.

"Massa Raybone done send us down to fotch you up," said Cyd, gloomily.

"What's the matter, Cyd?" demanded Dandy, trying to be cheerful in the face of these portending clouds of darkness.

"Massa Archy done git a black eye some how or oder, and Massa Kun'l frow 'imself into a horrid passion. Den he roar and swear jes like an alligator wid a coal o' fire in 'is throat," replied Cyd, aghast with horror.

"Well, what then?" asked Dandy, with a long breath.

"Den he send for Long Tom."

"For Long Tom!" gasped Dandy, his cheek paling and his frame quivering with emotion.

"Dat's de truf," replied Cyd, shaking his head.

"Long Tom" was a tall, stout negro-driver, who did the whipping upon the plantation. He was to be whipped! It was a barbarism to which he had never been subjected, and he was appalled at the thought.

At first, he decided not to return. Even the bloodhounds and the perils of the swamp were less terrible than the whipping-post. But he was unwilling to believe that he was to be subjected to this trying ordeal, and impelled by the resolutions he had made, he at last determined to meet his master, and by a fair representation of the case, with an earnest appeal to Archy, he hoped, and even expected, to escape the punishment.

Taking his place in the boat, he was soon gliding swiftly on his way to the plantation.



CHAPTER V.

THE TRAGEDY AT THE "DEAD OAK."

When the boat touched at the pier, the slight shock of its contact with the steps seemed to shake the very soul of the culprit, who had already been tried and condemned. Though he hoped to escape, the doubt was heavy enough to weigh down his spirits, and make him feel sadder than he had ever felt before in his life. It was not with him as it would have been with one of the crew--with Cyd, for instance, who had been whipped half a dozen times without taking it very sorely to heart. The Anglo-Saxon blood in his veins boiled at the thought of such an indignity, and if he had not entertained a reasonable hope that he should escape the terrible shame and degradation which menaced him, he would certainly have taken to the swamp, and ended his days among the alligators and herons.

There was no one on the pier when he landed; and leaving the crew to dispose of the boat, he walked with a heavy heart towards the mansion of the planter. He had accomplished but half the distance, when he was met by one of the house servants, who directed him to repair to the "dead oak" beyond the negro village. The boy who had delivered this order hastened back to the house, affording him no opportunity to ask any questions, even if he had been so disposed.

"Long Tom" and the "dead oak" were ominous phrases at Redlawn, for the former was the whipper-general of the plantation, and the latter the whipping-post. The trunk of the decaying tree had been adapted to the purpose for which it was now used, and though Colonel Raybone was considered a liberal and humane master, the "dead oak" had been the scene of many a terrible tragedy.

Because his master was a just and fair man, Dandy hoped to escape the doom for which all the preparations had already been made; but the planter was only as humane, as just and fair, as the necessities of the iniquitous system upon which he had lived and thrived would permit him to be. If he had lived beyond the reach of the influence of this Upas tree he might have been a true and noble man. Dandy believed that a true statement of the facts in the case would move the heart of his master to mercy--would at least save him from the indignity of being whipped.

With hope, and yet with some fearful misgivings, he went to the "dead oak," where the group who had been summoned to witness the punishment were already assembled. By the side of them stood Long Tom, with the whip in his hand. The strap by which he was to be fastened to the trunk was adjusted.

Dandy felt a cold chill creep through his frame, attended by a convulsive shudder, as he beheld these terrible preparations. The hope which had thus far animated him received a heavy shock, and he regretted that he had not improved the opportunity to run away before it was too late.

"Take off your coat!" said Colonel Raybone, sternly.

Dandy obeyed. His cheeks were white, and the color had deserted his lips. He was then directed, in the same cold and determined tones, to remove his shirt. His teeth chattered, and his knees smote each other; and he did not at once obey the order.

"If you please, master, what am I to be whipped for?" said Dandy, in trembling tones.

"What for, you young villain? How dare you ask such a question?" replied Colonel Raybone, angrily. "You know what you are to be whipped for. Look in Archy's face!"

He did look; it was, undoubtedly, a black eye which he had inflicted upon his young master.

"If you please, sir, Master Archy will explain how it happened," added Dandy, in soft and subdued tones, which contained a powerful appeal to the magnanimity of the young lord of the manor.

"Archy has explained how it happened. Do you think I will let one of my niggers strike my son such a blow as that? Off with your shirt!"

"I didn't want to strike him at all. I didn't want to take off the gloves, sir. He made me do it."

"Did he make you give him a black eye?" roared the planter. "Do you expect me to believe such a story as this?"

"Didn't you make me strike?" continued Dandy, turning to his young master.

"I didn't ask you to get mad, and fly at me like a madman," replied Archy, coldly, as he placed his handkerchief upon the injured eye.

"I didn't mean to strike him so hard, master. Forgive me this time, and I never will strike him again."

"I wanted you to strike, but not to get mad," added Archy.

"Forgive me this time, master," pleaded Dandy.

"Forgive you, you villain! I'll forgive you. I'll teach you to strike my son! Tear off his shirt, Tom!"

Long Tom was a slave. He had groaned and bled beneath the lash himself; but the trifling favors he had received had debauched his soul, and he was a willing servant, ready, for a smile from his master, to perform with barbarous fidelity the diabolical duties of his office. Seizing Dandy by the arm, he pulled off his shirt, and led him to the tree.

The last ray of hope had expired in the soul of Dandy. His blood rebelled at the thought of being whipped. He was not stirred by the emotions which disturb a free child with a whipping in prospect. He cringed not at the pain, he rebelled not at proper and wholesome punishment. This whipping was the scourging of the slave; it was the emblem of his servitude. The blows were the stripes which the master inflicts upon his bondman. His soul was free, while his body was in chains; and it was his soul rather than his body that was to be scourged.

The thought was madness. His blood boiled with indignation, with horror, and with loathing. The tide of despair surged in upon his spirit, and overwhelmed him. He resolved not to be whipped, and, when Long Tom turned away to adjust the strap, he sprang like an antelope through the group of spectators, and ran with all the speed he could command towards the river.

Perhaps it was a mistake on the part of Dandy, but it was the noblest impulse of his nature which prompted him to resist the unjust sentence that had been passed upon him. He ran, and desperation gave him the wings of the wind; but he had miscalculated his chances, if he had considered them at all, for the swift horse of the planter was tied to a stake near the dead oak. He had been riding over the estate when Archy returned from Green Point with the story of the blows which had been inflicted upon him.

Colonel Raybone leaped upon his horse the instant he realized the purpose of the culprit, and, before Dandy had accomplished half the distance to the river, the planter overtook him. He rode the horse directly upon him, and if the intelligent beast had not been kinder than his rider, the story of poor Dandy might have ended here. As it was, he was simply thrown down, and before he could rise and recover himself the planter had dismounted and seized him by the arm.

So deeply had the prejudices of his condition been implanted in his mind, that the thought of bestowing blows upon the sacred person of his master did not occur to him. If he had dared to fight, as he had the strength and the energy to fight, he might still have escaped. Colonel Raybone was an awful presence to him, and he yielded up his purpose without a struggle to carry it out.

The planter swore at him with a fury which chilled his blood, and struck him several smart blows with his riding-whip as the foretaste of what he was still to undergo.

"Now, back to the tree," said Colonel Raybone, as he mounted his horse again.

Dandy had given up all hope now, and he marched to the whipping-post, as the condemned criminal walks to the scaffold. He had advanced but a short distance before he met the other spectators to his doom, and Long Tom seized him by the wrist, and held him with an iron gripe till they reached the dead oak.

"Tie him up quick, Tom," said Colonel Raybone. "It has been more work to flog this young cub than a dozen full-grown niggers."

Long Tom fastened the straps around Dandy's wrists, and passed them through a band around the tree, about ten feet from the ground. He then pulled the victim up till his toes scarcely touched the earth.

"Now, lay them on well," said the planter, vindictively.

"How many, Massa Raybone?" asked Tom, as he unrolled the long lash of his whip.



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"Lay on till I say stop."

Dandy's flesh quivered, but his spirit shrunk more than his body from the contamination of the slave-master's scourge. The lash fell across his back--his back, as white as that of any who read this page. The blood gushed from the wound which the cruel lash inflicted, but not a word or a groan escaped from the pallid lips of the sufferer. A dozen blows fell, and though the flesh was terribly mangled, the laceration of the soul was deeper and more severe.

"Stop!" said Colonel Raybone.

Long Tom promptly obeyed the mandate. He evidently had no feeling about the brutal job, and there was no sign of joy or sorrow in his countenance from first to last. If he felt at all, his experience had effectually schooled him in the difficult art of concealing his emotions.

"Take him down," added the planter, who, as he gazed upon the torn and excoriated flesh of the victim, seemed to feel that the atonement had washed away the offence.

During the punishment Master Archy had betrayed no small degree of emotion, and before the driver had struck the sixth blow he had asked his father, in a whisper, to stay the hand of the negro. He had several times repeated the request; but Colonel Raybone was inflexible till the crime had, in his opinion, been fully expiated.

Long Tom unloosed the straps, and the body of the culprit dropped to the ground, as though the vital spark had for ever fled from its desecrated tabernacle.

"De boy hab fainted, Massa Raybone," said the driver.

"I see he has," replied the planter, with some evidence of emotion in his tones, as he bent over the prostrate form of the boy, to ascertain if more was not done than had been intended.

He felt the pulse of Dandy, and satisfied himself that he was not dead. We must do him the justice to say that he was sorry for what had happened--sorry as a kind parent is when compelled to punish a dear child. He did not believe that he had done wrong, even accepting as true the statement of the culprit; for the safety of the master and his family made it necessary for him to regard the striking even of a blow justifiable under other circumstances as a great enormity. It

was the system, more than the man, that was at fault.

Dandy was not dead, and Colonel Raybone ordered two of the house servants, who were present, to do every thing that his condition required. He and Archy then walked towards the house, gloomy and sad, both of them.



CHAPTER VI.

A VISION OF THE PROMISED LAND.

Dandy, lacerated and bleeding, but still insensible, was conveyed to his chamber in the mansion house, by some of the servants. His physician was an old slave, skilled in the treatment of cases of this kind. When the patient recovered from the swoon into which he had fallen, his back was carefully washed, and the usual remedies were applied. Though suffering terribly from the effects of his wounds, he did not permit a sigh nor a groan to escape him.

The mangled flesh could be healed, but there was no balm at Redlawn that could restore his mangled spirit. Dandy felt that he had been crushed to earth. Slavery, which had before been endurable with patience and submission, was now intolerable. He had been scourged with the lash. He had realized what it was to be a slave in the most bitter and terrible sense.

"I will watch and wait," said he to himself, when the old slave had left him alone with his reflections, "but no longer with patience and submission. I will cease to be a slave, or I will die a freeman with the herons and the alligators in the swamp."

The day wore slowly away, but it was filled up with earnest and energetic reflections,—in a word, with plans and suggestions of plans for escaping from the bondage whose fetters now galled him to the quick. And before the sun set upon the day of his greatest humiliation, he had matured a scheme by which he hoped and expected to win the priceless boon of freedom. It was a daring scheme, and its success must depend wholly upon the skill and energy with which its details were managed.

When one resolves to do a thing, it is already half done; and Dandy, stretched upon his couch of pain, was inspired by the hope and comfort which his plan afforded him. It might be weeks or months before the favorable opportunity for executing his purpose should arrive; but the time would come, sooner or later.

"I will watch and wait," said he, while a smile of hope illuminated his pale face.

WATCH AND WAIT had now a new significance, more vital than before; and he kept repeating the words, for they were an epitome of the whole duty of the future.

While he was pondering his great purpose, he was surprised to receive a visit from Master Archy. The imperious young gentleman displayed a languid smile upon his face as he entered the chamber. It was intended as a token of conciliation. If his pride had permitted him to speak to the suffering bondman, he would have said, "Dandy, you see this smile upon my face. It is the olive-branch of peace. I freely forgive you for what you have done; and you see, by my coming, that I feel an interest in you. Not every young master would bestow a visit of sympathy upon his slave, after he had been whipped; so you see how condescending I am. We will be friends, as we were before. It is true you have been whipped; but you deserved it, and I am willing to forgive you. It may have been my fault, but as you are a nigger, and in my power, it don't make much difference."

This was what Master Archy's looks said, and the sufferer read them as well as though the words had been written upon his face. After Dandy came to his senses, his first thought was, that he would be revenged upon Archy for his mean and cowardly conduct; but the great scheme he had matured drove this purpose from his mind. Success required that he should conceal his feelings, or he might lose the confidence of his master, and thus be deprived of the opportunity for which he intended to watch and wait.

"How do you feel, Dandy?" asked Archy, in tones of sympathy, as he placed himself by the bedside of his body-servant.

"Not very well, Master Archy," replied Dandy.

"My father carried it farther than I intended, Dandy. I tried to stop him before."

"Thank you, Master Archy," answered the patient, meekly.

"Though it was more than I meant you should have, I hope you will remember it a long time," added Archy.

"I shall, master."

"My eye is not in very good condition," said he, wiping the injured organ with his handkerchief. "It was a hard blow you gave me."

Dandy wished he would leave him, and he did not care to argue the matter with him, even if he had been privileged to do so.

"It won't do to let your servant go too far," said Archy.

"I am very sorry it happened," replied Dandy.

"Well, I hope the lesson will last you as long as you live."

"It will, Master Archy."

The young tyrant, when he had fully satisfied himself that his minion was in a tractable state, took his leave, much to the satisfaction of the sufferer. The old negro who acted as his physician paid him another visit in the evening, and assured him that he would be well in a few days. He left him with the injunction to go to sleep, and forget all about it.

Dandy could not go to sleep, could not forget all about it. The wound in his soul was more painful than those upon his back, and hour after hour passed away, but his eyes were still set wide open. His great resolution filled the future with sublime visions, which he panted to realize. His path lay through trial and danger, was environed by death on every side; but paradise was at the end of it, and he was willing to encounter every hardship, and brave every danger, to win the glorious prize, or content to die if his struggles should be in vain.

He was determined to leave Redlawn at the first favorable opportunity; and while he pictured a glowing future beyond the chilly damps of the swamp, and out of the reach of the rifle-ball and the bloodhound, there were still some ties which bound him to the home of his childhood.

Home! No, it was only a mockery of that heaven upon earth! It had been the scene of his tribulation--that which riveted the bonds upon his limbs. But it was home so far as it was the abiding place of his friends,--not those who scourged him, whose caprices had tormented him; not his young master, not his old master. That delightful poetry which paints a loving slave clinging fondly to the master that scourges him had never glowed in his imagination. Whatever of regard he had before cherished towards his master had been driven from his heart by the thongs of the slave whip.

He had friends at Redlawn,--the gentle, meek, and patient Lily,--the wild, rollicking, mirthful Cyd. They were his friends, indeed, and the thought of leaving them at all was sad; the thought of leaving them in bondage, to be sold and scourged, was intolerable. While he was thinking of them he heard a slight rap at the door.

"May I come in?"

It was Lily, and the permission was promptly given. The clock in the great hall below had struck eleven, and the family had but just retired. She had been waiting all this time to pay a visit of sympathy to the sufferer.

"How do you do, Dandy?" asked she, as she sat down in a chair at the head of the bed.

"I'm better, Lily."

"I'm very glad. I wanted to come and see you very much, but I was afraid to do so. It was terrible, Dandy! To think that you should be whipped! I should as soon have thought of being whipped myself."

"It is terrible, Lily."

"What did you do, Dandy? It must have been some awful thing."

The sufferer briefly related the particulars of the event at Green Point, which had procured him the whipping. Lily expressed her horror at the meanness of Master Archy, and poured out her sympathy in unmeasured fulness upon her friend.

"But I shall not be here long, Lily," added Dandy, in a whisper.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked she, amazed at the idea of resistance in any form.

"Will you keep my secret, Lily?"

"You know that I will, Dandy."

"I mean to run away."

"Run away!" gasped Lily.

"I will not stay here another month if I can help it."

"But where will you go?"

"I know where to go, and how to go; and, live or die, I shall make the attempt."

"And you will be free?"

"I will, or I will die. I will not be a slave!" said he, in an energetic whisper.

"How grand it would be! I wish I could be free," sighed Lily. "I don't know what will become of me one of these days."

"None of us can know."

"If I were a man I should not fear so much. Master was offered two thousand dollars for me a year ago."

"He will not sell you."

"Whether he does or not, I shall be miserable as long as I live. I often wish I was dead."

"Poor Lily!" sighed Dandy.

"Can't I go with you," asked she, bending over him, and whispering the words into his ear.

"You, Lily! I shall go to the swamps first. I may have to live with the alligators for months, perhaps for years."

"I am not afraid of them. If you will let me, I will go with you," added she, eagerly.

"I shall have to meet hardships and dangers,--more than you could bear."

"I'll bear every thing, Dandy. I will help you; I will die with you."

"Poor girl!"

"I would bear any thing. I would rather live with the alligators than with Miss Edith. You don't know how much I have to bear, Dandy."

"The same that I have to bear from Master Archy. If I thought you could stand it, Lily, I should be glad to take you with me."

"I can stand it," replied she, with enthusiasm.

"You shall go, Lily."

"Heaven bless you, Dandy!"

"And I'm going to take Cyd with me, too, if he will go; but he don't know any thing about it yet."

"When shall we start?"

"I don't know; not till master goes a hunting again. I will tell you all about it in a few days."

Lily was content to leave every thing with Dandy, in whom she had more confidence than in any other person, for he was her only real friend. With her soul full of new emotions, she left the chamber of the sick boy just as the clock struck twelve.

Dandy's great purpose now assumed a new significance; and as Lily was to share in the toils, privations, and dangers of the enterprise, a new responsibility was imposed upon him.

It was two hours more before his exciting thoughts would permit him to sleep. His wounds had ceased to smart, and he had even forgotten his flogging in the glorious vision to which it had introduced him. And when he slept it was but to dream of the swamp and its perils, and of the promised land which his fancy pictured beyond it.



CHAPTER VII.

THE ISABEL IS PREPARED FOR A CRUISE.

At the end of a week the lacerated flesh of poor Dandy was so far healed that he again discharged all the duties of his position near the person of his young master. The flesh was healed, but the spirit still smarted under the effects of the whipping. "Watch and wait," was his motto; and though he possessed his soul in patience, he kept his eyes and his ears wide open, ready to seize upon the desired opportunity to carry out his great resolution.

The season most favorable for shooting had arrived, and Dandy was in expectation that Colonel Raybone would order the preparations to be made for his annual excursion, either to the rivers above, or the lakes below, in search of game. Upon this event was based his hope of making his escape.

The smiling month of May was ushered in with its pleasant days, and about a fortnight after his whipping Dandy had the satisfaction of hearing the subject broached. The excursion was a matter of considerable importance, for the planter was generally absent two or three weeks, during which time he and his party lived on board of the large sail-boat. As there were no guests at Redlawn, the people wondered who were to be the colonel's companions.

"We will leave on Wednesday," said the planter to his son.

"Are you going alone, father?"

"Certainly not; you may go with me for one, and you may take Dandy with you. Jake and Cyd shall go to do the heavy work."

"Who else? There is room enough in the cabin for four."

"There is no one else to go. So we shall have the more room ourselves," replied the planter, as he walked away.

Master Archy announced to Dandy and Cyd that they were to attend the party, and both expressed their satisfaction at the privilege accorded to them. They were directed to put the Isabel, which was the name of the boat, in good order for the trip. She had to be thoroughly washed and dried that she might be in readiness to receive her stores on the following day, which was Tuesday, and they hastened off to perform their task.

The Isabel was about twenty-five feet long. She was very broad on the beam, and drew but very little water for a boat of her size. She was provided with a centre board, and worked admirably on the wind. She had been built expressly for the shallow waters of the lower lakes.

She was schooner-rigged, and could carry a heavy press of sail, which the light winds of these inland lakes rendered necessary. The cabin was twelve feet long, and nine feet wide at the broadest part, and contained four berths. The "trunk," which was elevated about fifteen inches above the deck, afforded a height of about five feet beneath. The berths, which extended beneath the main deck, answered for beds by night, and sofas by day.

The standing room, or open space abaft the cabin, was eight feet long, with cushioned seats on three sides. Forward of the cabin there was a "stow-hold," four feet long, in which the fuel and furnaces used for cooking were kept. Under the cabin table, and under the berths and seats in the standing room, were a plenty of lockers for the reception of provisions and other articles required on board.

We are thus particular in describing the Isabel, because Dandy and his friends were destined to make their home on board of her for some time. They might have found many a worse dwelling place on shore, for the boat had ample accommodations for them. The cabin was elegantly fitted and furnished, and there was every thing on board which could be needed to make them comfortable.

While Dandy and Cyd were cleaning the Isabel, the former boldly announced his purpose to run away, and invited his friend to make one of the party.

"Golly! Dis chile go for sure!" roared Cyd, displaying his wealth of ivories, and dropping his scrubbing brush with amazement at the magnificence of the idea.

"Hush, Cyd! You will tell every one on the place."

"No, sar! I won't tell no one ob it. Dat's de truf, Dandy."

"Be careful then, and don't speak so loud."

"But where you gwine?" demanded Cyd.

"I'm going into the swamp, and shall stay there till master thinks we are all dead. Then I'm going to run down to the

sea, and get on board of some vessel that will carry us to the free states."

This prospect was rather too much for the simple comprehension of the unlettered negro boy, and he only rolled the whites of his eyes in mute astonishment.

"I've studied it all out, Cyd, and I know where to go, and how to get there."

"Yes, Dandy, you knows ebery ting, and I'll foller you to de end ob de world--dat's de truf," added Cyd.

"And Lily will go with us."

"Lily?"

"Yes; now keep your mouth shut, and don't look any different from what you always do."

"Golly--yes; when you gwine to go, Dandy?"

"To-morrow night. Every thing will be put on board, ready for the colonel to start early the next morning. Just as soon as all the people in the house have gone to bed, we will meet here, and go on board."

"Den I shall be a free nigger?"

"Yes, if we get off, and the plan works well. But you must be very careful."

"You kin trust dis chile, Dandy. You knows you kin."

"I do, or I should not have made you my companion."

Dandy instructed his sable friend very minutely in the duties he was to discharge in connection with the enterprise. He had every confidence in Cyd's discretion, and knew that he would rather die than betray him.

The Isabel was carefully cleaned, and left to dry in the bright sunshine of a clear day. The next morning, the steward of the plantation laid out the stores which were to go on board; and as their storage was a nice matter, Dandy was charged with this duty. He was assisted by Archy's boat crew, who conveyed the articles on board; and before sunset the boat was ready for her cruise. Every locker was filled with meat, vegetables, crackers, wines, liquors, fruits, cakes, cordials--with every thing which could contribute to the comfort or luxury of the excursionists. There were two barrels of water in the standing room, and the choice fowling pieces of the planter and his son were in the cabin, with a supply of ammunition sufficient to destroy half the game of the parish.

