Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

Five years before the outbreak of the Civil War, love of adventure, hatred of slavery and the desire to help my friend, George Wesner, led me, Charles Bradley, a civil engineer of Attakapas County, Louisiana, to become an agent of the underground railroad. Wesner had been nursed through the smallpox by a young slave, Lucy, belonging to the Coverley plantation. He discovered facts which proved that Lucy was white and of good family. A secret love match followed, which progressed well until Coverley proposed to sell Lucy to his son and refused to sell her to anyone else. Wesner became desperate. I agreed to help him steal Lucy, and went to New York to arrange with the anti-slavery society for the care of any slaves we could bring North.

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CHAPTER IX.

The Winter dragged itself into Spring before our preparations for flight were complete. March 14 came slowly along; for two weeks the weather had been rainy and foggy, the damp air from the gulf drifting in upon us, varied by an occasional visit of miasma from the overflowing swamps and lagoons of the mighty waters north. Our prairie roads were knee deep with the black mud of Southwestern Louisiana. It was an uncommonly wet and cold Spring for our climate, where frost is seldom seen.

Our fugitives in the swamp we had not seen since George left them; but we rested secure, believing they were safe, for if one had strayed out and been caught, the news would have flown on the wings of the wind. George had implicit confidence in Lemuel Mason, and faith in Lucy's persuasive powers to keep the little band together, to say nothing of their own fears, which were in themselves no inconsiderable factor in keeping them quiet.

We had kept on selling goods, and I had been doing some surveying—not a break in our every-day life. Still we felt that we were living over a mine liable at any time to explode.

George had told the negroes that about March 15 he would send a guide to take them through to the promised land. To Lucy he explained everything—that circumstances might delay him beyond that date, and to have no fears if they did. Yet he was very anxious to start, for the swamps were full and every little bayou a river, and boat navigation was comparatively easy.

The night of the 15th was dark and rainy. The clouds were low set in the heavens, and inky black. Now and then a flash of lightning would give a fitful vivid illumination to the prairie in front of our store. Nine o'clock, and still the loafers lingered and droned out the same stale stories that I had heard so many times. Old Bob Morris, would speculate on what had become of Coverly's niggers, and Skew Bill would relate with many embellishments how near he came to catching the whole of them. According to his story, the backs of the mules were sweaty where the niggers had just left them—jus' left 'em, gentlemen, as we came up; left 'em and took to the swamp where no dog could foller, 'cause of the water, and my dorgs is as likely purps as there is in the Turkey-paw kentry, remember.

"Curse them, will they never go?" whispered George. "Just think, the liar! The niggers were 15 miles away when he found the mules!"

At length the last man left, Schneider being the last, as he wanted to get a little tobacco, to be paid for when he caught Coverly's niggers. Not being very certain of the security, I demurred granting his request. Thereupon Mr. Schneider left, threatening us with a loss of his custom. As that consisted of about 10 gallons of rum a year and a few groceries, paid for in venison at about twice its worth, delivered when no one else would buy, the threatened calamity did not strike either of us as much to be feared.

"Thank heaven the last man is gone!" cried I, "and now for the rendezvous!"

George packed a little valise, with a rubber coat for Lucy, three or four tin cans of whisky, the latter article being reckoned in Louisiana a necessity second only to a good pair of legs in traversing the swamp.

On the road at last, the Spanish moss on the live oaks looking weird and ghostly in the gloom and murky darkness. Quietly we rode past the few houses that bordered the main traveled road. The mud was deep, and it was impossible to move faster than a walk. My time was precious, as I was anxious to get to the rendezvous, see for myself how the negroes were situated and go back before morning. I wanted to be at the store before daybreak, and have a good chance to clean my horse from the mud stains and wet. I do not know that I was afraid, but I had that uneasy feeling that invariably accompanies deception.

We were pretty effectually disguised, George as a white overseer and I as the strange negro, bringing the white guide to the wanderers.

It was past midnight when we reached the vicinity of the rendezvous. All was as quiet as the homes of the dead. Not a sound could we hear as we drew near. Whether they were dead or we off the track we were unable to conjecture. Through the inky blackness of the night no eye could penetrate, and we had kept our way thus far by compass, turning our dark lanterns upon it every few rods. The water was ankle deep, in some places above our knees. Through this we waded, stumbling now and then over a fallen log, but luckily keeping our feet. George, who was some distance ahead, halted until I came up.

