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The Real Dismal Swamp.

If Tom Moore had not visited the United States in 1804 and, at Norfolk, Va., written his famous poem about the Dismal Swamp, that charming, easily accessible and other-worldly relic of the primeval wilderness—a bit of wildest nature at the doors of New York, Philadelphia or Washington—would probably not bear so dark a reputation. I don't think Mrs. Stowe's Dred alone would have fired my boyish imagination with this dream. No, it was Tom Moore's poem, learned by heart, with its weird and potent spell:

But oft from the Indian hunter's camp
The maid and her lover so true
Are seen at the hour of midnight damp
To cross the lake by a firefly lamp,
And paddle their white canoe.

I have written that stanza from memory; I haven't seen the poem for 20 years, but I'll wager it's right to a syllable. I knew swamps in my boyhood, tolerably wet and tolerably gloomy. The Dismal Swamp was my delicious nightmare of the composite wetness and gloom of all those dark corners of our New England woods. I longed to visit it, to creep through its tangle to the

weird and lonely lake where the lover "hollowed a boat of the birchen bark," and to see, perhaps, that strange apparition, or at the very least, a fugitive slave pursued by bloodhounds.

Well, I have been to the Dismal Swamp at least and camped on the shore of its lake. I saw no apparition in "a boat of the birchen bark." Indeed, there being no birches in the swamp, the chances of it were somewhat diminished in advance. Less fortunate than "Porte Crayon," the American magazine illustrator who went into the swamp with his sketch book in 1856, I saw no gigantic negro peering warily through the reeds, with a finger on the trigger of his rifle. I did not even see any water, outside of the lake and the canals. Although it was early May when my companion and I entered the swamp, and the Spring of 1910 was not a dry one, we could walk dry shod everywhere that we attempted it.

There were no mosquitoes nor yellow flies to annoy us so early in the season. We saw no snakes. The air was warm and balmy by day, cool and soft by night. Innumerable birds sang in the wilderness about us. The prevalent northwest wind

(Continued on page 8.)