To the supplies laid out by the steward, Dandy contrived to add a dozen hams, nicely sewed up in canvas bags, and several kegs of crackers, which he took from the store room. These articles were stowed in the forward cuddy, and concealed beneath the fuel and furnaces, so that the planter, when he inspected the boat, might not discover them. Some other articles were placed in a convenient position on shore, that they might be taken on board in the night.

At sunset, Colonel Raybone went off to the Isabel, and carefully examined every part of her, to satisfy himself that there had been no omissions in her outfit.

"You have done very well, Dandy," said the planter, when he had completed his inspection. "How many hams have you put on board?"

"Six, sir," replied Dandy.

"We may be absent five or six weeks; you may put in six more," added Colonel Raybone.

"Yes, sir."

He also ordered an additional supply of smoked beef and tongues, which, of course, the caterer was glad to convey on board. When these stores had been added to the stock, he was satisfied, and ordered Dandy and Cyd to be on board by six in the morning.

The superintendent of these operations then locked up the cabin, and went on shore. Though he was burning with excitement, he managed to demean himself with his ordinary coolness, and Cyd looked as immovable as a statue.

At the usual hour they retired to their several rooms, but not to sleep. Dandy, as the conductor of the enterprise, was weighed down with the responsibilities of his position. Though he had done every thing he could to insure the success of the venture, he was still burdened with a feverish anxiety lest something had been omitted, and with the dread that something might happen to interfere with the plan.

There were many things which might intervene to thwart his purpose. If the night should prove to be calm, there would be scarcely a hope of success; for the Isabel was so large that the two boys could not row her far enough, before daylight, to place them out of the reach of pursuit. There was quite a fresh breeze when he went to his room; but he trembled with fear lest it should subside before he could take advantage of it.

While Miss Edith was at dinner that day, he had found an opportunity to whisper his purpose into the ear of Lily,

and to give her such instructions as the occasion required. He had no doubt that his companions would meet him on the pier at the appointed time.

Fortunately for the success of the plan, the family retired at an earlier hour than usual, and Dandy waited with impatience till the stillness of the house assured him it was safe to leave his chamber. He then tied up a portion of his clothing, and crept softly down stairs. His heart beat with most tremendous pulsations. The opportunity for which he had been watching and waiting had come, and issues more terrible than those of life and death hung upon the success of the enterprise. If he failed, if he was captured, he might expect the auction block, for Colonel Raybone always sold a servant that attempted to run away.

The destiny of poor Lily was also in his keeping, and for her to be sold was to be consigned to a fate worse than death to a pure-minded girl--a fate which both of them were old enough to understand.

"God be with me!" ejaculated Dandy, half a dozen times before he left his chamber.

It was all the prayer he ever uttered, but it was an earnest and sincere one.

"God be with me," repeated he, in a whisper, as he closed the front door of the house behind him, and with stealthy step crept down to the pier.

Cyd was already there, for he did not sleep in the great house, and had not to wait the movements of the family. He trembled with excitement as Dandy joined him, for he knew the fate of the runaway if he was caught. They immediately brought the articles which had been concealed down to the steps, and put them in the bateau, which was used as a tender for the Isabel.

"What's dis for?" asked Cyd, as he deposited two pots of paint in the boat.

"Don't ask questions," whispered Dandy, earnestly. "Not another word, or I'll leave you. Now, put these things on board, and mind you don't make a particle of noise."

Cyd obeyed the order to the letter, and paddled off to the sail-boat. Every thing was now in readiness for their departure, but Lily had not yet made her appearance. Cyd returned to the shore, and they waited half an hour, but the lady's-maid did not come.

There was a stiff breeze blowing, and Dandy was impatient at the loss of a single moment of precious time. He walked up to the house, fearful lest something had happened to prevent her from keeping her appointment. There was a light in Miss Edith's chamber, which explained her non-appearance; but he could not think of going without her.

When his patience was nearly exhausted, the light was extinguished. Lily soon made her appearance on the lawn, and they hastened down to the pier.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE YOUNG FUGITIVES.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Lily, when Dandy joined her on the lawn; "I am frightened out of my senses."

"There is nothing to fear yet, Lily," said her conductor, as he took her by the hand to restore her confidence. "The wind is quite fresh, and long before we are missed we shall be out of the reach of pursuit."

"I am frightened, and I can't help it."

"You will feel better when you get on board of the boat. You shall have a nice cabin, and you can lie down and go to sleep just as you would in your own chamber."

"I don't think I shall sleep much to-night. I was afraid I should not be able to join you, for Miss Edith had the headache, and made me stay with her till she could go to sleep."

"We are all right now, Lily. Every thing is as favorable as it can be. We have nothing to fear as long as the wind blows."

Lily had very little practical knowledge of boating, and she did not comprehend the allusions of Dandy; but she trusted him with all her soul, and when he said there was no danger, her fluttering heart was calmed down. Before they reached the pier she had entirely recovered her self-possession, though she could not help being deeply impressed by the important step she was taking.

Cyd was seated on the landing steps, whistling the air of a negro melody, as cool as though he was about to engage in a lawful enterprise. He had been tremendously agitated at the announcement of the idea, and when he decided to form one of the party; but he was one of that class to whom exciting events soon become an old story. He already regarded his freedom as achieved, and he had even made himself familiar with his new social condition.

Dandy handed Lily into the bateau which was to serve as the Isabel's tender, and then seated himself in the bow.

"Come, bear a hand, Cyd," said the leader, in a low but sharp tone.

"What am I to bear a hand to?" demanded Cyd.

"Jump in quick, and paddle off to the Isabel."

"Golly! Is dis chile got to row de boat? Says I, 'Cyd,' says I, 'you's a free nigger, and you got nuffin to do but----'"

"Take your paddle quick, or I will leave you here!" interposed Dandy.

Cyd obeyed this time. His ideas of freedom were, no doubt, derived from his master and the other white people at Redlawn, who had nothing to do but amuse themselves and order the negroes round the place. They were very crude ideas, and he was yet to learn that freedom did not mean idleness. He paddled the bateau off to the sail-boat, and Lily was put on board.

"Now, haul the Edith alongside," said the skipper, as he proceeded to unloose the sails.

"De Edif!" exclaimed Cyd. "Wha--wha--what you gwine to do wid de Edif?"

"Haul her alongside!" replied Dandy, sharply. "If you spend the night in talking, we shall not get off till morning."

"Hossifus!" ejaculated Cyd, whose vocabulary being rather limited, he was under the necessity of coining a word occasionally, when he felt the need of a strong expression. "Dis nigger tink he was free, but it's Do dis, and Do dat. Hossifus; dis chile tink he's only got a new massa--dat's all, for sartin."

"If you don't want to go, Cyd, you needn't. I will put you on shore, and go without you."

"Gossifus! Dis chile like to know what you gwine to do widout Cyd."

"I shall do very well without him. Shall I put you on shore, or not?"

"Possifus! No, Dandy; I'se gwine wid you, any how."

"Then you must mind me!" added the skipper, earnestly.

"I done do dat."

"Haul the Edith alongside, then."

"Sartin, Dandy. I'se gwine to haul de Edif alongside, but dis chile like to know what for?"

"Mind me, or I'll put you on shore!" cried Dandy, angrily.

"Mossifus! I'se gwine, Dandy," said Cyd as he stepped into the tender, and paddled off to the Edith, which was moored a short distance above.

Presently he returned, and the painter of the race boat was made fast to a cleat on the quarter of the Isabel. Cyd was much mystified by the operation, for he could not see why they should take the Edith with them. He was very anxious to argue the point with Dandy, who, it seemed to him, had never before in his life been so sharp and ill-natured. But the skipper was too much excited by the tremendous issues of the hour to be in a mood for argument.

By this time Dandy had cast loose the sails, and together they manned the halyards, and hoisted the mainsail. It was large, and the fresh breeze caused it to flap and beat with a fearful noise, which added not a little to the excitement of the skipper.

"Stand by the moorings, Cyd, and have your jib halyards ready!" said Dandy, as he took his place at the tiller.

"Hossifus! I'm dar, Massa Dandy."

"You needn't 'massa' me, Cyd. Stop!"

"Which'll I do, Massa Dandy, stand by de moorings, or stop?" demanded Cyd, whose ivories were now distinctly visible in the gloom of the night.

"Neither; jump into the bateau, and bring the wherry alongside," replied Dandy.

"Gossifus! What you gwine to do wid de wherry?"

"Mind me, or go on shore!" said the skipper, sternly.

"I'se gwine. Golly! dat makes two boats apiece all round, for sartin."

"Go, quick!"

"I'se gone; 'pears like I'se only swapped off Massa Archy for Massa Dandy."

But Cyd obeyed the order, and brought the wherry to the side of the Isabel, to which she was secured, like the other boats. The bewildered boy was not in the habit of doing his own thinking, and his faculties were not, therefore, very fully developed, and an explanation would have relieved him of a world of doubts and conjectures.

"Now, have your jib halyards ready, and stand by the moorings," said Dandy.

"Yes, sar!" replied Cyd, putting a wicked emphasis on the complimentary part of the answer.

"Let go the moorings!" shouted Dandy, as he hauled in the main sheet.

"All gone, Massa Dandy," replied Cyd, as the heavy rope by which the boat was secured splashed into the water.

"Hoist the jib!" added the skipper, in the same loud tones, that he might be heard above the noise of the flapping sail.

"Up she goes," responded Cyd, joyously.

The Isabel, released from her moorings, caught the breeze, and the voyage of the young fugitives was commenced. She leaped like a race-horse before the fresh breeze.

"We done gone!" exclaimed Cyd, as he walked aft, when he had secured the jib sheet.

"We are off!" replied Dandy, as he cast an anxious glance in the direction of the planter's great house, to assure himself that none of its inmates witnessed their departure.

The night was very dark, and there were indications of a storm. It required all the skill of the bold leader of the expedition to steer the boat in the thick gloom of the night. The navigation was difficult and dangerous. The bayou was filled with snags and stumps, and to strike one of them was to dash the boat in pieces, and wreck all the hopes which hung upon the success of the enterprise. But Dandy was thoroughly acquainted with all the difficulties in his course, and was so familiar with the waters of the bayou, that he was as much at home upon them by night as by day.

"Hoist the foresail, Cyd," said the skipper.

"Mossifus! Dis chile tinks de boat's gwine fas enough," answered Cyd, "but I'se gwine to do jus what you say, Massa Dandy."

"Do it then."

Cyd did do it then; but it was evident to the commander of the Isabel that the "crew" of his vessel was in a lamentable state of insubordination. All his orders were questioned, and the boat was liable to go to the bottom in an

emergency, because his commands were not promptly obeyed. He was not a little astonished at Cyd's conduct, for in the boat of Master Archy he was in the habit of obeying all orders like a machine, never presuming to ask a question, or suggest a doubt.

The foresail was set, and the Isabel dashed on with increased speed. There was no more "working ship" to be done, and Cyd again took his place on the cushioned seats in the standing-room, a luxury, by the way, in which he had never before attempted to indulge himself; but when it is considered that he had just emerged from slavery to freedom, his want of respect for the dignity of the "quarter deck" will be fully excused.

"Go forward, Cyd, and keep a sharp lookout ahead," said Dandy, as soon as the "crew" was comfortably seated on the cushion.

"Gossifus! I suppose I'se a nigger still," said he. "Dis chile tinks he's jes as good's any body now."

"You are, Cyd."

"Den I mus squat on de hard deck, and you sets on de cushions."

"Take one of the cushions with you, if you wish to; but go forward and keep a sharp lookout."

"I'se gwine."

"Go, then."

"Dis nigger don't zackly like dis kind ob freedom," growled Cyd, as he moved forward.

The wind was about south-west, which was fair for the course the Isabel was then steering, and in three quarters of an hour she made Green Point. Dandy could not but recall the events which had occurred there three weeks before, for they had stimulated him to the daring enterprise in which he was now engaged. It was there he had resolved to watch and wait in patience and submission for a less perilous opportunity to effect his escape than that which he had now embraced. The spot was full of interest, for his great resolution had been born there; but the moment was big with the destiny of the whole party, and he could not stop to indulge in sentimental reflections.

"Stand by the jib sheet, Cyd!" said he, as the Isabel swept past the point.

"Yes, sar--all ready!" replied Cyd, who had so many times assisted in working the boat, that he was perfectly familiar with the routine of a foremast hand's duty.

"Hard--lee!" cried Dandy, as he put the helm down, and brought the Isabel up on the other tack.

Cyd tended the jib sheet without further instruction, and then took his place again on the forecastle to look out for danger ahead. The course for the next five miles was up the large bayou, of which the Crosscut was a tributary. It was lined on both sides with large trees, which sheltered the water, to some extent, from the force of the wind, and her progress was less rapid than before. The navigation was less obstructed, and Cyd was called aft to enjoy the luxury of the cushioned seats.

Lily, who had now become reconciled to her situation, also joined the skipper in the standing room. The hurry and excitement of the departure had passed off, and the load of anxiety was removed from the mind of Dandy.

It was midnight, dark and gloomy; but the young fugitives felt that they were passing from the gloom of slavery into the light of freedom. The first difficulties of the enterprise had been overcome, and though there were months of peril and hardship before them, it seemed as though the glorious sun of the new existence had already risen.



CHAPTER IX.

THE FUGITIVES REACH LAKE CHICOT.

The Isabel moved steadily through the waters of the wide bayou, bearing her precious freight farther and farther from the plantation. With every mile she advanced, the hopes of the fugitives grew stronger. Though Dandy alone knew the route by which they were to reach the land of freedom, they were conscious that any white man whom they might meet would arrest them as runaways. Before they could pass out of the limits of the state, they must go in sight of many plantations, where they were liable to be seen, and even near two or three villages.

In spite of the perils which the future had in store for them, the party were quite cheerful. Even Lily, gentle and timid as she was, soon became accustomed to the novel situation in which she was placed, and ceased to dread the pursuing footsteps of the slave-hunters.

"Do you think we shall escape, Dandy?" asked she, as she seated herself by the side of her friend.

"I expect we shall," replied he, unwilling to kindle too strong a hope in the mind of the girl. "If we manage well, we have a good chance."

"I hope we shall, for master would certainly sell us all if we should be caught."

"Dat ud be wus as staying wid Massa Kun'l," added Cyd. "But I s'pect we won't be caught, Massa Dandy."

"Why do you call me master, Cyd?"

"Dis chile tink you cutting it rader fat."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You'se tell me do dis, and, Cyd, do dat,--jes as dough dis nigger no account at all."

"I am in command of the boat; and it was my duty to get her under way. When I told you to do any thing, you began to ask questions."

"Dis nigger's free now," replied Cyd, with becoming dignity.

"Not yet, Cyd. We may be caught at any moment."

"Gossifus! I tought I was free now."

"What made you think so?"

"We done runned away from Massa Kun'l."

"He may catch you again."

"De Kun'l ain't here, no how, Dandy; 'pose I neber see him any more, and he neber see me any more, who's my massa den?"

"When you get into a free country, you will be free."

"But who's my massa now? Dat's what dis chile want to know for sartin."

"You have no master."

"Den I'se free," exclaimed Cyd, exhibiting his ivories, which the gloom of the night, increased by the deep shadows of the tall trees, was powerless to conceal. "I tell you, I'se a free nigger."

Cyd commenced a most violent demonstration of satisfaction as he contemplated his new social position. He laughed, kicked with his heels, sang and danced. He felt that he had got the best of the argument, and this was no small ground of rejoicing.

"Suppose you should be caught?"

"Den I be Massa Kun'l's boy again."

"But why did you call me Massa Dandy?"

"Kase you order me round jes like Massa Kun'l, and de white folks. Dis chile begin to tink he's your nigger."

"You are just as good as I am."

"Yes, sar; Cyd knows all about dat. You tell me to git de row boat; den to git de wherry; and when I ask what for, you

tell me to mind my own business, and not ask queshtuns."

"It was because we had no time to spare," replied Dandy, whose feelings were injured by the charge of his sable companion.

"Dat may be; but you speak to me jes like de white folks."

"I didn't mean to do or say any thing that would make me seem like a master, for I hate the very sound of the word."

"Hossifus!" exclaimed Cyd, gratified by this acknowledgment. "I done tink you meant to be my massa, jes like de kun'l. If dis chile jes as good you be, Cyd can't see why you don't tell what you do dese tings for."

"I am willing to tell you what I did these things for, now that I have time to do so. But, Cyd, I will change places with you."

"Possifus! What fur?"

"You shall command the boat, and I will obey all your orders without asking a single question."

"What, Cyd?"

"Yes, Cyd," replied Dandy, earnestly. "Here, take the helm!"

"Gossifus! I dunno whar you're gwine."

"Verry well; I will give you my map of the country, and you shall find the way for yourself, as I shall have to do."

"What you gib me?"

"The map."

"What's dat?"

"Here it is," replied Dandy, giving him a small pocket map of the State of Louisiana, of which he had possessed himself a few days before the departure.

Cyd took the map, turned it over two or three times, and could not make out its use. Lily and Dandy both enjoyed his confusion, for it was a great puzzle to him to know how they were to find their way through the swamp by the aid of this little book, as he called it. A lantern was lighted, and Lily unfolded the map, and spread it out upon one of the berths.

"Mossifus!" exclaimed Cyd, when he had carefully examined the map, and the lantern was prudently extinguished. "I don't see what dis paper fur."

"It's all I have to guide me to the ocean, after we have passed Chicot. Now, if you will take the map, and command the boat, I will obey you in all things."

"Golly! I don't see what good de paper's fur. I kin foller de norf star."

"But we are going to the south."

"I tink I will stay where I is, and you shall command de boat."

"Then you must mind me at once. Our very lives may depend upon your prompt obedience."

"I will, Dandy."

"Free men have to obey, as well as slaves. On board a ship, every body obeys the captain."

"What's use ob bein free, den?"

"The captain of the ship can't sell the sailor, nor separate him from his wife and children. The man is paid for what he does, and when his voyage is up he may go where he pleases."

"I knows all about it now, Dandy."

"I don't want to be called Dandy any more. My name is Daniel, but you may call me Dan for short."

"Possifus! Den's what's my name? I'se free too, and I wan't my name changed."

"Your name is Thucydides."

"Tucydimes!"

"No, Thucydides," laughed Dan--for we will adopt his suggestion, and call him no longer by his plantation name.

"Hossifus! Hab to git up afore breakfast to speak dat word in season for dinner," chuckled Cyd.

"You are called Cyd for short, as I am Dan. There is nothing bad about the word."

"It's a very good name, Cyd," added Lily.

"Goshus! If you say so, Missy Lily, it's all right. If it suits de fair seck, it suits me," said Cyd, shaking his fat sides with satisfaction. "Dis chile don't keer what you calls him, if you only calls him to supper."

"Now, Cyd, I will answer the questions you asked when we were getting under way."

"Yes, what ye got all dem boats draggin arter us fur?"

"Don't you see the reason, Cyd?"

The boy scratched his head, but he could not see. As we have before observed, he had not been in the habit of doing his own thinking, and, consequently, he was not skilled in reasoning from effect to cause.

"Suppose we had left the boats, Cyd," added Dan.

"Den we shouldn't hab em wid us, keepin de boat back."

"At six o'clock in the morning, Colonel Raybone will be ready to start on his trip. He will go down to the pier, and expect to find us all there."

"Gossifus! we shan't be dar!" exclaimed Cyd, whose imagination was lively enough to enable him to picture the scene that would ensue.

"What then, Cyd?"

"Golly! Massa Kun'l up and rave like he neber did afore," replied Cyd, who appeared to enjoy the idea.

"Well, what then?"

"Dunno. He can't help hisself," chuckled Cyd.

"Suppose we had left the boats?"

"Mossifus! He tell four stout boys to git in de club-boat, and streak it down de riber like an alligator arter a possum. Yah! ha, ha!" roared Cyd, holding on to his sides.

"Do you see why I have taken all the boats?"

"Yes, Dandy--Dan; I sees into it jes like a millstone. You'se got a long head, Dan. But what ye gwine to do wid de paint?"

"We shall live in the swamp till the colonel has done looking for us. This boat is white now, and we will paint her green, so that she can't be seen so easily."

"Dat's good, Dan; but de kun'l won't stop lookin fur us till he finds out something."

"I mean that he shall find out something. He will suppose that we have gone to the north. He will never suspect that we have come this way. Here we are," said Dan, suddenly rising in the boat, as she came to a narrow opening on the southerly bank of the river.

Running the boat up to the bank of the bayou, he ordered Cyd to make her fast to a tree on the shore.

"What's gwine to be done now, Dan?" asked Cyd, when he had obeyed the order.

"We shall follow the big river no farther. Now, I want to make Master Raybone think we have gone up that way, which leads to the Mississippi. I left some papers in my room, which will convince him that I intended to go that way. Now, Lily, we must leave you for a little while," added Dan, as he drew the bateau alongside. "We will not be gone more than an hour."

Dan and Cyd got into the bateau, and towed the other boats about two miles up the river, where they secured them in such a position that they seemed to be abandoned. When the search for them was made, these boats would be found two miles from the course the fugitives had actually taken. They then pulled back to the Isabel, and got under way again.

Their course was now changed, and the boat passed down the narrow cut-off, which soon widened into a broad stream. The wind, which had been quite fresh when they started, had now subsided to a gentle breeze; but as the country was more open than on the Big River, as it was called, they still moved along at the rate of three or four miles an hour.

At five o'clock in the morning--Dan had a silver watch which had been presented to him by Master Archy--they reached the entrance of Lake Chicot. It was about daylight, and as there was a plantation on the western bank, it was not deemed prudent to proceed any farther, for if the boat was seen, it would at once be recognized as that of Colonel Raybone.

The westerly side of the lake was low, swampy ground, covered with a thick growth of trees and an undergrowth of cane. The skipper of the Isabel ran along this shore till he found a stream flowing into the lake. Hauling up the centre board, he ran his craft into this creek. As the sails would not draw, being sheltered by the trees and cane, the two boys worked the boat up the stream with their oars till she was completely concealed from the opposite shore, or from the lake, if any boat should happen to pass during the day.

Here the careful skipper intended to lie until the friendly shades of another night should permit them to proceed on the voyage to a more secure haven.



CHAPTER X.

BREAKFAST ON BOARD THE ISABEL.

"Now, Cyd, get up the furnace, and make a fire," said Dan, as soon as the sails of the Isabel had been furled, and the boat carefully secured to a tree on the shore.

"Sartin," replied Cyd, as he took off the hatch of the stow-hold. "Who's gwine to be de cook, Dan?"

"Do you know how to cook, Cyd?"

"Hossifus! I don't know nossin at all 'bout it."

"Neither do I; and I think Lily does not. I will try my hand at the business first. We can make some coffee, boil the potatoes, and fry the bacon. I am sure I can do that."

"So kin Cyd."

"Just as soon as we get to the place where we are going, we will divide the work between us. You shall be cook one week, and I will the next week. Now bring up the bacon, the potatoes, and the coffee."