"I think," said he, "from the shoaling of the water we must be near them. On this side the hummock is rather flat and slopes gradually, the other side, where the cabin is, being steeper. I don't want to pass it, for it will be disagreeable wandering around in the water until morning."

"I spotted a few trees at the edge of the hummock," he continued, after we left our horses, "and if we can fortunately find one of them we are all right. Flash your light to the right and see if you see anything."

I did so: there was nothing.

"To the left"—nothing.

"Let us keep together," I said, "for this place is fearfully lonesome."

George laughed quietly, and again turned his light forward. We waded perhaps two or three rods farther, the water shoaling fast.

"We are on the hummock," cried George.

Just then, but a short distance away, I saw slowly rising a tiny spark. It was gone in an instant, but it was enough.

"Straight ahead, my boy, turn on your bull's eye."

It shone straight against the walls of the cabin.

"Here we are, I see the cabin," I cried.

Lucy had not retired. George whistled softly. At the signal she flew to the door, unbarred and opened it, and, dripping with rain, we entered.

In the mud fireplace a few embers gave a tremulous light, dim and uncertain. Lucy gazed at us a moment, and gave her hand to Wesner. "You are the guide," she said, "and," (turning to me with a smile), "you are the strange negro."

In the little loft the men were slumbering; back of the low partition slept the women and children. The rain beating against the low roof, and the wind sweeping through the forest, drowned the noise created by our entrance, and they slept as only negroes can sleep. It was now nearly 1 o'clock. I could stop but a few moments, for I had three miles to go in a heavy, rainstorm, through swamp and forest, and alone. The night was black as Ethiopia itself, and I was tired and hungry.

"Do you know this gentleman, Lucy?" asked Wesner.

She nodded assent. In 10 minutes there was a table set and a steaming cup of coffee for us—what a luxury at that moment.

Few words were exchanged.

"I must return before daylight," said I, and rising from the table, threw on my wet coat and left the cabin. George and Lucy accompanied me to the edge of the water, and, wishing each other a mutual "godspeed," with one hearty hand-grip for success, I was alone.

Holding my compass in my hand, and opening the slide of my lantern, I made the best possible time toward the horses, which I had left on an old abandoned road, unused for years. In fact, I think it was never used except to haul out ship timber one Winter by some Northern shipbuilders. This road ran nearly at right angles with my course, and shaping that so as to be sure and strike it between the horses and the stream, I kept on, and in less than an hour reached it about one-fourth of a mile below the horses. At 4 o'clock both horses were stabled at the store and well rubbed down. Then I lay down for a few hours' rest, and when the first customers for the day appeared was ready for business.

Many inquiries were made during the day for George, but my invariable answer was: "Gone north after goods."

Various surmises were made as to the fate of "Coverly's niggers," none of them worth repeating. The old man had been watching Perry's swamp, constantly, and as the negroes were never within 15 miles of there, I concluded it was no particular harm to let them watch.

One day Skew Bill came tearing up to the store, wild; bounced off his pony and rushed in.

"Mr. Bradley," cried he.

"Well, Bill?"

"Old Coverly has got track of his niggers."

"Where?"

"Just where I told 'em. They was in Perry's swamp."

"What makes you think he has found them, Bill?"

"Well, 'cause, you see, I saw two niggers night afore last come out of the swamp, and skulk off. I follered 'em a spell, but they caught sight of me and hid. There is going to be a big hunt to-morrer, all the fellers are to meet here at 8 o'clock in the morning, and, by hokey, we'll just scour the ole swamp and see if they are there. They must be on this side of the bayou."

The next morning the boys commenced to gather. There were about 25 or 30 of what George called "Turkey-paw bucks," young dare-devils, wild as bucks, and full of fun. To them a nigger hunt meant plenty of cornjuice and a good time generally.

As for negroes, if found, all right; if not, they had the fun all the same. There was Bill Simonds, from St. Mary's, young, lithe as a panther, cool as ice, a dead shot and a Comanche on horseback; the Smythe brothers from New Iberia, both able men, who afterward proved their bravery; the Dubois brothers, three of them, fun-loving Frenchmen, either one would risk his life for a joke. These are all of the names I remember, except Charlton, the deputy sheriff, a thick-headed old blunderer, an inveterate stammerer and invariably drunk by 12 o'clock every secular day, but plumb sober on the Sabbath, when he endeavored to make up for a week's scoundrelism by praying the greater part of the day. This was a sheriff's posse, and had what Charlton called, "The l-law an' con-st-st-t-t-tu-tution, gentlemen, to back it up."