Old Jake, who was to do the cooking for the excursionists, had provided every thing that would be needed for the purpose. In a short time the fires were blazing in the two furnaces, the coffee and the potatoes were boiling upon one, and the other was in readiness for the frying-pan, when the other articles should be in a sufficiently forward state to require its use.

Though Dan had never actually turned his hand to the business of cooking, he had so often seen the various operations performed, that he was competent to do it himself, after acquiring a little experience. He was a keen observer, and whenever he saw any thing done, he could generally do it himself.

In the forward part of the cabin of the Isabel, reaching from the foremast to the centre-board, was a fixed table; and while Dan was cooking the bacon, Cyd prepared it for the morning meal. They had every thing which could be found in any well-ordered house, and the table had more the appearance of that of a first-class hotel than one provided for the use of the runaway slaves.

"Possifus!" exclaimed Cyd, when the table was ready, as he sat down upon the berth to observe the effect. "Dat's bery fine! Cyd, you'se gwine to set down to dat table. You'se a free nigger, now, Cyd, and jes as good as de best ob dem. Dar's de bread, dar's de pickles, dar's de butter, dar's de sugar, dar's de milk, dar's de salt, dar's de castor. Gossifus! All dat's bery fine, and Cyd's gwine to set down at de fus table."

"Here, Cyd," called Dan, through the sky-light, as he proceeded to pass down the breakfast. "Put them on the table."

"Mossifus! Do you think Cyd don't know what to do wid dese yere tings? I knows what fried bacon's fur!"

The potatoes, the bacon, and the coffee were handed down, and when they were placed upon the table, the effect called forth another rhapsody from Cyd. While he was apostrophizing the bacon and the potatoes, he was joined by Dan.

"Come, Lily," said he; "breakfast is ready."

"Hossifus! We forgot one ting for sartin," exclaimed Cyd, suddenly looking as sober as though he had not a friend in the world.

"What, Cyd."

"De bell."

"Bell? What do we want of a bell?"

"To call de folks to breakfas, to be sure," replied Cyd, distending his mouth from ear to ear.

"I think we can get along without a bell," replied Dan, laughing at the folly of his companion.

Lily joined the boys in the forward cabin, as they called the space forward of the centre-board. She looked as pleased and happy as Dan and Cyd; and one would hardly have believed, from their appearance, that they were fugitives from slavery. All the talk about the chilly damps of the swamp, the perils and the hardships of the flight, appeared to have been forgotten. The planter and his son could hardly have been more jovial than the party which had taken possession of the yacht.

Cyd was not accustomed to the refinements of social life, as Dan and Lily had been, and he began to behave in a

very indecorous and remarkable manner. As it was all in the family, Dan ventured to suggest to him that, as he was now seated at a gentleman's table, he should behave in a gentlemanly manner; and not eat bacon from his fingers, when a knife and fork had been especially provided for this purpose. Cyd accepted the rebuke, and thereafter imitated the manners of his companions, even carrying his ideas of gentility to extremes.

The cooking was a decided success, with the exception of the coffee, which was very muddy and uninviting. This was not strange, inasmuch as none of the chemical conditions, upon which good coffee is produced, had been complied with. It was nothing but coffee and water stewed together. Dan was mortified, and apologized for the failure.

"How did you make it, Dan?" asked Lily, with a smile, which fully spoke the offender's pardon.

"I put the coffee in, and then the water," replied the amateur cook, with a blush.

"Hot water?"

"No, cold."

Lily laughed aloud at this blunder, and then gave him a receipt for making good coffee, which included the use of boiling water and fish-skin.

"I saw that fish-skin in the locker, and I couldn't think what it was for?" laughed Dan.

But the breakfast was finished, and, in spite of the drawback of poor coffee, it was pronounced satisfactory, especially by Cyd, whose plantation rations had not included coffee, butter, white bread, and other articles which graced the table of the Isabel.

"Now, Dan and Cyd, you can go away and do what you please," said Lily.

"We will clear up the table and wash the dishes first," replied Dan.

"No; I am going to do that."

"You, Lily?"

"I am going to do my share of the work. I can't manage a boat, but I think I can cook, and take care of the cabin, set the table, and do every thing that belongs to the women."

"I didn't mean to have you work, Lily," said Dan. "You have been a lady's-maid all your life, and never did any work."

"Well, I know how; and I'm going to do my share. I should not feel right to live like a lady here. I mean to do all the work in the cabin, and the cooking too."

"No, Cyd and I will do that."

"Mossifus! Do all dat, and all de rest too."

"I must do something, or I should be very unhappy."

"Well, Lily, you shall have your own way; and while you are clearing off the table, Cyd and I will prepare the lady's cabin."

"The what?" asked Lily.

"Your cabin; you shall have a room all to yourself."

Dan left the cabin, followed by Cyd. Taking from one of the lockers, in the standing room, an awning which was used to spread over the forward deck, he unrolled it, and proceeded to make his calculations, while Cyd stood by, scratching his head and wondering what was going to be done.

The cabin of the Isabel was entered by two doors, one on each side of the centre-board, which divided the after cabin into two apartments. Dan, after measuring the cabin, cut the awning to the size required, and then nailed it up as a partition between the forward and the after cabin. The space thus enclosed formed a state room, six feet long and three feet wide, outside of the berth. This room could be entered only by the door from the standing room. It made a very neat and comfortable chamber, and Lily was much pleased with it.

By the time the dishes were washed and put away, there was considerable gaping among the party. Cyd opened his mouth fearfully wide, and Miss Lily's eyelids drooped, like her fragrant namesake, when its mission on earth is nearly finished. The fugitives had come to the knowledge that they had slept none during the preceding night, and as the voyage was to be continued when darkness favored the movement, it was necessary that the hours should be appropriated to slumber. Lily retired to her new state room, closed the door, and was soon asleep.

"Now, Cyd, one of us must turn in," said Dan.

"Can't we bof turn in?"

"No; one of us must stand watch while the other sleeps. We have been getting along so finely, that we have almost forgot that we are in danger."

"Possifus!" gasped Cyd. "Wha--wha--what you want to keep watch fur?"

"Suppose any one should come upon us while we are asleep?" added Dan.

"Pose any one come 'pon us when we're awake: what den? Who's a gwine to help hisself?" yawned Cyd.

"I am, for one. I shall not be taken, if I can help it."

"Gossifus! What you gwine to do? 'Pose you see de nigger hunter, wid tree, four dozen bloodhounds: wha--wha--what you gwine to do den?"

"I'm going to fight! And you must do the same!" replied Dan, with energy, as he grasped one of the fowling-pieces that lay upon the bunk.

"Gwine to fight!" cried Cyd, opening his eyes with astonishment. "Gwine to kill de dogs and kill de men?"

"That's what I mean. I will shoot man or dog that attempts to touch me."

"Wha--wha--wha--" stammered Cyd, as he always did when excited; but the idea was too big for him just then, and he broke down altogether.

"That's a settled point, and you must learn to use a gun."

"Woo--woo--woo--would you shoot Massa Kun'l, if he come for to take you?" demanded Cyd.

"I would, or any other man. I belong to myself now, and I will fight for my own freedom to the last."

"I dunno 'bout dat, Dan," mused Cyd. "Hossifus! Shoot Massa Kun'l! Dunno 'bout dat."

"Turn in, Cyd, and go to sleep. You may have the first chance."

The two boys drew lots for the choice of berths, and Dan obtained the after one. Cyd was soon snoring in one of the forward bunks, while Dan took his place upon deck to guard against the approach of man or beast that might threaten their newly-acquired freedom.



CHAPTER XI.

THE BAY OF THE BLOODHOUNDS.

Dan had his solitary watch for four hours, with nothing to disturb his meditations except the occasional visit of an alligator; but as the ugly reptiles did not offer to swallow the boat, or otherwise interfere with her, the lonely sentinel did not even challenge the intruders. He was very sleepy, for he had not closed his eyes during the preceding night, and his great purpose had sadly interfered with his slumbers since the time for its execution had been fixed.

It was one o'clock when he called the "watch below." Lily was still wrapped in slumber, worn out by her sleepless night, and by the excitement of her novel position. After charging Cyd to keep awake, assuring him that "eternal vigilance was the price of liberty," Dan went into the cabin to obtain the rest he so much needed. He slept soundly, and, no doubt, dreamed strange things; but when he awoke it was nearly dark. Starting up with a spring, he bounded to the deck, where he found Cyd fast asleep upon the cushions of the standing room.

"Cyd!" exclaimed he, seizing the faithless sentinel by the collar. "Is this the way you keep watch?"

"Possifus!" ejaculated Cyd, as he sprang to his feet. "I done been asleep."

"Been asleep! I should think you had! Have you been snoring there all the afternoon?"

"No, *sar*! Dis chile hain't been asleep more'n two minutes--no, *sar*, nor more'n a minute and a half."

"Yes, you have; you have been asleep all the afternoon. You deserve to be a slave all the rest of your life!" added Dan, indignantly.

"Gossifus! I tink not. Wha--wha--wha--what does you mean by dat?" stuttered Cyd.

"How dared you go to sleep when you were on watch?"

"I tell you, Dan, I'se been wide awake all de artemoon. Hadn't been asleep quite two minutes."

"He hasn't slept long, Dan," said Lily, as she came out of the cabin; "for I was with him only a little while ago."

"I'm glad of it, if he hasn't," added Dan, more calmly.

"You kin bet yer life dis chile don't go to sleep on de watch. No, *sar*!"

"But you did go to sleep, Cyd. You were asleep when I came on deck."

"I jes close my eyes for a minute, but I was jes gwine to wake up when you comed on deck."

"I can't keep awake all the time; I must sleep some."

"Bout six hours," chuckled Cyd; and his companion had really slept about this time.

"Why didn't you call me then, as I did you?"

"I told him not to do so, Dan," interposed Lily, whose sweet smile was sure to remove any objection which Dan might have. "We ate our supper about an hour ago. Cyd was going to call you, but I wouldn't let him. I knew how tired you were, and you will not have any chance to sleep to-night."

"It was very kind of you, Lily," said Dan with a smile. "But I must teach Cyd not to sleep when he is on watch. Any carelessness of this kind might spoil every thing."

"I never'll go to sleep on de watch agin, so help me Possifus!" exclaimed Cyd, now fully impressed by the magnitude of his criminal neglect.

"I'll answer for him," said Lily; "I'll stay on deck and keep him awake next time."

"O, no, you needn't, Lily."

"But why can't I keep watch in the daytime, and let both of you sleep? If there was any danger I could call you."

"I don't mean to ask you to keep watch, or do any such work. It is not a woman's place."

"I mean to take my turn next time," said she, resolutely. "Now, Dan, I will get your supper. Cyd and I ate bread and butter, and drank cold water; but if you are going to sail the boat all night, you will want some tea."

"Thank you, Lily; you are very kind. I will get the tea myself."

"No, you shall not. I am not going to be idle all the time. I mean to do my share of the labor. If it isn't a woman's work to keep watch, it is to get tea; and if you please, I will do it myself."

My young readers will remember that Lily, though a slave girl, was a gentle, delicate creature. She had never done any manual labor. She had simply stood by her young mistress, fanned her when she was warm, brushed away the flies, handed her a book, or other article, when she wanted it, picked up her handkerchief when she dropped it, and assisted at her toilet. If Miss Edith needed any greater exertion of bone and muscle, another person was called to render the service. But she had been about the kitchen and work rooms of the plantation, and having a taste for the various housekeeping operations, she had incidentally acquired some little skill in cooking, needle-work, and other branches of female industry.

Her form was agile and graceful, her organization delicate; and no person, even with a knowledge of her social condition, and rankly imbued with southern prejudices, could have denied that she was beautiful in form and feature. Her complexion was fairer than that of a majority of Anglo-Saxon maidens. Her eye was soft, and sweetly expressive. Such was Lily, the slave girl of Redlawn; and when she talked of performing the drudgery of the Isabel, Dan, with that chivalrous consideration for the gentler sex which characterizes the true gentleman, resented the idea. He preferred to labor day and night, rather than permit her to soil her white hands with the soot of the furnaces.

Lily, as we have seen, had wiser and more sensible ideas on the subject. She had an instinctive contempt for that sort of chivalry, and in spite of the remonstrances of the knightly skipper of the Isabel, she kindled a fire, and with the assistance of Cyd, soon placed the tea and bread and butter upon the cabin table. She then took her place at the head of the board, and "did the honors" with an elegance and grace which would have adorned the breakfast parlor at Redlawn. Though Cyd had been to supper, he accepted the invitation to repeat the operation.

Before the meal was commenced, it was necessary to light the cabin lantern, which swung over the table. Whether there is any exhilaration in a cup of tea or not, the party soon became very cheerful; and Cyd was as chipper as though he were in the midst of the Christmas holidays.

After supper Dan took the bateau, and pulled out to the lake, to reconnoitre the position, and assure himself that there were no obstacles to the departure of the Isabel. When he returned, Lily had washed the dishes and put the cabin in order, thus carrying her point, and establishing herself as mistress in this department. Dan did not deem it prudent to start so early in the evening; but the sails were hoisted, and every thing made ready for the departure.

The wind was light, and the leader of the expedition had some doubts about starting at all that night. The Isabel had made only about twenty miles during the preceding night, with a strong breeze to help her during a portion of the time. He had carefully studied the maps in his possession, and estimated the distances by the scale between the various points. He knew exactly where he intended to go, and a failure to reach the place before daylight would expose him to the risk of being seen from some of the plantations on the banks of the lake.

The responsibility of deciding this important question rested upon him alone. The distance to be accomplished before they could reach another place of security was about twenty-five miles. An average of three miles an hour would enable him to complete the passage by sunrise, and he at last decided to attempt it.

About nine o'clock the two boys got into the bateau, and towed the Isabel out of the creek, and with gaff-topsails and staysail set, in addition to the jib, fore, and main sails, the voyage was renewed. Keeping as near the western shore of the lake as it was prudent to go, the boat glided gently over the tranquil waters.

In a couple of hours the Isabel reached the narrow outlet of the lake. Thus far, the south-westerly wind had enabled her to run with a free sheet; but at this point the course changed, and Dan found that he should be compelled to beat dead to windward in order to reach his destination. Then he wished he had not started; but up the creek he had been unable to determine from what direction the light breeze came, and had decided the question to the best of his ability.

Though he had no reason to reproach himself for his want of care, the situation was none the less difficult or trying on that account. But there was one compensating advantage: as he passed through the narrow outlet of the lake, the broad surface of the Chetemache was before him. It was forty miles long by ten miles wide, and afforded him abundant space in which to work the boat. And in this open sea the wind came unobstructed to his sails.

The course of the Isabel, on her first tack, lay close to the eastern shore of the lake. The boat moved very slowly through the water, and Lily and Cyd sat by the side of the skipper, talking in low tones of the future, with its hopes and its trials, its joys and its dangers. Suddenly they heard a crackling sound in the cane-brake near them; then came from a greater distance the bay of bloodhounds. There was no mistaking these sounds; and for an hour they listened in almost breathless anxiety to these appalling indications of a slave-hunt.

The yelp of the dogs came nearer and nearer; but they had lost the sounds which indicated the presence of the hunted fugitive.

"Gossifus!" whispered Cyd, for he had been forbidden to speak a loud word. "Where you 'pose de nigger dem dogs is chasin' is?"

"I don't know. I pray that he may escape," replied Dan.

"Can't you help him?" asked Lily, whose frame shook with terror, as her fancy pictured the terrible scene which she had so often heard described.

A splash in the water a hundred yards astern of the Isabel now attracted the attention of the party.

"Can't you help him?" repeated Lily, in trembling tones.

"It will not be safe for us to show ourselves, for the human bloodhounds are not far off."

"Do help him if you can. Save him from those terrible dogs!" pleaded Lily.

"He will swim to that island," said Dan. "Perhaps the dogs will not catch him."

"Yes, they will."

"Yes, dey will. Dey done leap in de water. Dar dey go!" added Cyd, as they listened to the splashes as the brutes sprang into the lake.

"Save him! Save him, Dan!" cried Lily.

"It may cost us our lives and our liberty," replied Dan.

"No matter. Let us die if we can save the poor man from the fangs of the bloodhounds."

"I will, Lily," replied Dan, as he put the Isabel about, and headed towards the small island, about half a mile from the shore. "Take the helm, Cyd," continued he, as he left his post at the tiller, and rushed into the cabin.

He returned in a moment with two fowling-pieces in his hands, and proceeded to load them. By this time the panting fugitive was distinctly seen, closely pursued by the dogs.



CHAPTER XII.

QUIN, THE RUNAWAY.

Dan had loaded the fowling-pieces with buckshot. Though not a good marksman, he had some experience in the use of arms, and felt fully competent to cut off the bloodhounds before they could pounce upon their human prey. Leaving Cyd at the helm, he went forward and stationed himself at the heel of the bowsprit.

The dogs were better swimmers than the fugitive, and were rapidly gaining upon him, for the poor creature's limbs seemed to be partially paralyzed by the appalling danger that menaced him. The Isabel was approaching the scene of this exciting race with a rapidity which promised soon to terminate the affair.

Dan immediately obtained a correct idea of the relative positions of the dog and the man. His object was to run the boat between them, and thus cut off the savage beasts from their prey.

"Luff a little, Cyd," said he.

"Luff 'em 'tis," replied the helmsman, who was boatman enough to understand the nautical phrase, and even to handle the craft under the direction of a more skilful skipper.

"Steady as she is."

"See here, Dan. Is you gwine to shoot?" asked Cyd.

"Certainly I am. What do you suppose I got the guns for?"

"Possifus! What you gwine to shoot?"

"The dogs, of course. Luff a little--luff! You are letting her fall off."

"Luff 'em 'tis. See here, Dan. You be mighty keerful you don't hit de nigger."

"Silence, now, and mind your helm! You are steering wild."

Cyd had so far improved in the cultivation of the quality of obedience on shipboard, that he did not speak again, but he was fearfully excited by the stirring scene which was transpiring near him. Dan was not less moved, though his cool determination produced a different manifestation of his feelings. He was conscious of the danger to which his interference in the hunt subjected him. There were probably several slave-hunters on the track of the fugitive. The Isabel would be seen by them, and possibly be recognized, which would certainly bring pursuers upon her track.

But it was not in his nature to permit his suffering fellow-creature, in this unequal strife, to be conquered by his human and brute antagonists. The appeal of the gentle Lily had been addressed to a sympathizing heart, and he entered with all his soul upon the task of saving the slave from the fangs of his pursuers.

The Isabel had now come within a few yards of the dogs and their prey. The time for action had come. Dan was fully sensible of the great crime, as the southern slave law regarded it, of shooting a "nigger dog;" but with a steady hand, though his heart bounded with exciting emotions, he raised the gun to his shoulder, and taking deliberate aim at the nearest hound, he fired. The brute gave a deep yell, and for some time continued to splash about in the water.

"Don't shoot me, massa! Don't shoot me, and I'll gib myself up," cried the fugitive, who seemed to have heard the report of the gun, without observing the effect which the shot had produced.

"I mean to save you," replied Dan, as he levelled the gun at another of the dogs; but this time he missed his aim, and the hound continued to swim towards the negro.

"Luff a little more," said Dan to Cyd, as the boat came between the man and the dogs.

"Luff 'em 'tis."

As the boat now divided the dogs from their prey, Dan did not again load the guns; but seizing the boat-hook, he gave the foremost hound a knock on the head, which caused him to retreat, howling with pain.

"Swim this way," cried Dan to the negro. "I will save you."

"Yes, sar," gasped the negro, whose breath was nearly exhausted by the hard struggle through which he had just passed.

As the Isabel luffed up, the fugitive came alongside, and Dan assisted him to climb upon the deck.

"O Lord!" groaned he, as he threw himself at full length upon the forecastle.

"Poor fellow!" sighed Lily, who ran forward to see the sufferer as soon as he was hauled on board. "What can we do for him?"

"He needs rest. He is all worn out. He may have run for miles before he took to the water."

"Can't we give him something? There is some cold tea in the cabin."

"I will get him something," added Dan; and he ran aft and entered the cabin.

He returned in a moment with a bottle and a tumbler. The fugitive still lay upon the deck, panting and groaning like a dying gladiator after the mortal struggle of the arena. Freedom was worth the exertion he had made, though every fibre in his frame had been strained. He had manfully fought the battle, though without the interference of our party he would certainly have lost the day. Dan poured out a tumblerful of the wine which the bottle contained, and placed it at the lips of the sufferer. He eagerly drank off the draught, and sank back upon the deck.

"He will be better soon. He is all out of breath," said Dan, as he brought one of the cushions from the standing room and put it under the poor man's head.

"Gossifus!" shouted Cyd, who still retained his position at the helm, though his interest in the scene of the forward deck caused him to steer very badly. "Hossifus!" added he, in gasping tones; "de dogs! de dogs!"

"What's the matter, Cyd?" demanded Dan.

"De dogs! Dey done eat dis chile all up! Dey won't leabe de ghost ob a grease-spot luff of dis nigger!" cried Cyd, in mortal terror.

"Mind how you steer, then!" replied Dan, hastening to the assistance of his terrified companion. "Don't you see you have thrown her up into the wind, so that the sails don't draw a bit!"

"Mossifus! dis chile don't want to be food for de dogs."

"You will be, if you don't mind what you are about," said Dan, as he took the tiller; and putting it up, the boat gathered fresh headway, and soon shot out of reach of the bloodhounds.

"Why don't you shoot de wicked dogs?"

"I don't want any more noise. I hate the dogs as bad as you do, but we must be careful," replied Dan. "Now, can you mind what you are about, and keep the sails full."

"Dis chile kin do dat, for sartin."

"If you don't the dogs will have you. Now, be careful, and I will go forward, and take care of the poor fellow, who is nearly dead. Watch the sails; never mind the dogs; they can't catch you, if you sail the boat properly."

"You kin trus dis chile for dat. Cyd isn't afeerd ob notin, only he don't want to be eat up by de wicked dogs."

Dan went forward, where Lily was bending over the panting runaway, rubbing his temples, and speaking sweet words of hope and comfort to him. In a short time he was in some measure recovered from the effects of his fearful struggle with the fate that beset him.

"I was sure I was caught, when I saw de boat," said he, as he raised himself to a sitting posture, and gazed with astonishment at those who had so singularly proved to be friends, instead of foes.

"Are there any men on your track?" asked Dan, who could not lose sight of the peril he had incurred by this Samaritan act.

"I speck dar is," replied he. "I hear dem off eber so far, but I don't see dem."

"Can they chase you on the lake?"

"I speck dey can. Dey'll get a boat and follor de dogs."

"Where are you from?" asked Lily.

"From Major Pembroke's plantation, 'bout ten mile from dese yere parts, I speck."

"How long since you run away?"

"I luff de place about tree days ago. I stay in de cane-brake till noon to-day, and git so hungry I could stan it no longer. Den I goes out to find someting to eat. Den somebody sees me, and dey follow me wid de dogs. I done kill two of dem dogs, and I kill de rest, but I hear de men coming, and I run for de lake. I speck, when I git in de water, to frow de dogs off de scent, but dey git so near dey see and hear me. Dem's mighty fine nigger dogs, or dey never follor me into de water. I done gib it all up when I hear dem in de water arter me."

"Did you get any thing to eat when you went out of the cane-brake," asked Lily.

"No, missy; I got seen 'fore I find any ting."

"Poor fellow! Then you haven't had any thing to eat for three days?"

"Noting but leabes an de bark ob trees."

"I will give you some supper at once," said Lily, as she hastened to the cabin.

"Lily!" called Dan. "You mustn't light the lantern, or make a fire."

"Why not?"

"The light would betray us. The slave-hunters will soon be out in their boat after this man."

"I will not, then."

While Lily was engaged below, Dan provided the runaway with a suit of his own clothes, which were not much too small for him, as he was a man of medium stature. He then conducted him to the standing room, for he was still too weak to walk without support. His supper was brought up, and he ate cold bacon and potatoes, bread and cheese, till the wondering Lily thought he would devour their whole stock of provisions, and till Dan kindly suggested that he would make himself sick if he ate any more.

While he was eating, Dan satisfied his curiosity in regard to the Isabel and the party on board of her. The runaway, whose name was Quin,—an abbreviation of Quincy,—listened with astonishment to the story of these elegant fugitives, who ran away in a yacht, and lived in a style worthy of a planter's mansion. No doubt he thought their experience was poetical and pretty, compared with his own, for his flight had been a death struggle with famine and flood, with man and brute.

In the mean time, the Isabel had run the dogs out of sight, and the waters in the direction from which she had just come were as still as death. No doubt the lake would be scoured in search of the fugitive; but for the present the party seemed to be secure from pursuit.

The boat was now approaching the northern shore of the lake, and it became necessary to tack. The wind held steady, but light; and Dan had but small hopes of being able to reach his destination before daylight. When every thing was made snug on the other tack, and there seemed to be no present danger ahead or astern, Cyd conducted Quin to one of the forward berths, and he turned in for the night. The runaway was evidently a very pious slave, and the young fugitives listened with reverend interest to the long prayer he offered up before he retired. It was a paean of thanksgiving for his escape from the fangs of the slave-hunters. It was homely speech, but it was earnest and sincere, and those who listened were deeply impressed by its fervid simplicity.

Dan and Lily sat alone in the stern of the boat, for Cyd had been permitted to turn in with the runaway. They talked of freedom and the future for an hour, and then they were started by the sound of oars in the distance. The slave-hunters were on their track.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE NIGHT CHASE ON THE LAKE.

Though the Isabel carried all her extra sails, the wind was so light that she made very little progress through the water, and the sound of oars which indicated the approach of a boat was appalling to Dan. There could be no doubt that it contained the slave-hunters in pursuit of Quin; and the fate of the whole party seemed to be linked with that of the slave, who was sleeping in happy security in the cabin.

The schooner was close-hauled, and sailing as near the wind as she could; but Dan, as soon as he realized the peril of the situation, gave the boat a couple of points, which sensibly increased her speed. When he first heard the pursuer's boat, it was just abeam of the Isabel. His present course, therefore, carried him nearer to the boat for a time, but it was not safe to permit her to get to the windward of the Isabel, in that light breeze.

Dan was satisfied that, if he had been in the four-oar boat with his black crew, he could have overhauled the Isabel in a short time, if the two craft had been in the positions occupied by the pursuer and the pursued. The race depended entirely upon the character of the boat in which the slave-hunters had embarked.

Whatever the result of the pursuit, Dan was fully determined not to be taken himself, nor to permit his friends on board to be taken. With the arms in the cabin, he was confident that he could make a good defence. But the thought of taking the life, even of a slave-hunter, was terrible to him, though he had fully reasoned himself into the belief that such a course would be perfectly justifiable before God; and he cared little for the judgment of a slave-holding community. His Maker had given him the right to be free--had endowed him with the right to use his own bone and sinew for his own benefit and happiness; and the man or the community that attempted to deprive him of this right committed a crime against God and him, and it was his duty to defend himself against this violation of his Heaven-given right.

He hoped, however, to be spared the pain of resorting to the use of arms. He prayed to God, with all the earnestness of an earnest nature, for more wind; for his creed, if he had any, was very simple, and included a belief in special providences. The boat of the slave-hunters was now not more than half a mile distant, and the chase had become intensely exciting to Dan and Lily, who alone were on deck. The trembling maiden could with difficulty maintain a reasonable self-possession. She was terrified as the panting hare when she feels the warm breath of the pursuing hound.

"We shall certainly be taken, Dan," said she, as she caught sight of the boat beneath the main boom of the schooner. "We are lost."

"No, Lily, not lost. You shall never be taken while I have a drop of blood left in my body," replied Dan, in a low and earnest tone.

"Why, they are ever so much nearer than they were when we first saw them."

"That is true; but it is only because I changed the course of the boat."

"Why did you change it, then?"

"Because, if I run her down into the corner of the lake, they can easily cut us off."

"I suppose you have done the best you could."

"There was no other way to do," answered Dan, as he glanced under the boom at the pursuer. "We shall soon know which boat goes the fastest now."

"I don't understand it at all," said Lily, whose knowledge of seamanship was very limited.

"You know the shape of the letter A?"

"I do."

"Well, that boat has been running up one leg of the A, and I have been running up the other; so, you see, we must be coming nearer together. I had to run this way in order to use the wind to the best advantage."

"But you will come together in this way in a few moments."

"No; we are as near now as we can be, unless that boat sails faster than we do. I shall continue to sail in a straight line, but I shall get ahead of the other if she does not change her course. She cannot cut me out now, at any rate."

Probably Lily was willing to talk of this subject to banish more painful thoughts from her mind, though it is not likely that she clearly comprehended the tactics of the skipper of the Isabel.

"Don't you think I had better call Cyd and Quin?" asked she, after she had again glanced at the position of the pursuing boat.

"No, let them sleep. We will not call them till it is necessary to do so," replied Dan.

"Do you think we can escape them?" asked she, anxiously.

"I cannot tell, Lily. I hope so. It depends entirely upon the wind. If the breeze should die out, of course we could make no progress at all."

"Do you think the wind will die out?" said she, nervously.

"I can't tell, Lily. I hope not, I pray not."

"Suppose it should die out, Dan?" added she, moving up nearer to the skipper.

"If we lose the wind there is nothing to prevent the boat from overtaking us at once."

"O, dear!" shuddered Lily, moving up still nearer to him who was her only earthly protector.

"Why do you tremble so, Lily?" asked Dan, as he took her hand and pressed it in his own, perhaps thinking that he might thus impart to her some of his own steadiness.

"Because I am so terribly frightened," replied she, with quivering lips. "I would rather die than be taken; and I have been thinking that I would throw myself into the lake if the boat catches us."

"You shall not be taken, Lily," said Dan, his lips compressed, and his teeth tightly closed, evincing the determination with which he had resolved to meet the slave-hunters, if they attempted to lay their polluting hands upon the gentle girl by his side.

"What can you do against such men as those?"

"I can fight, Lily; I would do so to save myself, but more to save you."

"O Heaven! If I should be taken! What would become of me?"

"No, no, Lily: don't take on so," said Dan, as he passed his arm around her waist--a familiarity in which he had never before indulged, but which was done only as a father clasps his child--to inspire her with more confidence, to assure her that she was in the care of one who was able and willing to save her from the dreadful fate that impended.

"I wish I could be brave as you are, Dan," said she, confidently; for the expedient of her devoted friend seemed not to be without some effect. "You don't appear to be at all alarmed."

"Because I have firmly resolved not to be taken myself, and not to let you be taken."

"I suppose they only want Quin."

"They cannot have him. He is a fugitive, like ourselves, and I don't believe God would permit us to escape if we should wickedly abandon him."

"Nor I; we won't do that. We will all be taken together," said Lily, whose sympathy for the hunted runaway seemed, for the moment, to give her new courage.

"Do you suppose they know any thing about us?" asked she.

"Perhaps they do. I suppose Colonel Raybone has sent hunters in every direction for us, and has probably offered a reward."

"Then we shall certainly be taken," answered Lily, with a shudder.

"We will not be taken, Lily, whoever pursues us."

"Hallo! In the boat there!" shouted a man of the pursuing party.

The slave-hunters were now within less than a quarter of a mile of the Isabel, for they had been gaining upon her by a vigorous use of their oars. The boat which contained them was now exactly astern of the schooner.

"Hallo!" replied Dan, who, knowing that the men could not talk and row to the best advantage, was quite willing to converse with them.

"What boat's that?" shouted the spokesman of the slave-hunters.

"Captain Barrett's," replied Dan, whose virtue was not sufficiently developed to induce him to tell the truth in his present perilous situation.

"Where from?"

"Down below Brashear," answered Dan, who had previously made up his mind what to say if any conversation with the pursuers should become necessary.

"What ye doin up here?"

"Came up with a party."

"Seen ary runaway nigger in the water?"

"No," shouted Dan, promptly.

The question filled him with hope, for it assured him the slave-hunters had not been near enough even to hear the report of the fowling-pieces when he fired them; or, at least, not near enough to discover who had fired them.

"Didn't ye see him?" asked the pursuers again.

"No."

"Gossifus! Wha--wha--wha--what's de matter?" demanded Cyd, rushing up from the cabin with Quin, both of them having been awakened from their slumbers by the voice of the skipper.

"Silence, Cyd!" said Dan, in a low, decided tone.

"Hush, Cyd!" added Lily, in a whisper. "Don't speak a word."

"Wha--wha--wha----"

"Hush, Cyd!" repeated Lily, who seemed, in the moment of danger, to be endowed with a self-possession at variance with her former timidity.

"Where you bound now?" called the slave-hunter.

"Home," replied Dan.

They asked no further questions for a time, and Dan saw, with a thrill of satisfaction, that they were lying upon their oars. He hoped that his answers had convinced them the runaway was not on board; but in this he was disappointed. He heard the men in the boat talking together, though he could not make out what they said. When the conference was ended, they renewed their efforts to overtake the Isabel.

"Hallo, the schooner!" shouted the spokesman again.

"Hallo, the boat," replied Dan.

"Heave to, and let us see you a minute."

"What for?"

"Want to talk with you."

"Can't stop."

"Guess ye kin. Heven't ye seen nary nigger?"

"No."

"Well, stop--won't ye?"

"Can't stop; must get home by sunrise."

"Well, ye must stop!" yelled the speaker, angrily, and with an oath.

"Hossifus!" groaned Cyd, in mortal terror.

"Shut up, Cyd," added Dan, sternly. "If you can't hold your tongue, I'll throw you overboard!"

"Possifus! Ugh! Wha--wha--wha----"

"Come, Cyd," interposed Quin, in a low tone, "don't make a noise. If you do, we shall all be lost."

"Dis chile's awful skeered. I done wish I hadn't come," replied Cyd, in a gentler tone; but the words trembled on his lips.

"Quin," said Dan.

"Sar," replied the fugitive, with a self-possession which thoroughly shamed the quaking Cyd.

"Take hold of the painter of the bateau, and haul it alongside."

"Yes, sar."

"Cyd, take hold and help him. Haul it up to the foremast, and take it on deck."

The order was obeyed, though Cyd, in his terror, was not able to render much assistance. The bateau was taken on deck to assist the sailing of the Isabel, and also to prevent the pursuers from seizing it, if they should unfortunately come near enough to do so.

"Stop your boat, I say," yelled the slave-hunter, after they had pulled for a few moments with the most determined zeal.

"Can't stop!" replied Dan.

"Stop her, or I'll fire into you!"

"Gossifus!" exclaimed Cyd, whose teeth were still chattering with fear.

Dan made no reply, and concluded not to answer any more questions.

"Are ye go'n to stop her?" demanded the pursuer. "I b'lieve you've got that nigger on board; and if ye don't heave to, I'll fotch ye up with a bullet."

"Bring up the guns, Cyd," said Dan, with forced coolness.

"Wha--wha--wha----"

"The guns!" said Dan, fiercely, as he stamped his foot upon the flooring to emphasize his meaning.

"Gossifus! I done think--" But Cyd disappeared in the cabin without giving those on deck the benefit of his thoughts.

"Now, Lily, you must go into your cabin. Lie down in your berth, for they may fire upon us," said Dan. "Don't be alarmed; there are only three men in that boat, and we can certainly beat them off."

"I will not leave you, Dan. I am not afraid of the bullets. I only fear----"

At that moment the report of a gun startled them, and the ball whistled close by Dan's head.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE BATTLE FOR FREEDOM.

"Take the helm, Cyd, and mind how you steer!" said Dan, with earnestness, as he rose from his seat, and seized one of the guns.

"Hossifus!" exclaimed Cyd, aghast at the thought. "Wha--wha--wha----"

"Take the helm!" repeated the resolute skipper, with a decision which left no alternative for the boy.

"Possifus! Dis chile don't want to set dar, and be shooted."

"There is no more danger there than there is any where else. Take your place, and don't be a coward. If you want to be free, you must fight for it now."

"Golly! Dis nigger ain't afeered, but Cyd don't want to be shooted, kase you can't do widout Cyd."

But the trembling foremast hand took his place at the tiller. He continued to mutter to himself, as though he was repelling the charge of cowardice which had been fastened upon him.

"Come, Lily, you must go into your cabin now," added Dan, tenderly, as he turned to Lily. "This is no place for you."

"O, I'm not afraid of the guns, Dan; only of the slave-hunters, and I cannot hide myself from them."

"You may escape if you stay in the cabin, and you can do no good here. I shall feel better to know that you are in a place of safety."

"I'm not afraid, Dan; really, I am not," replied she, earnestly.

"But you are in our way here, Lily. Do go into your cabin, and lie down in your berth."

"I will if I am in the way."

"If we have to fight, it will be right here, and I am determined to resist to the last."

"I will go;" and Dan led her to the door of her cabin.

She entered, and threw herself upon the cushions of the berth, and Dan, satisfied that she was in a place of comparative safety, turned his attention to the defence of his party.

"Can you handle a gun?" said he, turning to Quin, who appeared to be as cool and resolute as the skipper.

"Well, I done shoot some," replied Quin.

"Take a gun, then."

"Wha--wha--wha----" gasped Cyd.

"Silence, Cyd! Keep both eyes on the sails, or I'll put a bullet through your head. I didn't expect you would be a coward at such a time as this."

"Dis chile ain't a coward," answered Cyd, rising from his seat.

"Sit down, and mind your helm then!"

"Give me de gun, and I'll show you Cyd ain't no coward, no how."

"You never fired a gun in your life. You would be more likely to shoot yourself than any body else. Mind your helm; that's all we want of you."

"Possifus! Dis chile ain't no coward, no how," growled Cyd, as he cast his eyes at the sails. "Fire away dar, and show dese folks Cyd's no coward!"

"Gwine to fire into dem folks in de boat?" asked Quin.

"I am, if occasion requires," replied Dan, as he discharged the gun he held in his hand in the direction of the pursuers. "But I want to let them know that we are armed, and able to give as good as they send. I don't want to kill any of them if I can help it."

"I don't mind killin ob 'em; dat's what dey done do to me if dey gits a chance."

"Stop your boat!" shouted one of the men again; and it was evident, from the tones of the speaker, that the report of the gun from the Isabel was not altogether favorable to the views of the pursuers.

Dan made no reply, but loaded up his gun for further use.

"Stop your boat, or we'll fire into you again," shouted the speaker.

"If you do you will get as good as you send," answered Dan, as he put the cap upon his piece.

The reply was followed by another shot from the slave-hunters; but the ball whistled far above the heads of the fugitives. Dan took deliberate aim at the boat, and fired, ordering Quin to do the same. So far as they could discover, neither of the shots took effect. From this time both parties kept up an occasional firing; but as the night was so dark, and the motion of the boats not favorable to a steady aim, no one in the Isabel was hit, and Dan and his companion were not aware of any different result to the other boat.

Cyd maintained his position at the helm with the steadiness of an old salt who had stood at the wheel in a hundred battles; and Dan, witnessing his improved demeanor, began to think his singular conduct had been the result of excitement rather than of timidity.

But one thing was painfully evident to all on board of the schooner—that the boat was gaining upon her, and that the wind was gradually dying out. There was no hope for them except in their own right arms. They must fight for liberty, fight for the rights which they had boldly reassumed. Dan and Quin were fully determined upon this course, and if they could bring Cyd up to a sense of duty on this trying emergency, there would be some chance of success.

As it was, the odds were against them. The pursuers were probably men accustomed to the use of arms, while all in the Isabel were, to say the least, very indifferent marksmen. Hitherto, they had fired at a dark mass on the water, for they could not distinguish the enemy in the gloom of the night, and the pursuers had been subject to the same disadvantage. A nearer approach to each other of the contending parties, would enable both to obtain a more accurate aim, and the work of death could not be much longer postponed.

"De wind's clean gone," said Cyd, as the heavy sails of the Isabel began to flap idly in the brails.

"Cyd, you must fight!" added Dan, earnestly.

"Possifus!" exclaimed Cyd, rising and seizing a boat-hook that lay on the quarter. "Dis chile will fight, for sartin."

"Good, Cyd! You are a brave fellow! You deserve to be free, and you shall be."

"Hossifus! Don't tell Cyd he's a coward, kase he ain't no such ting, no how."

"I didn't mean that, Cyd; and I take it all back," added Dan. "The boat has lost her headway now. They will be upon us in a moment or two. Stand firm, Cyd, and break the head of any man that attempts to get into the boat."

"Yes, sar! Dat's jus what I'se gwine to do. I'll broke de head ob any nigger-hunter dat's gwine to come in dis boat, for sartin."

"Now, stoop down both of you, and let them fire over our heads as they come up."

Dan crouched down in the bottom of the Isabel, with the gun ready for use when the decisive moment should arrive; Quin and Cyd did the same, and the intrepid skipper proceeded to give them such instructions for repelling the assault as the occasion required. All of them were to keep their places till the pursuers were close alongside, when the four guns, which were ready for use, were to be discharged. They hoped this would be sufficient to drive them off. If it should not, a fifty-six pound weight, taken from the ballast in the run, was to be pitched into the boat, as she came alongside, which would break out a hole in its bottom, and sink it before the enemy could get on board; Cyd was then to do duty with his boat-hook, and the others with similar weapons.

The slave-hunters showed some hesitation in boarding the schooner. The guns which had been fired from her had undoubtedly inspired them with a proper respect for those on board of her. The Isabel lay with her sails hanging loosely from the gaffs for half an hour, and still the enemy did not come up to her.

"We's gwine to hab a shower," said Quin.

"And a squall too, I'm afraid," added Dan, as he cast his eyes anxiously over the rail, to observe a pile of dense black clouds, which had suddenly rolled up the midnight sky.

"Whar's de boat?" asked Cyd.

"She lies off here only a little way from us. If she will only keep still till we can get a breeze, we shall be all right."

"Let 'em come on; dis chile's all ready for 'em," replied Cyd.

"Have you got over being scared?"

"Never was skeered."

"You said you were."

"Cyd's only jokin den. I done feel so kinder stirred up. I done want to holler--make de nigger feel good."

"Hush! They are coming!" exclaimed Dan, whose quick eye detected a stealthy movement on the part of the boat.

"Hallo! In the boat, thar," shouted the slave-hunter.

"Well. What do you want?"

"We're go'n to come on board of yer."

"No, you are not. You are all dead men if you attempt it."

"What do you want to shoot us fur? We ain't a go'n to hurt yer."

"You fired first, you infernal chicken thieves! We know what you are," replied Dan, who thought it best to class them with these depredators--men who frequent the western and southern rivers, plundering boats or houses, as opportunity presents.

"We ain't no chicken thieves."

"Keep off. We know you," repeated Dan.

This conversation was followed by another pause, during which the careful skipper had another opportunity to examine the weather indications. They were decidedly unfavorable. It was probable that a squall, if not a tornado, would soon burst upon them, and he deemed it prudent, even at the risk of being shot, to haul down the jib-topsail, the staysail, and the gaff-topsails. This he succeeded in doing; but he had scarcely finished the job, without giving himself time to stow the extra sails, before he saw the boat of the pursuers dashing rapidly towards the Isabel. The slave-hunters had at last made up their minds what to do. They meant to risk the encounter.

Just then a sharp flash of lightning illumined the lake, followed by the muttering thunder. A few fitful flashes of lightning had before glared on the gloomy scene; but now it gleamed fiercely from the sombre clouds, and the heavy thunder rolled an almost incessant peal.

"Ready! Ready, now!" said Dan, earnestly, as he sighted his gun at the trio in the boat, which the lightning plainly revealed to him.

"All ready," replied Quin.

"Now give it to them," said Dan, as he discharged his gun, and grasped another.

Quin did the same. The pursuers' boat was not more than ten rods from them, but, from the want of skill in the marksmen, the discharge proved harmless.

"Put in! Put in!" yelled one of the slave-hunters. "Never mind their firing. They can't hit nothing."

Dan and Quin fired again.

"I'm hit!" roared one of the enemy, with a horrible oath. "Don't go no furdur."

"Keep her a goin!" replied another. "We'll fix 'em in a minute now."

The boat dashed up towards the Isabel; but Dan, as soon as he had fired, leaped from his place, and seizing the fifty-six pound weight, plumped it full into the bottom of the boat. The fugitives heard the pine boards crash, as the weight broke its way through, and went to the bottom of the lake.

"Stand by, now!" shouted Dan, as he seized his club, and dealt a heavy blow upon the head of the slave-hunter who was in the act of leaping on board the schooner.

"We're sinkin!" cried another of them; and the gunwale of the bateau in which they sailed was nearly submerged.



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They had no time to act upon the aggressive; it was all they could do to secure their own safety. Just then, the expected squall struck the Isabel, and though Dan had before cast off all the sheets, she careened over till the water flowed into the standing room. Her watchful skipper sprung to the helm, and in an instant she righted partially, and darted forward like a steed pricked with the spur.

"We are safe!" exclaimed Dan, as Lily rushed from her cabin, startled by the exciting events which had just transpired.



CHAPTER XV.

THE FATE OF THE SLAVE-HUNTERS.

"Haul down the foresail, Cyd!" shouted Dan, as the Isabel gathered way, and forged ahead. "Be quick, but be careful of yourself."

With the assistance of Quin, Cyd got the foresail in, though it was not without a deal of hard tugging, for the wind now blew a fierce gale. As soon as sail was thus reduced, the sheets of the jib and mainsail were secured, and the schooner lay down to her work, dashing through the water at a furious rate.

"We are all right now, Lily," said Dan. "Go into your cabin again, or you will be blown away."

"Were any of you hurt in the fight?" asked she, as loud as she could scream, for the wind howled fearfully through the rigging of the schooner.

"No, we are all well and hearty. Go to the cabin, Lily."

She returned to her place of security, and seemed to be satisfied that the hour of peril had passed, for the thunder and the lightning, the dashing waves and the roaring wind, had no terrors compared with those produced by the presence of the slave-hunters.

The Isabel labored fearfully in the heavy squall, and it was only by the exercise of all his skill that Dan could keep her right side up. He was obliged, as the gusts of wind struck her, to ease off the sheets, and to luff her up. By the glare of the blinding lightning he obtained the position of the boat in the lake, or he might have run her on shore, and, with the beautiful craft, wrecked all the hopes of his party.

"Here, Cyd and Quin, stand by to reef this mainsail! We can't stand this long," said Dan, as he threw the Isabel up into the wind.

"Possifus!" yelled Cyd, above the howling of the tempest. "We all go to de bottom, for sartin."

"No, we won't; stand by, and work lively. Let go the peak halyards," replied he, as he cast off the throat halyards, on the other side. "Haul down the sail as fast as you can, Quin."

With the jib still drawing full, the Isabel continued steadily on her course, while Dan and Cyd put a double reef in the mainsail, Quin standing at the helm in the mean time, and acting under the direction of the skipper.

"Now, up with it," added Dan, when the reef-points were all taken up.

The mainsail was hoisted, and again the Isabel dashed madly on her course, for she had now all the sail she could carry in that fierce blow. Dan stood at the helm, with his eyes measuring the distances, as the vivid lightning revealed the bearings of the shores. Cyd was ordered to the forecabin to keep a sharp lookout ahead, while Quin was directed to bale out the boat, for at least a hogshhead of water had poured in over the side when the flaw struck her.

The wind came in heavy gusts, each one of which threatened to "knock down" the Isabel; and if her skipper had not been a thorough boatman, such must have been her fate. By skilfully meeting the flaws as they struck her, he prevented her from capsizing. Under ordinary circumstances he would have deemed it highly imprudent to carry any sail, and would have anchored the boat with a long cable; but this was the battle of Freedom, and success was worth any risk and any peril which it might require.

The tempest, however, was of short duration. When the rain began to pour in torrents, the gale subsided. The reefs were shaken out, and, finally, the foresail was set again. The wind continued to blow pretty fresh, but all danger was at an end.

"What you 'pose come ob dem men?" asked Quin, as he finished his task of baling out the boat.

"I don't know; but I feel confident that not all of them are able to tell what has happened to them."

"One of them was hit wid de shot," added Quin.

"And I struck one over the head with a fender."

"Dem two mus be gone killed dead for sure," said Quin, with solemn earnestness.

"Of course it was not possible for them to get ashore, for their boat was stove all to pieces. Do you know them, Quin?"

"Yes, sar; dey's all nigger-hunters."

"Could they swim?"

"I dunno; but I s'peck dey could."

"It would not make much difference whether they could or not. The wind blew a hurricane for a few moments."

"Quin tinks dey must be all dead," replied the man, shaking his head.

"I'm afraid they are; but it was not our fault. If I thought they were, I would not go down the lake any farther," added Dan, musing.

"I feels almost sartin dey's gone to dar reward--'may de good Lo'd hab mercy on dar sinful souls.'"

Dan considered the question for a time in silence, and finally determined to put the boat about, and head her for his destination at the north-westerly corner of the lake. The rain still came down in torrents; but as all on deck were provided with rubber coats, belonging to the boat, which had been provided for the use of the planter and his guests on board, they did not suffer, and were not even very uncomfortable. But if they had been, it would not have been regarded as a serious matter, amid the fierce excitements of that eventful night.

The storm was nothing more than one of those sudden showers which come up so unexpectedly at the south. We once passed through a tornado in Louisiana, which came in a shower that gathered upon a blue sky in less than half an hour. It tore up tall trees as though they had been cornstalks, and rolled up the Mississippi so that it looked like a boiling caldron. In half an hour more the sun was shining gayly on the scene of devastation, as though Nature had no terrors in her laboratory of forces.

In an hour after the exciting scene on the lake, the Isabel had a gentle breeze and fair weather. Cyd still maintained his position on the forecastle, and Lily once more ventured into the standing room. Dan gave her a minute account of the affray with the slave-hunters, and concluded by stating his belief that all three of them had been drowned in the lake.

Lily shuddered at the thought; for the taking of a human life, even in defence of the freedom which she valued more highly than life itself, seemed a terrible thing to her gentle heart.

"Perhaps they are not dead," said she.

"Perhaps not; but it is hardly possible that they could have swum ashore. We were at least three miles from the land, and their boat was all stove to pieces."

"Dey might hab hold on to de boat," suggested Quin.

"But there was an awful sea for a few moments. Why, the water dashed clean over our decks," added Dan. "One of them may have saved himself, but I am confident the other two must have been lost."

"Hi, Dan!" shouted Cyd, from his position at the heel of the bowsprit.

"What is it, Cyd?"

"Dar's someting ober dar," added Cyd, pointing over to leeward, as he walked aft.

"What is it?"

"Cyd tinks it's de boat ob de slabe-hunters."

"Perhaps it is," said Dan, musing. "And our wounded or dying enemies may be clinging to it. Shall we save them?"

"Hossifus! Dey kill us ef we does," exclaimed Cyd.

"Lub your enemies," said Quin, piously. "Let us sabe dem if we can. We kin tie dar hands and fotch 'em ober dar."

"I don't think they are there."

"We must save their lives," added the gentle Lily.

"And perhaps lose our own; but I will overhaul the boat, to satisfy myself whether the men were lost or not," said Dan, as he let out the main sheet, and put up the helm. "Stand by with the boat-hook, Cyd."

In a few moments the Isabel had run up to the wreck of the boat, and Cyd grappled it with the boat-hook. There were no men clinging to it, but in the bottom of the boat, covered over with water, lay the body of one of the slave-hunters. It was probably the one who had been shot. He had not been killed at once, for he had spoken after he was hit; it looked as though he had been drowned in the bottom of the boat where he lay.

The fugitives were filled with horror at this discovery. Poor Lily had nearly fainted, and if Cyd had been shot himself, he could hardly have made a stronger demonstration. Quin uttered many pious ejaculations, showing that he had, from his heart, forgiven this man, who, an hour before, had thirsted for his blood. Dan, though not less impressed than his companions, was calm and resolute.

"This body may betray us," said he. "We must sink it in the lake."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Cyd, with a thrill of horror.

"We have no time to spare," added Dan, briskly. "Bring up another fifty-six, Quin."

The weight was brought up and tied to the corpse of the slave-hunter, as it lay in the boat. Dan then ordered his companions to tip the boat over; but Quin, asking for a moment's delay, threw himself upon his knees, and commenced an earnest prayer in behalf of the deceased, supplicating forgiveness for his bloodthirsty enemy. Dan listened reverently to the prayer, while Lily sobbed as though the departed slave-hunter had been her dearest friend, instead of the bitter foe of her race.

The service was ended; the boat was careened till the body rolled out, and disappeared in the depths of the lake.

"May de good Lo'd hab mercy on his poor, sinful soul, for de lub of Jesus' sake!" exclaimed Quin, as the corpse sank to its resting-place.

"Make fast the boat to that cleat on the quarter, Cyd," said Dan, as he hauled aft the sheets, and put his helm down.

Cyd obeyed, and the Isabel filled away upon her course again. Lily was calmer now, but she was still much impressed by the solemn and awful scene of which she had just been a witness.

"It's all over now, Lily. Don't think any more about it," said Dan, in soothing tones.

"It is terrible--isn't it, Dan?" replied she, with a shudder.

"It is, Lily; but there was no help for it. All that we have done was in self-defence."

"But it is awful to think of killing them."

"It is better as it is than if we had let them take us."

"Did you really mean to kill them, Dan?"

"Not if I could help it; but I would have killed a dozen of them rather than be carried back into slavery."

"We didn't kill 'em, Missy Lily," interposed Quin. "Dey done drowned. De good Lo'd strike 'em down jus like he did de 'Gyptians in de Red Sea, in de midst ob dar wickedness. We didn't kill 'em, Missy Lily."

"That's it, Lily," added Dan, indorsing the explanation, though the religious aspect of the case was not so strongly impressed upon his mind as upon that of his pious companion.

"We might have saved them," continued the gentle-hearted girl, who derived but little consolation from the words of Quin. "You might have taken them on board when the squall came."

"Why, Lily, I had just smashed their boat with my own hands, and I wasn't going to put my head into the lion's mouth. It is best as it is, Lily. The death of these men will remove all danger from our path, for no one has seen us except them."

"But how awful!" sighed she.

"I told you, Lily, before we started, that terrible things might happen to us. You shall be free; let this thought comfort you."

But it did not comfort her, and she continued to bewail the catastrophe that had befallen the slave-hunters till the attention of her companions was called to the position of the Isabel.

"Dar's land on de bof sides of us," called Cyd, who had again been stationed at the heel of the bowsprit to act as lookout man.

"All right! I see it," responded Dan. "Quin, let go the foresail halyards. How does it look ahead, Cyd?"

"Dark as de back of dis chile's hand."

"Look out sharp!"

"Do dat, for sartin."

The Isabel continued slowly on her course, for the woods on the shore now began to shelter the sails from the full force of the wind. The corner of the lake grew narrower with every moment she advanced, till the boat was not more than a couple of rods from either shore. She was running up one of the tributaries of the lake.

Presently the creek was less than thirty feet wide; and having passed round a bend so as to hide her from the open lake, Dan ordered his companions to make fast to a tree, as he ran her up to the shore.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE SWAMP.

The place where the Isabel had been moored was in the midst of a gloomy and extensive swamp. Though Dan had never been here before, he had heard of the region, and from the first had determined to conceal his party within its deep and almost impenetrable morasses. The swamp was about fifteen miles in extent from north to south, and ten from east to west. It was full of bayous and lagoons, and inhabited only by herons, alligators, and other wild animals of the south-west.

It was impossible to penetrate the swamp without a boat, for the *terra firma* of the region consisted only of islands covered with trees, most of them surrounded by shallow and muddy waters. It is doubtful whether any human being had ever fully explored this extensive swamp; and Dan was confident that, if he could succeed in making his way with the Isabel to a distance of two or three miles from the lake, his party would be free from intrusion, unless, indeed, the slave-hunters made a business of driving them from their covert.

The information of the leader of the expedition in regard to the swamp was exceedingly limited. All he knew had been derived from Colonel Raybone, who, in conversation with some of his friends, had mentioned the region, and given a partial description of it. He had learned that the bayou, which was the outlet of the waters of the swamp, was obstructed by fallen timber a short distance from the lake. As runaway slaves could not live in this desolate place, there had been no occasion to pursue them into its deep recesses.

The party on board the Isabel were very much fatigued by the labor and excitement of the night; and when the schooner was safely moored, Dan declared that nothing more should be done until the party had rested themselves. It was not yet daylight, and the boat was in a secure position.

"But we must not all go to sleep," added Dan. "I intend to keep a watch night and day while we stay in this place, if it should be for a year."

"Hossifus! What's de use of keepin de watch?" yawned Cyd, as he stretched himself, and opened his mouth wide enough to take in a small alligator.

"Suppose half a dozen slave-hunters should come up here while we are all asleep!" replied Dan, sharply.

"Pose dey come when we're all awake--what den?"

"We can beat them off, as we did those last night."

"Gossifus! Some ob us git killed for shore, if dey keep shooten wid de guns."

"Better die than be taken, Cyd. We must believe this before we can be sure of success."

"Dat's what I's gwine to do," added Quin. "Dis chile will fight till dey ain't notin lef ob him--ye kin be shore ob dat."

"Possifus! Den, if you's all gwine to fight, Cyd ain't gwine to be out ob de fashion, for sartin. I's don't know much about de guns, but Cyd kin split a two-inch plank a buttin agin it. I's can't shoot, but I can butt," grinned Cyd. "You kin bet your life dis chile ain't no coward, no how."

"You did very well last night, Cyd, and I hope you will stand up to your principles," said Dan.

"What's dem?"

"What do you think, Cyd?"

"Hossifus! Cyd tinks he's sleepy," yawned he, opening his mouth in a fearful gape. "I's stand up to dat, for shore."

"Very well; but one of us shall stand watch while the others sleep. Which shall it be?"

"I'll be de fus. I done sleep some last night," said Quin. "You didn't shet your eyes once."

"Whose turn next?"

"Cyd's, for sartin. You'm did a big ting last night, Dan. We all done gwine to de bottom ob de lake, or de nigger-hunters hab us for shore, if'twan't for you, Dan. You kin sleep all day."

"I'm very tired, and need rest, for we have hard work before us; but you must keep awake, whoever is on the watch. Our lives depend upon the man on the watch."

"You kin trust me, Dan," replied Quin.

"So you kin me," added Cyd.

Dan examined all the guns, to see that they were in condition for immediate use, and then turned in, to obtain the rest he so much needed. Lily had already retired, and before the weary skipper could close his eyes, Cyd was snoring like a sleepy alligator.

Quin was tired and sleepy, as well as his companions; but it was a matter of conscience with him to keep awake. He walked up and down the standing room in his bare feet, that the noise might not disturb the sleepers, to guard against the possibility of being unfaithful to the solemn duty which had been imposed upon him. The sun rose bright and clear, and the solitary sentinel still kept vigil over the sleeping party in the cabin. Two hours, four hours, elapsed, and Quin still paced the deck. It was full six hours before the sleepers showed any signs of life.

Lily was the first to wake and come on deck. In a whisper she told Quin to go to his berth, and permit her to keep the watch. At first he objected; but her persistence finally overcame his scruples, and he crept softly to his bunk in the forward cabin. In a few moments he was sleeping as soundly as the rest. The two boys were physically incapable of going without their rest. They were growing, and to sit up all night, filled with anxiety and excitement, was more than they could bear without Nature's strongest protest.

They slept hour after hour, and Lily faithfully performed her duty as sentinel over them. The swamp was as still as the house of death; not a sound was to be heard, for even the alligators were motionless, as they sunned themselves upon the dead logs of the lagoons.

Dan, having slept eight hours strong, was the first to appear on deck. As he looked at his watch he was surprised to find it so late, and surprised to find Lily acting as watch on deck. His orders had been disregarded; but Lily was too powerful an advocate with him to permit any blame to be cast upon his companions. She persuaded him that every thing which had been done was for the best. Cyd soon after made his appearance, having slept all he could at one stretch, and the boys proceeded to get breakfast. Ham and eggs, coffee and toast, constituted the repast, prepared by the skilful hand of Lily, though she was assisted by her willing friends.

Quin did not wake till the meal was ready to be put upon the table; and the party all sat down to this princely banquet in the forward cabin, with the feeling that they were fortunate beyond all other fugitives that had ever escaped to the swamp.

After breakfast--or rather dinner, if we designate the meal by the time of day--Lily insisted upon her right to clear off the table and wash the dishes, which was yielded after some discussion, though with the proviso that Cyd should assist in the heavy work. While they were thus engaged, Dan and Quin took the bateau, which had been put into the water before dinner, and rowed up the bayou to explore the region above them. Finding an unobstructed passage for about two miles, they returned.

By this time the work of the housekeepers was finished, and the labor of towing the Isabel up the bayou was commenced. As the water was very shallow in some places, they had to follow the channel; and it was sundown when they had moored her to the point they had reached in the bateau.

"That will do very well," said Dan, as they made her fast to a tree.

"De nigger-hunters neber find us here, for sartin," added Cyd, as he dashed the sweat from his brow.

"We are not in a safe place yet," continued Dan. "But we are in no hurry, and we won't do any more to-day. Let us have supper and go to bed."

Lily had already made the tea, and had every thing in a forward state of preparation.

After supper, the important question of the watch came up again for consideration.

"We may as well settle this matter once for all," said Dan. "I suppose six hours' sleep is enough for any of us."

"Plenty," added Quin.

"Dunno," said Cyd, shaking his head, and gaping as though he had not slept any for a week. "Dis chile allus goes to sleep at eight, and wakes up at five. How long's dat, Dan?"

"Nine hours; that's enough for a hog."

"Nuff for a nigger too."

"I have got a plan all ready, and if you agree to it we will adopt it," added Dan.

"You's de cap'n, and weder we 'gree to it or not, you mus hab your own way," continued Cyd.

"Not at all. We'll have no captain here. We are not at sea, and we will all be equal. What we do will be for our own safety. I intend to keep my watch, and do my share of the work; so you needn't grumble, Cyd."

"Possifus! Cyd neber grubble in his life."

"You seem to think that I want to make you do more than your share."

"No, sar! I's tink you do more'n your share, Dan. Cyd ain't notin but a nigger, and you's almos' a gen'leman."

"Come, come, Cyd. I shall be angry if you talk in that way. I am just the same as the rest of you."

"Hossifus! Wha--wha--wha----"

"That'll do, Cyd."

"You's got all de brains, and knows jes what to do and where to go. Gossifus! Wha--wha--what become ob us widout Dan?"

"Dat's jus what I tink," added Quin. "You does de tinkin, and we does de wuck."

"I shall do my part of the work. Now listen to me, and I will tell you how I think the work ought to be divided. We'll go to bed at nine o'clock, and turn out at five."

"Dem's um," nodded Cyd.

"I will take the first watch to-night, till one o'clock, and Cyd the second, till five in the morning."

"But whar's my watch?" demanded Quin.

"At five o'clock you shall turn out and get breakfast. To-morrow night it shall be your first watch, and my second, and Cyd shall get breakfast the next morning. Then Cyd shall have the first watch the third night, and Quin the second, and I will get breakfast. That makes a fair division, I think."

"Dat's all right," added Quin.

"Those who sleep but four hours in the night can sleep during the day, if they wish."

"Yes, when de wuck's done," said Quin.

"We shall not have much work to do after we get settled," replied Dan.

"All that's very fine," added Lily, who had been listening to the arrangement; "but I shall not consent to it. I intend to get breakfast myself."

"No, Lily," remonstrated Dan. "If you do all the cooking, you will have to work harder than any of the boys. One of us will do the heavy work on deck, and you shall attend to the table. I am willing you should do your share of the work, if you insist upon it, but not more than your share. We shall have nothing to do but eat and sleep when we get the boat in position."

Lily insisted for some time, but was forced to yield the point at last; for neither Dan nor his companions would consent to her proposition. At nine o'clock Lily went to her cabin, and Quin and Cyd were soon sound asleep in their bunks. At one o'clock Cyd was called, and Dan gave him his watch, that he might know when to call Quin.

It was a difficult task for the sentinel to keep awake; but I believe he was faithful this time in the discharge of his important duty. At five Quin was called, and Cyd immediately proceeded to make up for lost time.



CHAPTER XVII.

CYD HAS A BAD FIT.

Cyd was roused from his slumbers at nine o'clock to assist in working the Isabel farther into the swamp, and in the course of the day she was safely moored in her permanent position. The quick eye of Dan had detected the admirable fitness of this place both for concealment and defence. It was not more than three miles from the lake.

The Isabel was secured between two islets, in the midst of a broad lagoon. The channel between the two portions of land was only wide enough to admit the boat, and the shore was covered with an impenetrable thicket of bushes and trees, so that the fugitives were obliged to "strip" the sail-boat, and take out her masts, before they could move her into the narrow bayou.

The next day, when the morning work on board was done, they commenced the task of concealing the Isabel more effectually from the view of any persons who might possibly penetrate the swamp. A half-decayed log was thrown across the channel, and green branches stuck in the ground, till the boat could not be seen. A coat of green paint was then put over the white one, and the party were satisfied that no one could discover their retreat, unless he happened to blunder upon it.

In these preparations a great deal of hard work was done; but the feeling of security which they procured amply compensated for the labor. When it was done, the fugitives enjoyed a season of rest, and for a week they did nothing but eat and sleep, though a strict watch was kept all the time to guard against a surprise. But this was an idle and stupid life; and even Cyd, who had formerly believed that idleness was bliss, began to grow weary of it. A few days more were employed in building a bridge from the deck of the boat to the island, in establishing a kitchen on shore, and in making such other improvements on board and on the land as their limited experience in the swamp suggested.

After every change and addition which the ingenuity of the fugitives could devise had been completed, the time again began to hang heavily on their hands. It was a happy thought of Lily that Dan should open a school for the instruction of Quin and Cyd, and half the day was very pleasantly occupied in this manner. At the end of a month both of these pupils were able to read a little from Dan's Testament, and they continued to make good progress during the remainder of their residence in the swamp.

At the end of a month Dan saw with dismay the inroad which had been made upon the supply of provisions. The addition of one person to the party had deranged his calculations, for Quin was blessed with a tremendous appetite. It was necessary that a sufficient quantity of the bacon and crackers should be reserved for the voyage that was yet before them, which might be a month in duration, or even longer. This supply had been carefully stowed away in the fore hold, and at the rate they consumed their provisions, the remainder would not last them two months.

Dan communicated his doubts and fears on this subject to Quin and Cyd, who immediately became very wise, and suggested a dozen expedients to meet the difficulty. Cyd proposed to forage on a plantation, which was immediately condemned as involving too much risk. Quin thought they might go to the nearest store and purchase food, as both Dan and Lily had considerable sums of money. This also was too dangerous.

"What's de use stoppin here so long?" asked Quin.

"The search for us has not ended yet," replied Dan.

"But dey won't tink no more ob us in two monfs from dis yere time."

"Very true; but the water will be so low that we can't get out of the lake in less than one month from now. We must stay here till next spring," added Dan, decidedly.

"Wha--wha--what ye gwine to stop here a whole year fur?" demanded Cyd, with his usual impetuosity.

"When would you leave?"

"When de water gets high in de fall."

"If we go to sea in the fall or winter, we shall meet with terrible storms in the Gulf. We should perish with the cold, or founder in a gale. We may have to be at sea a month. We shall have to meet our greatest perils after we leave this place."

"Well, I s'pose you knows best, Dan; and we's gwine to do jus what you say," replied Quin, meekly.

"Dem's um, Dan; you jus tell dis chile wot you wants done, and we's gwine to do notin but do it," said Cyd.

"But we must have something to eat while we remain here," added Dan.

"Dat's so; niggers can't lib widout eatin."

"We can do as the Indians do--we can hunt and fish," suggested Dan.

"Sartin--plenty ob ducks and geese, pigeons and partridges."

"And we have fowling pieces, with plenty of powder and shot; but none of us are hunters, and I'm afraid we shall not have very good luck in shooting game."

It was decided that Dan and Quin should try their luck on the following day; and having taken an early breakfast, they started in the bateau, rowing down the bayou in the direction of the lake. Dan was provided with a fowling piece, while Quin was to try his luck as a fisherman. The former was landed at a convenient place, while the latter pushed off into the deep waters of the lake, each to exercise his craft to the best of his ability.

On the shore of the lake Dan saw an abundance of wild ducks; but they were so very wild that he found a great deal of difficulty in getting near enough to risk the expenditure of any portion of the precious ammunition which was to last a year. He fired twice without injuring the game, and began to think that he was never intended for a sportsman. The third time he wounded a duck, but lost him. This was hopeful, and he determined to persevere. At the next shot he actually bagged a brant, and, what was better, he believed he had "got the hang" of the business, so that he could hunt with some success.

We will not follow him through the trials and disappointments of a six hours' tramp; but the result of his day's shooting was five ducks and one goose, with which he was entirely satisfied. With the game in his bag, he hastened back to the place where Quin had landed him in the morning. The other sportsman had been waiting two hours for him, and had been even more fortunate than his companion, having captured about a dozen good-sized catfish. The result of the expedition was very promising, and the food question appeared to be settled. With light hearts they pulled back to the camp, as Dan had christened their dwelling-place in the swamp.

"Where is Cyd?" asked Dan, as he hauled the boat through the dense thicket which concealed the Isabel from the gaze of any outsiders.

"He is here on deck," replied Lily, with a troubled expression. "Something ails him."

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know; he is very sick, and I am so glad you have come!" added the poor girl, who appeared to have suffered an age of agony in the absence of the hunter.

Dan was alarmed, for he had not yet considered even the possibility of the serious illness of any member of the party; and Lily's announcement conjured up in his vivid imagination visions of suffering and death. He was full of sympathy, too, for his companion, to whom he was strongly attached. With a heart full of painful and terrible forebodings, he leaped upon the deck of the Isabel, and rushed to the standing room, where Cyd lay upon the floor. The sufferer had evidently just rolled off the cushioned seat, and was disposed in the most awkward and uncomfortable position into which the human form could be distorted.

Dan and Quin immediately raised him tenderly from the floor, and placed him upon the cushions. This movement seemed to disturb the sufferer, and he opened his eyes, muttering some incoherent words. At the same time he threw his arms and legs about in a frightful manner. Dan was quite as much puzzled and alarmed as Lily had been. He did not know what to do for him. His experience as a nurse had been very limited, and his knowledge of human infirmities was extremely deficient.

"What ails him?" asked Lily, whose anxiety for the patient completely beclouded her beautiful face.

"I don't know," replied Dan, hardly less solicitous for the fate of his friend. "How long has he been sick?"

"After you went away I was busy in the cabin for two or three hours, taking care of the dishes and cleaning up the place. When I came on deck he seemed to act very strangely. I never heard him talk so fast before. He said he felt sick, and thought he should vomit. He was so weak he could not walk; when he tried to do so, he staggered and fell. I helped him upon the seat, and then he seemed to be asleep. I bathed his head with cold water. When he waked up he was stupid, and I was afraid he would die before you got back. I didn't know what to do; so I gave him some brandy."

"How much did you give him?" asked Dan.

"Only about half a tumbler full--as much as you gave Quin when he was sick. Poor fellow! You don't know how much I have suffered in your absence."

During this conversation, Quin, who had more skill as a physician and nurse than his companions, had been carefully examining the patient.

"What do you think of him, Quin?" asked Dan, as he turned from Lily to consult with him.

"I tink dar's hope for Cyd," replied he, a queer smile playing about his mouth as he glanced at the anxious leader of the party.

"Do you? Then you understand the case--do you?"

"Yes, sar; I do, for sartin. My old massa used to hab jus such fits as dat," added Quin, his countenance beaming with intelligence.

"What did you do for him?"

"Notin, but put him to bed and let him sleep it off; I tink cold water good for him. Dat's what missus used to do for old massa when he hab it bery bad."

At the suggestion of Quin, Cyd was placed outside of the washboard, and half a dozen buckets of cold water were dashed upon him by the relentless hand of the negro nurse.

"Wha--wha--wha--" roared Cyd, as the first bucket fell upon him.

"See dar!" exclaimed Quin, triumphantly. "He done git better so quick. Gib him some more;" and he dashed another pailful upon him.

"Go away dar!" cried Cyd, trying to rise; but Dan held him fast.

"Dat do him heaps ob good," added Quin; and he continued to apply the harsh remedy.

"Don't do it any more, Quin," interposed Lily, who seemed to think the remedy was as bad as the disorder.

"Do him power ob good. Drive de fit right away from him," answered Quin, as he remorselessly dashed another bucket of cold water upon the patient. "Dat's wat dey call de water-cure."

"Go away dar!" screamed Cyd. "Luff dis chile lone."

"Don't, Quin; he does not like it," said Lily.

"Pose he don't; nobody likes de medicine."

"But you may kill him," added Dan.

"Kill him! Don't you see he's growin better all de time? Dar; dat'll do," replied Quin, as he carried the bucket to the forecastle.

"Wha--wha--what's the matter?" demanded Cyd.

"Do you feel better, Cyd?" asked Dan, tenderly, as he permitted the patient to roll over into the standing room.

"Yes, sar!

'T's born way down 'pon de Mississip;
I's crossed de riber on a cotton-wood chip,"

roared Cyd, trying to sing a familiar song.

"Why, he is crazy!" exclaimed Lily.

"Yes, missy, he's crazy; but he soon git ober it," answered Quin, laughing.

"Why do you laugh, Quin? You don't seem to be at all concerned about him," added Lily.

"Bad fit, missy!"

"What ails him?"

"Bad fit, missy; my ole massa use to hab lots ob dem fits," chuckled Quin.

"But what kind of a fit is it, Quin?"

"Notin, missy, only Cyd done drink too much whiskey, and get drunk--dat's all."



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE AFFRAY ON THE LAKE

Even Lily laughed when she realized that her friend Cyd was in no danger of dying in the bad fit which had attacked him; she laughed at his strange actions and his silly expressions; they all laughed for a time, but there was something very serious in the occasion. The patient was taken down into the cabin, and put to bed in his bunk.

When he was asleep again, and the rest of the party had returned to the deck, the serious part of the affair came up for consideration; and the meeting was so solemn and momentous that even the good luck of the two sportsmen was forgotten, and the game and fish were allowed to remain unnoticed in the bateau. To Dan and Lily it was a terrible thing for a boy like Cyd to get drunk. It was very funny, but it was awfully serious in view of future consequences.

Several bottles of wine and liquor had been deposited in the lockers under the seats in the standing room, and Cyd had helped himself as he sat there alone. This was the key to his mysterious sickness; and while his companions congratulated themselves upon Cyd's expected recovery, it was deemed prudent to place all the intoxicating beverages on board in a secure place. A locker in Lily's cabin was selected for this purpose, and it was soon out of Cyd's reach.

Dan wanted to throw all the liquor overboard, except a couple of bottles to be used as medicine; but Quin thought that some use might be made of it at a future time. There was no one on board, except Cyd, who would drink it; and he had imbibed rather as a frolic than because he had any taste for the fiery article.

The patient slept all the rest of the day and all the following night. The next morning he was afflicted with a terrible headache, and was so stupid that he was good for nothing. He was severely reprimanded for his folly, and made a solemn promise never to partake again; and as the dangerous fluid was all locked up, and the key in Lily's possession, it was believed that he would not violate his obligation.

Roast ducks and geese, and fried fish, were the food of the party for several days to come; and the change from salt provision was very agreeable. About once a week Dan and Quin repeated the excursion to the lake, and almost always returned with a plentiful supply of fish and game. The fugitives lived well, especially as pigeons, partridges, and an occasional wild turkey graced their table. A roast coon was not an unusual luxury; for by extending their hunting-grounds in various directions, they added very much to the variety of their larder.

The small stores, such as butter, salt, sugar, coffee, and tea, were exhausted in the fall, though they had been very carefully expended. They had been so long accustomed to their luxurious living, that the want of these articles was felt as a very great hardship. Their nice ducks and geese were absolutely loathsome without salt, and Dan came to the conclusion that salt was a necessity, and that it must be procured at any risk. About twenty miles from the camp there was a village where groceries could be obtained; and after a great deal of consideration it was decided to undertake a journey for this purpose. They had been five months in the swamp without seeing any human being, though Dan and Quin, in one of their hunting trips, had heard voices on the lake. They felt entirely secure in the camp, and Lily was not afraid to remain with Cyd while Dan and Quin went after the needed supplies.

It was resolved that Dan should pass himself off as a white boy, who, with a party of hunters, had encamped in the woods. He therefore dressed himself for the part he was to play, and embarked in the bateau with Quin, who was to act as his servant. With the utmost care they pursued their journey, and, without any incident or accident, came in sight of the village where they were to purchase the stores. But Dan did not think it prudent to visit the place in broad daylight; so they concealed themselves in the swamp, and slept by turns till nearly daylight the next morning.

This seemed to be the most favorable time to visit the store; and they entered the village, which was called so by courtesy, for it had only six houses. Putting on the bold, swaggering air of a young southerner, Dan entered the place, followed by his servant. With all the bluster necessary to keep up his character, he roused the shopkeeper, and ordered, rather than requested, him to open his store. Fortunately trade was not so lively in the place as to render the merchant independent of his business, and he gladly opened his establishment even at that unseemly hour. He asked a great many questions, which Dan answered very readily. The purchases were all made, and Dan's funds, though they amounted to nearly thirty dollars, were almost exhausted. When the stores had been gathered together, a new and appalling difficulty presented itself. Dan had not intended to purchase a quarter part of the supplies which were now piled in the middle of the store. It was five miles to the lake, and no two men in the universe could have carried them that distance.

The matter was one of so much importance, and the articles obtained with so much greater facility than he expected, that he had been tempted to procure this large stock. But the pile was so large that he began to repent of the act, and to wish that half his money was in his pocket again. To remedy the difficulty he began to bluster, and told the storekeeper

that he must get a team and tote the goods down to the lake for him.

The man objected; but he at last consented to procure his neighbor's mule team and help them out. For this service Dan paid him two dollars more, which entirely collapsed his exchequer. The stores were safely deposited in the bateau, and the man drove off, apparently as well satisfied with his morning's work as the other party to the transaction.

As soon as he was out of sight and hearing, Quin could contain himself no longer, and vented his satisfaction at the success of the enterprise in the most violent and extraordinary manner. He laughed till his eyes were filled with tears, and had nearly upset the overloaded boat by his extravagant demonstrations.

"What's the matter, Quin?" demanded Dan, astonished at the conduct of his usually prudent and sedate companion.

"Bress de Lo'd, we's got all de tings," exclaimed Quin.

"Don't crow till you get out of the woods."

"Dar's de hard bread, and de salt, and de butter--golly, Massa Dan, you done do dat ting bery fine."

"Wait till we get back to the camp before you say any thing. We are not out of danger yet."

"But we's got de tings, Dan--de coffee, de sugar, and de salt."

"Take your oar now, and when we get back we'll have a jolly time."

"Bress de Lo'd, yes, Dan," said the delighted Quin, as he grasped the oar.

Prosperity makes men careless and reckless. The bateau was so crowded with stores that the rowers had but little space to use the oars. Their progress was necessarily very slow. They wanted to get back to the camp before night, and instead of keeping under the lee of the land, where the boat would not be likely to attract attention, they proceeded by the shortest route. When they reached the upper end of the lake, and were within five miles of the camp, they were startled to see a boat put out from one of the small islands, and pull towards them.

"De Lo'd sabe us!" exclaimed Quin, as he discovered the boat, which contained two white men.

"Take no notice of them, and don't speak a word," said Dan, in a low tone.

"De Lo'd hab us in his holy keeping!" ejaculated Quin, reverently, as he raised his eyes towards heaven.

"Do you know them?" asked Dan.

"One of dem's Massa Longworth; don't know de oder," replied Quin, his teeth chattering as though he had been suddenly seized with the ague.

"Who is he?"

"De oberseer on de plantation next to ole massa's."

The overloaded bateau rendered an escape by fast rowing impossible, and the fugitives continued to pull steadily, as before. Dan had his gun in a position where he could use it when occasion required. The two men pulled up to within a short distance of the bateau, and rested on their oars.

"Where ye gwine with all that stuff?" demanded Longworth.

"We belong to a party of gunners up here," replied Dan, boldly; for he was determined to make the most of the circumstances.

"Where be they?"

"Up to Chicot--about ten miles from here."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Longworth, glancing at his companion. "That's a good story, but it won't go down."

"You open your mouth wide enough to take any thing down," answered Dan, smartly.

"Can't swallow that story, no how," said the overseer. "But who's that boy with you?"

"None of your business. I don't make stories for you to laugh at."

"Yes, you do, my boy. But you needn't row any fuder. We want ye both."

"You can't have us."

"We'll see about that," added the man, as he raised his fowling piece.

"No use,--'tain't loaded," snarled the other man in the boat.

"Mine is," replied Dan, elevating the piece.

Longworth cursed his companion for the revelation he had made, and proceeded to load the gun. In the mean time Dan dropped his piece, and began to pull again.

"Stop, now. I don't want to destroy valuable property with this yere iron, but I must if you don't stop," continued the overseer, as he finished loading his gun.

"Perhaps I can destroy as much valuable property as you can," said Dan, as he took his fowling piece again.

"You must come with me. I know that nigger in the boat with you, and I reckon you belong to Colonel Raybone."

"I, you villain! How dare you insult me? I am a free white man."

"Perhaps you be, but you've been advertised enough to let any man in these yere parts know you. That nigger belongs to my neighbor. If you've a mind to come in quietly, I'll see you let off without any whippin'."

"I have no mind to come in, either quietly or otherwise," replied Dan.

"Then the wust's your own;" and Longworth fired.

The ball whistled within a few feet of Dan's head; but, unterrified by the peril, he raised his gun and fired.

"I'm hit!" groaned Longworth, as he sank down into the boat.

The other man in the boat with Longworth took the gun, loaded it, and fired. At that moment Dan had stooped down to pick up his shot-pouch, and Quin being the more prominent party in the bateau, the other man fired at him.

"De Lo'd sabe me!" groaned Quin, as he placed both hands on his chest.

Dan was ready to fire again; but, to his astonishment, he saw the man who had shot his companion seize the oars and pull away from the spot as fast as he could.

It was evident that the fate of his companion had appalled him; and seeing Dan nearly ready to discharge his gun again, he hastened to widen the distance between them. He rowed with the desperation of a doomed man. As the boat receded, Longworth raised himself up, as if to assure the fugitives that he was not dead.

Dan pointed the gun at the retreating boat for some time, and then fired, but not with the intention of hitting his savage foes. They were slave-drivers, but he did not wish to kill them.

The boat shortly disappeared, and Dan turned his attention to his wounded companion. The ball had passed through his lungs, and had penetrated a vital organ. Deeply affected by the event, he did what he could to stanch the blood; but poor Quin was past the aid of any surgery, and breathed his last a few minutes later.

Fearful that other pursuers might soon appear, Dan worked the boat up the bayou as rapidly as he could alone; but it was late at night when he reached the camp. Then he wept; then the tears of Lily mingled with his own over the corpse of the honest and faithful Quin, whose spirit had soared aloft, where the black man is as free as his white oppressor.



CHAPTER XIX.

LILY ON THE WATCH.

The death of poor Quin filled his companions with sorrow and dismay. There was weeping all night long on board of the Isabel. He had been a true and faithful friend to each individual of the party, and they were all sincerely and devotedly attached to him. With this sad bereavement came the sense of personal peril, for those who had slain their associate would not be content till they had driven his companions from their covert, and shed their blood or again reduced them to slavery.

Lily was disposed to abandon all her hopes in despair, and Cyd trembled with fear as he thought of what the next day or the next week might bring forth. But the energy and firmness of Dan soon quieted their fears, and restored, in some measure, the confidence which had before prevailed in the camp.

"We have defeated the slave-hunters twice, and we can do it again," said he, as he rose from his seat at the cabin table, around which, as Dan ate his supper, the party had considered their sad and perilous condition.

"It's terrible to think of poor Quin," said Lily. "He was so good and kind."

"And we have one arm less to assist in our defence. Don't cry any more, Lily. I'm afraid we haven't seen the worst of it yet."

"Can't we do something? Can't we get away from this place?" asked Lily.

"That is impossible. The water is too low to float the Isabel down to the lake, even if she were ready to go. It will take several days to rig her, and put her in order for our voyage."

"What will become of us?"

"I don't know. I hope for the best. Don't cry, Lily. I am not afraid of any thing. If we are resolute, we can defend ourselves if the slave-hunters should find us, which I don't think they can."

"It's awful to think of fighting and being shot," murmured Lily, as she cast a tender glance at Dan.

"I thought of all these things before we started, and I will not shrink from them now. But come, Cyd; we must go to work and unload the bateau."

The stores, which had been procured at such a terrible sacrifice, were taken on board the Isabel, while the body of poor Quin was laid upon the trunk cabin, and covered up with a blanket. As they lifted the lifeless form from the bateau, Dan could not but recall the extravagant joy of the deceased when the stores were safely embarked. The scene which followed was a sad commentary on the hopes which the honest fellow had cherished only a few hours before.

It was necessary that the corpse should be buried that night, for the weather was warm, and none knew what were to be the events of the coming day. A suitable spot was selected on one of the adjacent islands, where Cyd and Dan dug a shallow grave. The remains of poor Quin, wrapped in the blanket, were then conveyed in the bateau to the spot, and deposited in their final resting-place. By the dim light of the lantern, Dan read a chapter from his Testament, and then all of them knelt around the grave. No audible prayers were repeated, but the hearts of these sincere mourners were filled with the spirit of prayer; and He who wants no vain words to praise Him, accepted the solemn but silent service.

The grave was filled, and the fugitives used all their ingenuity to conceal the broken ground, that it might not betray them to the ruthless slave-hunters, who might soon visit the spot. With sad hearts they returned to the camp. Dan was nearly exhausted by the fatigue and anxiety of the last two days; but he could not sleep while there was any thing to be done to prepare for the expected visit of the slave-hunters. His first care was to put all the arms and ammunition in readiness. He then showed Lily how to load a gun, that she might assist them in the defence.

On the islands they had collected a great quantity of logs, to serve them for fuel during the winter. These were carried upon the deck of the Isabel, and so arranged as to form a kind of breastwork, to shield the boys from the bullets of the enemy. By noon on the following day, every thing that could be thought of to conceal or defend the camp had been done. They were ready for the slave-hunters then, and if Quin had only been with them, they would have felt confident of the result of an attack.

In the afternoon Dan was so worn out that he could endure no more, and at Lily's urgent request he went below, and was soon asleep. Cyd was fully alive to the necessities of the occasion. He kept his eyes and ears wide open, but he neither saw nor heard any thing that indicated the approach of an enemy. Lily, though very much alarmed, was as resolute as her companions; for she knew and felt what slavery would be if its shackles were again fastened upon her.

She was a gentle, timid, shrinking girl; but she was determined to die rather than be restored to the tyranny of her capricious mistress, and the more terrible fate which would eventually overtake her.

The long, gloomy night that followed passed away, the anxious watchers still keeping vigil by turns upon the deck of the Isabel. The next day, while Lily was keeping watch, both Dan and Cyd being asleep in the cabin, she heard the dip of oars in the bayou. Her heart beat a furious tattoo against her ribs, and she almost sank with horror, as she listened to the sounds which indicated the approach of the dreaded enemy. It was her duty to call Dan; but she seemed to be riveted to her seat. The sounds came nearer and nearer, and soon she could hear the voices of the slave-hunters. She could distinguish the curses that fell from their lips as they advanced, and she was faint and sick with apprehension.

The Isabel was moored at some distance from the bayou, which led to the lake; but through the dense foliage which shrouded the boat, she could discover the slave-hunters. They were now not forty rods distant, and the slightest sound might betray their hiding-place. With quivering lips and trembling limbs, she peered through the bushes to ascertain whether the boat turned up the channel which led to the camp. It was a moment of terrible suspense; a moment fraught with the issues of freedom or slavery--life or death.

Why did she not call her companions, who were sleeping peacefully in the cabin, while she was torn and distracted by these agonizing fears? She dared not do so, lest one of them should speak and betray them all. Cyd was impetuous, and a word from him might render futile the labors and the perils of months.

Hardly daring to breathe lest it should undo them, she watched the progress of the boat. The slave-hunters paused at the mouth of the channel, consulted for a few moments, and then the bow of the boat was turned towards the camp. With a gasp of horror, Lily crouched down upon the floor of the standing room, and crept towards the cabin door. A torrent of despair seemed to be turned loose upon her soul. She grasped the side of the cabin door, when suddenly all her strength forsook her, and she sank senseless upon the floor. The terrible agony of that tremendous moment was more than she could endure, and she fainted.

The frail and delicate watcher had failed in the important duty she had assumed at the very instant when her warning notes were most needed, and the fugitives were then apparently at the mercy of the slave-hunters. Dan slept, Cyd slept; both wearied out with watching and hard work, all unconscious that their gentle, willing sentinel had failed them, and that the fiends they dreaded were within pistol shot of their retreat. They slept, and were silent. Lily, senseless upon the floor of the standing room, pale and motionless as a marble statue chiselled in the form of angelic beauty, was silent as the grave. Not a breath of air stirred the forest leaves, not a ripple agitated the waters. It was perfect stillness in the camp. There was no sound to disturb the solemn quiet of that temple of nature, save the ribald speech of the slave-hunters, mingled with fiendish curses.

There was none to keep watch and ward in the camp of the fugitives--none but He who watches over the innocent when they sleep and when they wake. He was there keeping ceaseless vigil by the senseless maiden, and over the sleeping boys. "He doeth all things well;" and the very silence that reigned in the camp saved the fugitives from the keen scrutiny of the enemy.

The hunters remained in the vicinity for a few moments, and finding no clew to the fugitives, turned their boat, and went back to the bayou. They proceeded up the stream a few miles farther, and then, abandoning the search in this direction, returned to the lake.

Still Dan slept, and Cyd slept, and Lily still lay silent in marble stillness upon the floor at the door of the cabin.



CHAPTER XX.

PREPARING FOR THE VOYAGE.

The deep silence which pervaded the camp was first broken by Dan. He woke slowly from his profound slumbers, looked about him for a moment, then glanced at Cyd, who, contrary to his usual custom, did not snore. Every thing was still; his ear was not saluted with the sharp crack of a slave-hunter's rifle, and no curses disturbed the solemn silence of the place. Every thing seemed to be secure, and he wondered that the enemy had not yet appeared.

He was tempted to turn over and go to sleep, for he still felt very weary, and his repose had not restored his wonted vigor. But he concluded to go on deck, as every prudent skipper should, before he finished his nap. Rising leisurely from his bunk, he made his way to the standing room where he was almost paralyzed at the discovery of Lily lying apparently dead upon the floor.

Dan was prompt and decided in action; and taking the insensible girl in his arms, he placed her upon the cushioned seat. Tremulous with emotion, he bent over her to ascertain whether his worst fears were to be realized. Her heart beat; there was life, and there was hope.

"Cyd! Cyd!" shouted he, in tones which would have roused a sleepier boy than his fellow-fugitive, and which, had it been heard a quarter of an hour sooner, would have brought the slave-hunters upon them.

Cyd leaped from his couch as the imperative tones of Dan reached his ears, fully believing that the enemy, for whom they had been so patiently preparing, was upon them. Seizing a gun which lay upon the table, he rushed aft, ready to do his share in the impending battle.

"Wha--wha--whar's de nigger-hunters?" demanded he, furiously.

"They are not here; there is no danger," replied Dan, calmly, as he continued to rub the temples of Lily.

"Possifus! Wha--wha--what's de matter wid Missy Lily?" cried he, as soon as he saw the insensible form of the maiden.

"Bring me a pitcher of water, Cyd."

"Is she dead?" gasped the poor fellow, as he obtained a better view of the pale face of Lily.

"No, no; bring me the water--quick."

Cyd obeyed the order, and Dan sprinkled her face with the contents of the pitcher. He then left her for a moment to procure some lavender in her cabin. Though not a very skilful nurse, he had seen a lady faint, and knew what to do upon such an emergency. He applied the lavender and the cold water so vigorously, and yet so tenderly, that Lily soon began to show signs of returning consciousness.

"What's de matter wid her?" demanded Cyd for the tenth time, for Dan was too busy to waste time in answering idle questions.

"She is better," mused Dan, as he pushed back the curls that had strayed forward upon the patient's face.

"Hossifus! Dis chile knows what ails Missy Lily," continued Cyd, opening his mouth to the utmost of its tension, and exhibiting all its wealth of ivory.

"What's the matter with you, Cyd? Shut your mouth, and behave like a decent man," added Dan, rebuking the levity of his companion.

"Gossifus! Dis chile knows all about dat; been dar hisself," chuckled Cyd. "Dis chile neber tink Missy Lily drink too much whiskey."

"Silence! you rascal! How dare you think such a thing!" replied Dan, sternly; for he was vexed enough to pitch Cyd overboard for indulging in such a suspicion.

"Mossifus! Dat's jus de way dis chile was."

"Silence! She has fainted. She is better now. See! She is opening her eyes."

Dan continued to bathe the temples of Lily with lavender till her consciousness returned, and the terrible incident which had preceded her fainting was present to her mind. Suddenly, as Dan left her for a moment, she sprang upon her feet, and rushed to the place where she had stood gazing at the approaching boat.

"Where are they?" gasped she.

"Lie down again, Lily. You are too weak to stand," interposed Dan, as he put his arms around her waist to support her.

"Where are they? O, we are all lost!" exclaimed she.

"What do you mean by *lost*?"

"Where are they?"

"Who, Lily? What is the matter with you?"

"Haven't you seen them, Dan?"

"Seen whom?"

"The slave-hunters!" gasped Lily.

"I haven't seen any one," replied Dan, calmly; for he began to fear that the mind of his fair charge was affected.

"They are here--close by us, Dan. We shall all be taken."

"There is no danger, Lily. We are perfectly safe. Be calm, my dear. You have been dreaming."

"No, I have not been dreaming. I haven't even been asleep. It was all real; but I have been a faithless sentinel."

"Now you are better, Lily, tell me all about it," continued Dan, seating her upon the cushions.

Lily related the incident which had transpired while her companions were asleep below; but Dan could hardly believe so strange a story, and insisted that she must have dropped asleep and dreamed it.

"I know I was not asleep."

"Why didn't you call me?"

"I was afraid that some noise might attract the attention of the slave-hunters, and I deferred it till I was sure they would discover us. Then I was creeping on the floor, so that they should not see me, to the cabin, when I fainted."

"Hossifus!" gasped Cyd, appalled at the narrow escape of the party.

"Don't you believe me, Dan? I am very sure I was not asleep," added Lily, earnestly.

Dan was compelled to believe the story, and he shuddered as he thought of the peril that had menaced them while they were all so helpless. Though he concluded that it was not safe to trust Lily on the watch, he did not utter a word of reproof to her for not calling him sooner.

"You think I did wrong, Dan, not to call you. I know you do, though you will not blame me."

"I can't help thinking what might have happened if the slave-hunters had found us while we were all asleep," replied Dan, seriously. "But I will not blame you, Lily."

"The slave-hunters did not find us. I think it was all for the best, Dan, that I fainted."

"Indeed?"

"If I had waked you and Cyd, you might have made a noise that would have exposed us," answered Lily, very solemnly. "I think it was the good God that took my strength away in order to preserve us all."

"It may be; but I had rather be awake when there is any danger."

"If you had been awake, you might have been shot; and then what would have become of us?"

Lily was fully satisfied that her fainting was a special providence, which had saved them all from capture or death. Dan was not so clear upon this point, and resolved never to sleep again when there was a possibility of an attack.

For several weeks after these exciting incidents, all the fugitives confined themselves to the Isabel and the islands on either side of her. Indeed, between Dan and Cyd, it was about enough for them to do the necessary work, and keep "watch and watch" during the day and night. As nothing more was seen or heard of the slave-hunters, they concluded that the search had been abandoned, and they soon ceased to dread their approach. Dan ventured to hunt again, and every thing went off as before, though all the party missed Quin very much.

The autumn passed away; the winter came, and then the spring. If our space would permit us to record the daily life of the young fugitives while they remained in the swamp, it would, no doubt, be interesting to our readers; and for their sake, no less than for our own, we regret that our limits do not admit of this lengthened narrative. They had many trials from cold and storms, from high water in the bayous and low water in the casks, from alligators and buzzards; but they lived through it all. Lily was sick a fortnight, and Dan a week; their fuel gave out in the coldest of the weather; and an alligator bit off the heel of Cyd's boots; and a hundred other events occurred which would bear an extended recital; but

we turn from them, with regret, to the closing events in the career of the young fugitives.

With the high water in April, Dan and Cyd went to work, in the most vigorous manner, to prepare the Isabel for the uncertain sea voyage which was before her. After a month of hard labor she was rigged, the sails bent, her water casks filled, a supply of fuel put in the fore hold, and the remaining stores conveniently stowed for the cruise.

On the fifteenth of May every thing was in readiness; the obstructions in the channel were removed; and at sunset, with a smashing breeze, the Isabel hauled out of the channel, and commenced her voyage.



CHAPTER XXI.

DOWN THE LAKE.

At the period of which we write, the railroad through the Teche country had not been constructed, and the population was very sparsely scattered over this region. Most of the available land, however, was occupied; but, of course, none of the little villages which spring up around railroad stations, and which, in the course of years, grow into large towns and cities, had yet appeared.

With many doubts and fears in regard to the future, the young fugitives commenced the voyage to the Gulf. It was seventy miles from the camp, and it was absolutely necessary that the trip should be performed by night, for the lake, at the season of high water, was navigable for small steamers, which, with other craft, occasionally passed over its turbid tide. In the passage down, they were liable to meet some of these boats; and though the search for the runaways had long since ceased, the Isabel might be recognized, and the mystery of her singular disappearance explained.

Dan was determined to be very cautious, and to expose his party to no risks which could possibly be avoided. The voyage was perilous enough at best, and he was not disposed to trifle with the good fortune which had thus far attended the expedition. He knew nothing of the navigation of the lake, or of the Atchafalaya River, through which he must pass to the Gulf of Mexico. He was therefore exposed to many perils. The boat might get aground at a perilous point, which might expose them to an examination from some inquisitive slaveholder. He might be stopped by a steamer, or overhauled by a boat, and the fugitives taken into custody because they could not give a good account of themselves.

Then, if he succeeded in reaching the Gulf, he knew that a day's sail at the most would take him out of sight of land; and he had nothing but a small compass and a map of the coast of Texas and Louisiana to guide him. He had no expectation of being able to reach the free North in the Isabel. He depended upon being picked up by some vessel bound to New York or Philadelphia; and he had read the newspapers and listened to the conversation of his master and his guests enough to know that shipmasters were very cautious about carrying slaves to the North. But he had made his plans, and hoped he should be able to overcome even this most formidable difficulty.

To contend against all these adverse circumstances, he had a good boat, though she was not fully adapted to a sea voyage. With her light draught she had but a slight hold on the water; yet Dan was an excellent boatman, and trusted in his skill to overcome the deficiencies of his vessel. The Isabel was well provisioned for at least a month; and if the weather was even tolerably favorable, he felt confident that he should be able to contend successfully against the elements. At any rate he feared the ocean, storm, and distance less than the insatiate slave-hunters of the South.

With these difficulties before them, the young fugitives started upon their uncertain voyage. It was a bright, pleasant evening, with a lively breeze from the westward. The long confinement of the camp in the swamp made the changing prospect exceedingly exhilarating. They had encountered perils before, and the experience of the past prepared them for the trials of the future. They had a head wind down the bayou which led to the lake, and it required two hours of hard work for the two boys to work the Isabel down to the open water; but when this labor was accomplished, the foresail, mainsail, and jib were hoisted, and they had a fair wind down the lake.

"Now, Lily, our voyage is commenced," said Dan, as he seated himself at the helm.

"Yes; and I am so glad to get out of that dismal swamp!" replied she, with a smile which spoke the joy of her heart.

"Perhaps you will wish yourself back again before many days, and perhaps before many hours."

"Do you think there is much danger, Dan?"

"We may not meet with a single difficulty, and we may be in danger all the time. I cannot tell. I hope for the best, but I am ready for the worst."

"Any thing is better than slavery, Dan."

"Even death itself, Lily," replied Dan, solemnly.

"But there will be no people out on the lake in the night--will there?"

"There may be; but we may not find a good place to conceal ourselves during the day. We may be discovered, for there are more people at the lower end of the lake than in the part where we have been."

"We will pray to God, Dan, every day, and He will protect us, as He has before," added Lily, confidently.

"And while we do that, we must be very careful. There is one thing I have been dreading ever since we began to

prepare for this cruise."

"What is that, Dan?"

"You know Mr. Lascelles?"

"Yes; he spends a week at Redlawn every year, and master used to stay a week at his plantation."

"He lives down this way somewhere--I don't exactly know where. The Isabel, I think, came down here one year; if so, I am afraid they will know the boat."

"Possifus!" exclaimed Cyd, who had been silently listening to this conversation. "Dey'll ketch us, for shore."

"I'm not afraid of being caught; but Colonel Raybone almost always visits Mr. Lascelles in the month of May. Suppose he should be there, and we should happen to go near his plantation?"

"Hossifus!" groaned Cyd. "Massa Raybone down dar! Dis chile gubs it all up den."

"Don't give up yet, Cyd," laughed Dan.

"Mossifus! If dis nigger see ole massa, he done sink into de ground, like a catfish in de mud."

"You haven't seen him yet, Cyd; and what is more, I don't believe you will see him."

"I hope not," added Lily, with a shudder.

"If we do, it will not alter any thing."

"What would you do, Dan?"

"I will never become a slave again. We have guns and powder, bullets and shot."

"Would you kill him?"

"No man shall stand between me and freedom. I would shoot him or any other man, if it were necessary to secure our safety."

"Gossifus! Shoot Massa Raybone!" exclaimed Cyd.

"I hope we shall not be obliged to fire upon any man; but I shall do so, and you must do the same, Cyd, if we are in danger of being captured."

"Do any ting you say, Dan," replied Cyd whose mind readily settled upon any policy adopted by his leader.

"Now, Lily, you had better turn in, as Midshipman Raybone used to say. You must sleep while you can, for you may have no rest again for several days."

"I'm not sleepy; but you are going to have a very hard time. When we get out to sea we shall have to run all the time--shall we not?"

"Yes--night and day."

"Then when will you sleep?"

"Cyd and I must sleep by turns. We shall get along very well if the weather is only good."

About eleven o'clock both Lily and Cyd retired to their berths, leaving Dan alone on deck. The wind held fair till about three o'clock in the morning, at which time the Isabel was within ten miles of the outlet of the lake. It was too dark for the careful skipper to discover the nature of the shore, and he was waiting for a little daylight to enable him to find a suitable place to lie up during the next day. The boat was fully three miles from either shore, when the wind suddenly died out. Directly ahead, there were several small islands, but they were farther off than the main shore.

The first of the skipper's trials seemed to have overtaken him; but he did not permit himself to despair. He hoped, when the sun rose, a breeze would come, and enable him to find some hiding-place for the day. There was nothing to do but watch and wait, and Dan reclined upon the cushioned seat to meditate upon the uncertainties before them.

There was not a breath of air upon the lake, and the sails hung motionless in their places. Lily and Cyd still slept, and Dan did not call them; for he was willing to spare them even an hour's useless anxiety. The moments hung heavily upon the impatient skipper; but at last the daylight came, and he had a chance to study the situation. On the shore at his left there was a sugar plantation, the mansion of which was built within a short distance of the water; for here, as in the vicinity of Redlawn, the highest land was nearest to the streams. But the estate was three miles distant, and he hoped that the Isabel would not attract the attention of the people on the place.

The sun rose, but no wind came to gladden the heart of the impatient and anxious skipper. The active life of the plantation had commenced. He could see the smoke curling up from the chimneys of the cook-house near the mansion;

and in different parts of the lake he counted three boats moving about near the shore. These signs produced an intense uneasiness in his mind, which was not lessened by the appearance of Lily, who came upon deck about this time.

While he was explaining to her the nature of their unpleasant position, the smoke of a little steamer was seen beyond the islands. She soon came in sight, and was headed directly towards the spot where the Isabel lay becalmed. Dan and his fair companion were appalled by this new danger; for a suspicion in the mind of any person on board the steamer could hardly fail of being fatal to them. But Dan was soon prepared to make the best of the circumstances.

"Cyd, Cyd!" called he, as he rushed into the cabin.

"Wha--wha--what's de matter?" stammered Cyd, springing to his feet.

"Go on deck at once," replied Dan, as he slung the powder-horn and shot-pouch over his shoulders, and took one of the fowling pieces.

Cyd was on deck before him, and discovered the nature of the danger which menaced them. The bateau, which had been placed upon deck, was launched, and Cyd was directed to get into it with the oars, and pull off a few rods from the Isabel.

"Now, Lily, you must go to your cabin, close the door, and on no account show yourself while the steamer is in sight," said Dan.

"But what are you going to do, Dan?" asked she, with an expression of the deepest concern. "Are you going to shoot any one?"

"No, dear," replied Dan, with a smile at her fears; "I am going to pretend to be a sportsman. As we can't get out of the way of the steamer, I intend to be as bold and impudent as I can. There, go to your cabin now, and we will hope for the best."

Lily retired to the cabin, closed the door after her, and threw herself on her knees to pray for the safety of herself and her friends during the impending peril. In the mean time, Dan walked up and down the deck, with the gun in his hand, apparently looking in all directions for game. Just as the steamboat came within hailing distance of the Isabel, a couple of brant fortunately flew over, and Dan fired. His practice in the swamp had made him a very good marksman, and he was so lucky as to bring down one of the birds. Cyd, as before instructed, pulled with all his might to the spot where the game had fallen.

"Possifus!" shouted he; "massa fotch dat bird down, for shore!"

When he uttered this exclamation the bateau was within a few yards of the steamer, and the few passengers on board of her, anxious to see the sport, hastened to the boiler deck, and thus obtained a full view of the Isabel, as she rounded in under her stern, on her way to the plantation, where she evidently intended to make a landing.

"Any news below?" shouted Dan, hailing the steamer as she approached.

"By Heaven! that's my boat and my boy!" exclaimed a gentleman on the boiler deck, as the steamer glanced by the Isabel. "Stop the boat! Stop her!"

It was Colonel Raybone!



CHAPTER XXII.

THE ISABEL RUNS THE GANTLET.

Dan heard the words of the gentleman on the boiler deck of the *Terre Bonne*,--for that was the name of the steamer,--and at once recognized his master. The worst fear that he had entertained was fully realized. That unfortunate calm had betrayed him into the hands of his enemy. But he was fully determined to carry out his resolution, and fight for life and liberty, even if he had to contend against the whole force of the steamer.

It appeared that the request, or rather the command, of Colonel Raybone to stop the boat was not immediately complied with; for she continued on her course for several minutes before her wheels ceased to revolve, and when she did stop she was fully a quarter of a mile from the *Isabel*. By this time Cyd returned with the bird which the sportsman had killed, and Dan announced the appalling fact that Colonel Raybone was on board of the steamer, and had recognized him and the boat.

"Possifus!" exclaimed Cyd, leaping upon the deck of the *Isabel*. "Wha--wha--what we gwine to do?"

"Take this gun, and do as I do," replied Dan, as he went into the cabin after the rifle.

"Gwine to shoot him!" groaned Cyd. "Hossifus! gwine to shoot ole Massa Raybone!"

"Do you want to go back to Redlawn with him, Cyd?" demanded Dan, with compressed lips.

"Don't want to go back, for shore. Gossifus! Dis chile's a free man now."

"Then use your gun when I tell you."

"Cyd do dat, for sartin," replied he, examining the lock of the fowling piece. "Mossifus! Dis nigger shoot de whole crowd if you says so, Dan."

"Don't fire till I tell you, and take good aim," added the skipper, as he finished loading the rifle.

"What's the matter, Dan?" asked Lily, opening the cabin door a little way, for she had heard the stirring words of her friends on deck.

Dan told her, in as few words as possible, what had happened, and the poor girl nearly fainted when she heard the name of her master.

"Then we are lost!" added she, in tones tremulous with emotion.

"Not yet, Lily. Be of good courage, and don't show yourself on deck."

The affrighted maiden threw herself upon her knees by her cot, and prayed fervently that God would interpose his strong arm to save them from the fate which now seemed to be inevitable. While she prayed, Dan and Cyd worked, and made such preparations for the pending encounter as their limited means would allow. There was only a small number of passengers on board of the steamer, and the resolute captain of the *Isabel* hoped that a few shots would intimidate them, and prevent Colonel Raybone from rushing upon certain death.

But the planter of Redlawn was as resolute as his runaway chattel, and a battery of artillery would not have deprived him of the satisfaction of pouncing upon the fugitives. Though no fear could deter the master from attempting to recover what he regarded as his own by the law of God and man, it was otherwise with the captain of the *Terre Bonne*; for he declared that he was in a tremendous hurry to make his trip, having been detained over night at the foot of the lake. He sympathized with Colonel Raybone in his desire to recover his slaves; but he positively refused to put the boat about and capture the runaways.

It is not improbable that the captain of the steamer saw the guns and the preparations made to receive a boarding party, and possibly he reasoned in his own mind that a chance shot was as likely to kill him as any other man on board; at any rate, he was as resolute in his refusal as any of the resolute parties we have already mentioned.

Dan could hardly believe his senses when he saw the *Terre Bonne* standing out towards the landing-place before the plantation. When her wheels started again, he nerved himself for the encounter; for he supposed she would come about, and bear down upon him. It was incredible that Colonel Raybone should give up the chase without an effort to capture them; and he knew his master too well to think, after more consideration, that he would abandon his slaves without an energetic effort to recover them.

The steamer went in to the landing-place, leaving Dan to wonder and rejoice at the happy turn which had taken place in the affairs of his party. He informed Lily of the altered state of things on deck, and the devout girl was happy in the

reflection that her prayers had been so promptly answered.

"But we haven't seen the end of it yet, Lily. O, no," added Dan, "Colonel Raybone will never give us up. He would spend more money than we are all worth for the pleasure of flogging me for running away; but he shall never have that satisfaction. I had rather die here like a man than to be scourged to death at the Dead Oak."

"Can't we get away? Is there no chance to escape?" asked Lily, whose beating heart was full of mortal terrors.

"Gossifus! Wha--wha--what's de reason we can't take de bateau and row ober to de shore, and take to de woods?" suggested Cyd.

"Well, what then?" demanded Dan, calmly.

"Why, den run like a possum up a gum tree."

"With bloodhounds and slave-hunters on your track. No, Cyd; we should certainly be taken if we did that."

"What shall we do, Dan?" murmured Lily. "We shall certainly be taken if we stay here."

"No; we have beaten off the slave-hunters twice, and we can do it again. They will come in small boats, and I will shoot them down, one at a time, if they persist," answered Dan, bringing down the butt of the rifle upon the floor of the standing room to emphasize his words.

"But you may be shot, yourself, Dan," said Lily, with a visible shudder.

"No; I will conceal myself behind the bulwarks when they come within range of my rifle."

"But can't we get away? Can't we escape without shooting any of them?" pleaded the poor girl, with a natural horror of bloodshed.

"We cannot unless we have wind."

"Gossifus! Dar dey come!" exclaimed Cyd, pointing to two boats pulling out from the landing-place of the plantation.

"Heaven protect and defend us!" cried Lily. "I will pray for wind; I will pray with all my soul for a breeze, Dan, and our Father in heaven, who has so often heard my prayers will hear me again."

"Stop a minute, Missy Lily; stop a minute," interposed Cyd, gazing earnestly down the lake; "needn't pray no more, Missy Lily; dare's a breeze coming up from de souf-east. Hossifus! de breeze am comin like a possum down a cotton tree! Possifus! Hossifus! Gossifus! De breeze am coming!" shouted Cyd, as he danced round the deck like a madman. "Needn't pray no more, Missy Lily. De breeze am come."

"Then I will thank God for sending it," replied the poor girl, a smile of joy playing radiantly upon her fair face.

If Dan was not so extravagant as his companion on deck, he was not less rejoiced, especially as the wind from this quarter promised to be a strong one. The bateau was hastily hoisted upon the deck of the Isabel, and the sails trimmed to catch the first breath of the coming breeze.

"Mossifus! Dat breeze wuth a hun'd tousand million dollars!" shouted Cyd, as the first puff of the welcome wind swelled the sails of the Isabel.

"It may be worth more than that," replied Dan calmly. "It may be life and liberty to us."

The breeze had come, and plenty of it; but for the course the skipper wished to lay, it was dead ahead; yet it mattered little where it carried them, if it only enabled them to escape from the terrible man who was the impersonation of slavery to them. As the wind freshened, the lake was agitated, and the Isabel dashed on as though she understood the issues which depended upon her speed. In half an hour the pursuing boats could not be seen; and no doubt they had abandoned the chase in despair.

It was useless to seek a place for concealment, for the white sails of the Isabel were doubtless watched by scores of eager eyes; so Dan ran up under the lee of one of the small islands that dot the lake, and came to anchor there. He did not care to run up the lake any farther than was necessary, and he did not think it prudent to beat down the lake in the face of his pursuers. No more anxious skipper than he of the Isabel ever paced a deck. Colonel Raybone was as energetic as he was remorseless, and would leave no means untried to capture the fugitives. Dan was at first afraid that he would charter the steamer, and pursue them in her; but this fear was removed when he saw the Terre Bonne steaming on her way up the lake.

The fugitives breakfasted on cold ham and hard bread while the boat remained at anchor; but not for a single instant did the watchful skipper intermit his gaze in the direction in which he had last seen the pursuing boats. It was a late breakfast, for it was ten in the forenoon when it was finished. But this meal, though it seemed to increase the vigor and resolution of the party, did not remove a particle of their anxiety for the future.

Dan, as we have before shown, was a master of strategy; and it is good generalship to penetrate the purposes of the enemy. Our hero was all the time trying to do this, but, of course, without any encouragement of success. He only felt sure that Colonel Raybone would cover the lake with boats filled with slave-hunters, if he could find them, and that every hour of delay increased the peril of his situation. He intended to wait till night, and then, under cover of the darkness, run down to the outlet of the lake, and escape to the Gulf. This purpose was encumbered by a terrible doubt; he feared that the south-east wind would die out when the sun went down, and that the fugitives would again be at the mercy of the slave-hunters. The thought was so appalling that Dan, in the middle of the afternoon, determined to run the gantlet of the boats, and trust to Providence for success. In a few moments after this decision was reached, the Isabel was under way, and standing, close hauled, down the lake.

The south-east wind, having free course, and blowing fresh, had kicked up a heavy sea, for an inland sheet of water; but this was highly favorable for the Isabel, and very unfavorable for the flatboats in which the pursuers chased them. As Dan had anticipated, the slave-hunters were on the alert; and as the Isabel was standing through a narrow channel between two islands, the two boats, which had chased her in the morning, dashed out from under the lea of one of them.

"Take the helm, Cyd, and keep her steady as she is!" said Dan, as he grasped the rifle.

"Possifus!" exclaimed Cyd; but he promptly obeyed without further speech.

Only one of the boats--that which contained Colonel Raybone--was near enough to board the Isabel as she dashed through the passage. It was evidently the intention of the planter to spring on board as she passed through the channel; for he stood in the bow of his boat with the painter in his hand. One of the rowers in the other boat had "crabbed" his oar and lost it overboard, or the colonel's plan would have succeeded.

"Put down the helm, Cyd! Luff, luff!" shouted Dan, as he fathomed the purpose of his master.

"Luffum 'tis!" replied the helmsman.

The Isabel was running tolerably free at the time the order was given, and when she luffed up, the planter's boat lay directly in her path. The next instant she struck the bateau full on the broadside.

"Possifus!" shouted Cyd, at the top of his lungs, as he heard the crashing and snapping of the pine boards, that indicated the destruction of the planter's boat.



CHAPTER XXIII.

COLONEL RAYBONE CHANGES HIS TONE

The Isabel dashed furiously on her way, passing over the bateau of the slave-hunters, which presently reappeared astern of her. Colonel Raybone, who, in spite of his years and his habits, was an active man, seized the bowsprit of the sail-boat, as it bore his frail bark beneath the waves; and while Dan and Cyd were eagerly gazing into the water astern of them in search of their dreaded master, he climbed upon the forecastle of the Isabel, thus saving himself from the wreck and the water.

"Hossifus!" groaned Cyd, as he turned to observe the course of the boat, and discovered upon deck the stalwart form of Colonel Raybone--to him the most terrible man on the face of the earth.

The exclamation attracted the attention of Dan, and a glance forward revealed to him the desperate situation of his party. The slave-master, nearly exhausted by the shock of the collision, and his exertions in hauling himself up to the deck of the Isabel, had failed to improve the first moment that ushered him into the presence of his astonished chattels; and the loss of that opportunity was the ruin of his expectations. Dan instantly raised his rifle; but the old feeling of awe and reverence for the sacred person of his master prevented him from firing at once.

"Hah, you villains! I've got you at last!" said Colonel Raybone.

Without making any reply to this expression of rage and malice, Dan fired, but not at the head or the heart of the colonel; for he did not wish to kill him. The rifle was aimed at one of his legs, and the ball passed through the fleshy part of his thigh. Colonel Raybone, with a volley of curses, sank upon the deck of the Isabel, a stream of blood flowing from his wound. Dan dropped the rifle, and took one of the fowling pieces, ready to complete his work if the occasion should require. His face was deadly pale, his lips quivered, and his frame trembled, as though the ball had passed through him, instead of his master. He had watched and waited too long for liberty and true life to sacrifice all his hopes, when they were on the point of being realized, to a sentimental horror of shedding the blood of a slave-master.

Lily, as soon as she heard the report of the rifle, opened her cabin door, and stepped out into the standing room. The pale face and quivering lip of Dan first attracted her attention; and when he pointed to the forecastle, she saw the prostrate form of her master, and sank upon the seat, overcome with fear and horror.

"Don't be afraid, Lily," said he. "He cannot harm us now."

"Have you killed him?" gasped she.

"No; I did not intend to kill him. I would not have fired at him if I could have helped it. I only hit him in the leg."

"But he will die."

"He may; I cannot help it. We should have been slaves again in a moment more if I had not fired."

"This is horrible!" moaned Lily.

"But it is better than slavery," replied Dan, firmly, though he was scarcely less agitated than his gentle companion. "Mind your helm, Cyd, and go to windward of that little island ahead," he continued; for the helmsman's ideas had been considerably shaken up by the stirring events which had just transpired.

The second boat, astern of the Isabel, was engaged in picking up the oarsmen of the first, and with the fresh breeze there was no danger of pursuit from that direction. Colonel Raybone was evidently suffering severely from his wound, but his mental tortures seemed to be greater than his physical pain. His mouth was still filled with curses, and maledictions of rage and hatred were poured out upon the runaways. He was so violent in his agony, that none of the party dared to approach him, and Dan stood with the fowling piece in his hand, ready to protect himself and his companions from any possible assault. There he lay, unable to rise; but still the Isabel dashed on, as if reckless of the terrible scene which had just been enacted upon her deck.

Colonel Raybone's wound bled freely, and the loss of blood soon moderated his fiery temper. Gradually he calmed down, and became quite reasonable, at least so far as outward manifestations were concerned. Then Dan ventured to approach him, though he did not relax his hold upon the gun, and took every precaution to guard against any sudden movement on the part of the sufferer.

"Are you much hurt, sir?" asked Dan.

"You have killed your master, Dandy," replied he, faintly, as he looked up at the redeemed chattel.

"I did not mean to kill you, sir, and I am sorry you compelled me to fire upon you," added Dan, in respectful and

sympathizing tones.

"I am wounded and in your power now; I can do nothing more, and you may finish me as soon as you please," groaned Colonel Raybone, completely subdued by weakness and the fear of death.

"I do not wish to kill you, Colonel Raybone, and I am willing to do all I can for you. But if you attempt to make me a slave again, I will shoot you at once."

"I can't harm you now if I would," said the sufferer, faintly.

"Then we will take you into the cabin out of the sun, and do what we can for you."

"Can't you land me at Mr. Lascelles' plantation?" asked he, lifting his eyes up with an expression so pitiful that Dan could hardly resist the petition.

"No, sir. I dare not do that," he replied. "But I will do all I can to save your life."

Dan then went aft, and explained to his companions the condition of Colonel Raybone. Lily was placed at the helm, with instructions how to steer, and Dan and Cyd, with a great deal of difficulty, removed the wounded planter to the cabin. But he had lost so much blood that he fainted as soon as they had placed him upon the bunk. Cyd then took his place at the helm; and while Lily bathed the head of the patient with lavender, Dan examined his wound. The ball had passed entirely through the fleshy part of the thigh, about half way between the hip and the knee. The blood flowed steadily from the two openings, but not in jets, which would indicate the severing of an artery.

Dan was no surgeon, but he had ingenuity and common sense, and he used these to the best advantage his limited means would permit. He tore up one of his shirts for bandages, and Lily made lint of his collars. When the sufferer had recovered from his faintness he drank a glass of brandy, which seemed to revive him. But he was still very weak, and breathed not a word of hatred or malice.

"Hallo! Dan! Where we gwine?" shouted Cyd from the deck, who had come to a point in the lake where he required further sailing directions.

The skipper took his map and went on deck. From the position of three islands laid down on his chart, and which he identified as those near him, he concluded that the Isabel had reached the outlet of the lake, which is the Atchafalaya River. Its course gave him a fair wind, and he headed the boat down the stream. As the sailing of the boat was now a matter of the utmost importance, Dan was compelled to remain on deck. He took the precaution to place all the fire-arms on board in a safe place, where Colonel Raybone, if his condition should so far improve as to encourage him to make an attempt to obtain possession of the boat, could not get them, and where he and Cyd could get them.

It was sunset when the Isabel entered the great bayou; and as she dashed on her course, the anxious skipper saw many boats, and even some larger craft, but no one offered to molest them. Colonel Raybone remained as quiet as a lamb. He was feverish, and in much pain, and all night long Lily sat by his bunk, and watched over him as tenderly as though he had been her dearest friend, instead of her most terrible enemy. She not only watched; she prayed for him—prayed that God would forgive him, heal his wounds, and soften his heart.

And all night long the Isabel sped on her course, and at midnight she entered the great bay. Dan was worn out with anxiety and long watching, and as the waters of the bay were comparatively smooth, the wind having subsided to a gentle breeze, he gave the helm to Cyd, and slept three hours upon the floor of the standing room, with a cushion under his head.

At daybreak, Point au Fer light, which was marked on Dan's map, lay directly ahead of them. The land to the westward was low and swampy, and with frequent indentations. In one of these Dan came to anchor about sunrise. He was much perplexed to know what he should do with Colonel Raybone. He could not think of going to sea with him on board, and to send him back was to invite an immediate pursuit.

The good care which had been bestowed upon the planter had very sensibly improved his condition. After breakfast he inquired of Dan where he had been for a year, and the whole story of the residence in the swamp was narrated to him. In return he told the fugitives what had been done to recover them, and added that he was on his way from New Orleans to Mr. Lascelles' plantation when he discovered the Isabel. Colonel Raybone said not a word about reclaiming his property, and apparently only cherished the hope of saving himself.

"Now, Dandy, what are you going to do with me?" asked he, when he had finished his narrative.

"I don't know, sir. After the whipping I got, I determined to run away; and I say now I would rather die than go back," replied he.

"Didn't I use you well?" asked the colonel.

"As well as any master can use a slave."

"I was rather sorry afterwards that I whipped you; but you were treated as well as the members of my own family; and so was Lily."

"But I was a slave, and so was she. Master Archy tormented me, and Miss Edith tormented Lily. I could have borne it, perhaps, if I hadn't been whipped."

"You have your revenge now," added the planter, meekly. "I am in your power."

"I don't seek revenge, and I wouldn't harm you for all the world," replied Dan.

The proud spirit of the planter was subdued by pain, weakness, and the fear of death, and he was in no condition to think of resistance. He offered to give the fugitives free papers if they would land him at any place where there was a surgeon, and from which he could be removed to Redlawn; but Dan dared not run any risks. The planter wanted to know where they were going, but the prudent skipper declined to answer this question.

The Isabel remained at anchor for three days, under the lee of the land, during which time Colonel Raybone was carefully nursed by Dan and Lily; but his wound was still very painful, and the patient, fearful of mortification, or some other unfavorable turn in his condition, declared himself willing to do any thing rather than remain any longer in this place.

"I might put you on board of some vessel if I dared to do so," said Dan.

"What do you fear?" demanded the sufferer.

"If you should tell the people of the vessel what we are, they would capture us."

"Do you think I would do that, Dandy?" asked he, in reproachful tones.

"I am afraid to run any risks, sir."

"Will you let me die here? My wound may mortify. I think it is growing worse instead of better," added he, with a groan of anguish. "I will give you my word, Dandy, if you will put me on board of any vessel bound to any place where I can get home, I will give you all your freedom. If you are arrested, send to me, and you shall have free papers. You know I always keep my word, Dandy."

It was a terrible necessity which could extort such a declaration from the imperious planter, and Dan decided to accept the proposition. The anchor was weighed, and the Isabel stood out of the inlet where she had lain for three days. They cruised all day without meeting a vessel; but on the following morning they hailed a small schooner bound up the bay.

"I will keep my promise, Dandy, to the letter," said Colonel Raybone, as they bore him to the deck. "Here is some money, which you may want before long;" and he handed Dan a roll of bills.

"Thank you, sir," replied he. "I hope we part friends."

"Yes, Dandy; and if you ever want a friend, come to me."

The crew of the schooner asked a great many questions, all of which Colonel Raybone took it upon himself to answer. He was placed in the cabin of the vessel, and Dan, bidding him good by, hastened back to the Isabel. They parted in peace, and Lily could not restrain her tears as the schooner bore away on her course.



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE YOUNG FUGITIVES MAKE A HARBOR.

"Colonel Raybone is not a bad man, after all," said Dan, as the Isabel filled away.

"He wouldn't be, if he wasn't a slaveholder," replied Lily.

"Possifus! I feel 'tickler sorry for ole massa, when he lay dar and couldn't help hisself," added Cyd.

"If he could have helped himself, he wouldn't have lain there. I never saw such a change come over a man. He will be ashamed of himself, I know, when he gets well, and it will be lucky for us that we are out of his reach."

"He would keep his word, Dan; you know that," said Lily, whose looks seemed to contain a mild rebuke of the sentiment just uttered.

"He would; at least, he wouldn't wish to break his word; but he will want me as soon as he gets to be Colonel Raybone again."

"Why, he was always good to us," responded Lily.

"He was always liberal and generous, and treated all the people well, while they behaved to suit him."

"They ought to behave well."

"I had to fawn and cringe before him, and before Archy. If I dared to say my soul was my own, I was punished for it. What did I get whipped for?"

"For striking Archy."

"Well, why did I strike him? Didn't he insist upon my striking him? and when he came at me like a madman, because I happened to hit him rather harder than I intended, I was tied up to the Dead Oak, and whipped like a mule. I shall carry the marks of that day to my grave," continued Dan, earnestly.

"But he has changed."

"He was afraid he was going to die, and he was in my power. He knew I could blow out his brains any moment when he attempted to lay his hands upon me; and he knew I would do it, too."

"I never saw him so mild and gentle as he was while on board the boat."

"I hope he will always continue so, and treat the people well when he gets back to Redlawn. I have nothing against him now. I forgive him, and I did all I could for him when he was wounded."

"I know you did. Do you suppose he will get well, Dan?"

"I have no doubt he will."

"Shall you send for your free papers?"

"I shouldn't dare to let him know where I am."

"He gave us our freedom."

"I should be afraid that he would alter his mind; and though he might keep his word, he might cause us to be taken up for killing the slave-hunters, or stealing the boat and provisions, or something of that kind. I shall keep out of his way. If we should be arrested, I would appeal to him then."

"Where are we going now, Dan?" asked Lily, as she glanced out upon the vast expanse of waters which rolled to the southward.

"I hardly know, Lily. We have got to the bottom of my map; I shall stand to the south-east till something happens. If we can fall in with a vessel which does not sail from or to a southern port, I should have some hopes, especially as we have money enough now to pay our passage."

"How much have you, Dan?"

"Two hundred dollars," replied Dan, exhibiting the roll of bills which the planter had given him. "Colonel Raybone is generous, but this would not half pay us for the services we have rendered him."

The pocket compass upon which the skipper had to depend for his course was now produced, and before dark that night the Isabel was out of sight of land. The wind was light, the weather pleasant, and the sea not heavier than they

had seen on the lake. It was arranged that each of the boys should steer four hours in his turn, night and day, and the voyage, which had been looked upon as involving many perils, was found to be very pleasant.

For two days they were favored with good weather; but on the third it came on cloudy and blowy after dinner. The foresail was taken in, and every thing made snug about the Isabel, in preparation for the worst. The storm increased in violence, and they soon had their first experience of a heavy sea. The waves tossed them about like a feather, dashing over the decks, and several times filling the standing room half full of water.

"Gossifus! Dis big sea!" exclaimed Cyd, as he shook the water from his woolly locks.

"Yes, and it is coming heavier yet," replied Dan. "But the Isabel stands it well."

"Plenty ob water on fora'd dar," said Cyd, pointing to the forecastle, which was often submerged in the heavy billows.

"Perhaps we can remedy that. I don't think we shall want the bateau any more, and we may as well toss it overboard. It sinks her head down too much."

"Hossifus! Frow de boat overboard?"

"Yes; over with it, if you can."

Cyd took a boat-hook, and pried up the bateau, and after much labor succeeded in getting it over the side, though he had nearly gone with it, when a big sea, swooping over the deck, finished his work. The effect of the step was instantly apparent in the working of the Isabel. She no longer scooped up the seas, but rode over them. Before night it began to rain, and the gale increased in violence. The bonnet had been taken off the jib, and a reef put in the mainsail; but she could not much longer carry this sail, and at dark she was put under a close-reefed foresail.

Poor Lily was obliged to remain in the cabin, and she was very much alarmed at the roaring of the waves and the terrible pitching of the schooner; but Dan often assured her that there was no danger; that the Isabel was behaving splendidly. During that long, tempestuous night, there was no sleep for the fugitives. Dan did not leave the helm, and Cyd stood by to obey the orders of the skipper. At midnight the gale began to moderate, but the sea still ran high.

The sun rose bright and clear on the following morning. The wind had subsided to a gentle breeze, and the Isabel moved slowly along over the rolling waves. Cyd and Lily went to sleep after breakfast, and Dan still maintained his position at the helm, which he had not left for fourteen hours. He was nearly exhausted; but so was Cyd, and he was afraid the latter would drop asleep if he left the boat in his care.

While he sat by the tiller, dreaming of the future, and struggling to keep awake, he discovered a sail far to the southward of him. The sight roused him from his lethargy, for he had not seen any thing that looked like a vessel since the day he parted with Colonel Raybone. He was wide awake; and laying his course so as to intercept the vessel, he waited patiently till the winds wafted her within hailing distance.

It was two hours before he could clearly make her out, for the wind was very light. She was a bark, and Dan could only hope that she was not bound to any port in the slave states. He had a very good knowledge of geography, and after calculating the position of the Isabel, he concluded that the bark could not have come from any southern city.

"Sail ho!" shouted he, when he was within half a mile of the bark.

"What's the matter?" called Lily, roused from her slumbers by the shout.

"Come on deck. We are close by a vessel."

"Gossifus!" shouted Cyd, as he rushed out of the cabin, and discovered the bark. "Wha--wha--what vessel's dat?"

"I don't know," answered Dan; "but we shall soon know all about her."

"What a monster she is!" added Lily.

Dan hailed the bark, and ascertained that she was an English vessel, bound from Vera Cruz to New York. As this information was satisfactory, he asked to be taken on board, with his companions. The vessel backed her main topsail, and Dan ran the Isabel alongside. The captain and crew were astonished to find a small boat, with two boys and a girl in her, at this distance from land; but they were kindly taken on board. In as few words as possible Dan told the substance of his story, and the captain consented to carry the fugitives to New York.

"I can pay our passage, captain," added he; "and if you will take us you shall lose nothing by it."

"I should be in duty bound to take you, any how," replied the captain; "but what shall we do with your boat?"

"Cut her adrift, if you can't do any better. We have done with her now."

"I think we can save her," added the captain.

As the wind was light, the Isabel was lashed to the side, and the bark squared away upon her course. In a short time every thing on board of the sail-boat was passed on board, and she was stripped and her masts taken out. She was then hoisted on deck, and set up between the fore and main masts. Dan and his companions were rejoiced to preserve her, for she had been their home for a year, and had borne them safely through many perils. They regarded her as a dear friend.

Captain Oxnard gave Lily a state-room, and the two boys were berthed in the steerage. It took all the rest of the day for Dan to relate the experience of the young fugitives on board the Isabel; and the officers of the bark were intensely interested in the narrative and in the runaways. The listeners were all Englishmen, and had no sympathy with slave-holders.

The passage was rather long, but it was pleasant, and on the twentieth of June the bark anchored in New York harbor. Her consignees were informed of the incidents which had placed the three passengers on board, and they were not disposed to undo what Captain Oxnard had done. While the vessel lay at anchor, the Isabel was hoisted into the water again, rigged, and every thing placed on board of her, just as she was when she left the camp in the swamp.

It so happened that the junior member of the firm to which the bark was consigned, was a friend of Mr. Grant, and had dined at Woodville the day before. It occurred to him that the young fugitives would be well cared for in the hands of his friends, and being a boatman himself, he resolved to proceed up the river in the Isabel.

It was a pleasant day and a happy occasion, and at an early hour in the afternoon, the party landed at the pier in front of the Woodville mansion. I need not inform my readers that they were kindly received by the family; and the story of the young fugitives was again repeated to a group of partial listeners.

Mr. Grant and his friend Presby immediately set their heads at work to determine what should be done with the party which had just arrived at Woodville. Bertha soon settled the question so far as Lily was concerned, by declaring that she must live with her, and go to school at the village, for she had become strongly attached to the fair fugitive, and would not think of permitting her lot to be cast among those who might possibly be unkind to her.

There was less difficulty in disposing of Dan and Cyd. Boats and boatmen were in great demand at Whitestone and other places on the river, and the Isabel promised to bring in a fortune to her owners during the summer months. A few days later, she was employed in carrying parties out upon excursions, with Dan as skipper, old Ben as pilot, and Cyd as foremast hand. In a short time Dan learned the navigation of the river, and dispensed with the services of the pilot. They boarded with Mr. Grant's gardener; but Cyd, very much to his disgust, was not permitted to sit down at the first table because he was black.

Dan and Cyd made a great deal of money in the Isabel during the remainder of the season, and when she was laid up for the winter, both of them went down to the city and worked in a hotel; but they much preferred a life on the water. In the spring they resumed their business as boatmen, and for several years continued to thrive at this occupation.

"See here, Possifus," said Mr. Presby, who never called Cyd by any other name; "don't you want to own a boat yourself?"

"I does own one, sar," replied he. "De Isabel jus as much mine as Dan's."

"I was going to set you up in business for yourself, Possifus."

"No, sar, tank ye; can't leabe Dan, no how; he fotched dis chile out of de swamp, and I don't run no popposition to him."

"That's right, Possifus; stick to your friends."

But Mr. Presby continued to do a great many kind deeds for "Possifus," which were duly appreciated.

When Dan was twenty-one, he and Cyd had saved a considerable sum of money; and the Isabel having become rather shaky from old age, they proposed to procure another boat, and establish themselves at the city. With the aid of Mr. Presby, they built a yacht of forty tons, which was called the "Lily." It was a beautiful little vessel, and soon became very popular among people devoted to the sea. They were very fortunate in this new enterprise, and made money beyond their most sanguine expectations.

Dan lived in the city now. The name on the doorplate of his house was Daniel Preston, for he had chosen a family name to suit himself--a privilege allotted to only a few. Mrs. Preston--of course the reader will at once understand that this was the Lily of our story--was as happy as liberty and prosperity could make her. Cyd--who has improved upon his former cognomen, and now calls himself Sidney Davidson--lives on board the Lily, a contented, happy man. He almost worships Dan and his wife, at whose house he is an occasional visitor.

They never heard anything from Colonel Raybone, or any of his family, perhaps because they made no inquiries.

Certainly no efforts were ever made to reclaim the chattels. They had proved that they could take care of themselves, and that freedom was their true sphere of life.

And now, having seen the young fugitives safely through all their trials and perplexities, and securely established in the enjoyment of those rights and privileges with which the great Creator had endowed them, we take leave of them, in the hope that the reign of Freedom will soon be extended to every part of our beloved country, and that the sons of toil shall no longer WATCH AND WAIT for deliverance from the bonds of the slave-master.

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