Out on the prairie in front of the store, the boys were gathering waiting Coverly's arrival. He and Dick were both expected and the hunt would not begin until they came. He had sent word to Dick that George had gone, or he would not have put in an appearance, for he had a wholesome dread of my partner's anger, and avoided meeting him.

Dick and myself were personally on good terms. I never admired him, but had never quarreled with him, and as the negroes to be hunted for were in part his property, I really wanted him to take part in the sport. He came wonderfully arrayed with a pair of Mexican spurs on his heels, a brace of Colt's 38 calibre in his holsters, and the ever-present shotgun in his hand. He was a mounted arsenal under a sombrero hat. His weapons and a scarlet sash wound around his waist gave him the appearance of a formidable antagonist; but he was not over courageous, and though something of a bully, had an uncommon aversion for the small end of a gun. He dashed up to the boys like a warrior. I wished him a cheerful 'good morning,' and away rode the crowd for Perry's. Dick on the big roan, leading at a gallop.

I was somewhat interested to know the result of their hunt, and kept a sharp lookout for the return of the hunters. I saw nothing of them until about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, when one of the Smythe boys rode up to the platform, dismounted, and, tying his horse to the hitching rail in front, walked into the store.

"Well, Charley, did you find the runaways?"

"Not one," he answered.

"What caused all the excitement?"

"A couple of free niggers in there splitting rails. They had their women with them, a couple of little huts built and were at work. They went in a mile or more on account of rift, as they explained to me. They wanted good straight rifted trees. Lord, man!—how Dick Coverly's lip dropped when he saw them! There isn't a slave in this whole swamp; they're gone somewhere, sure; they are not here," and he turned for home.

This was the end of Mr. Coverly's "nigger hunt."

Time passed, and the first of May came without news from George. I took a New Orleans daily paper, and thoroughly examined every issue. Had the fugitives been apprehended, the first news would have been in the New Orleans papers. Coverly had a standing advertisement in them offering $1000 for any information that would lead to their capture, and $3000 for their detention, so he could get them before August, with a separate reward of $2000 for Lucy, dead or alive.

Until I had enlisted as a practical abolitionist I had never especially noticed the runaway department of the newspapers, nor had I cared about them, but now every item I carefully eyed, and it became apparent to me that the system was not so pleasant as its supporters represented. I was not much given to moralizing in those days (I had seen the negro in his native country), and did not waste much time philosophizing upon the morality of American slavery. My ambition was to get my partner and myself well out of the affair, and well into another.

May 15 came the first news from George. The letter was very brief, but enough. Here it is:

"Cairo, Ill., May 3, 1855.—Friend Bradley: Arrived here all right today. Have sold our cotton to Eastern parties. Shall see them personally, and not trust to brokers. WESNER."

That was enough, for it told me they were at Cairo, and that he should accompany them himself until they were safe. A few days later I received another letter from some interior town in Illinois, relating to other business. There was quite a crowd in our store when my mail came, and as this was from George, some of his friends began asking questions about him. I read the letter, and as there was nothing about the fugitives in it, I could not understand its import. The last sentence read like this:

P. S.—Have been detained by sickness; had to see a physician. I am better, and will resume my journey.

This I did not quite understand, and I was doubly anxious.

One day not long after I received a telegraph dispatch forwarded by mail from New Orleans. This was:

"Cotton sold, spot cash, no discount."

I breathed free; we were safe for this time. I anxiously awaited my partner's return, being very impatient to hear the particulars of his adventure. Where every day was fraught with peril and any hour might bring the hunter or Sheriff upon him, the mental strain must have been very wearing, and I felt that I was not doing my share of the work. I had been comparatively idle, although, of course, I was to share in the spoils.

The 21st of June I had business at the town of Franklin, and was at the steamboat landing when the boat arrived. There were but few passengers upon the upper deck, but as I glanced about, my eyes rested on my friend Wesner, leaning over the guards, smoking the never-absent cigarette. His eyes sparkled, and a quiet smile of triumph rested on his face as he nodded to me.

"Got your buggy, Brad?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then I will ride with you and let my baggage go to New Town with the goods. There is a heavy invoice billed there."

On the ride home, George refused to talk.

"The story," said he, "is a long one. I kept a brief diary of every important occurrence as we went along, and also where we were at the time. I am tired and pretty well fagged out, and all I will say is that I received from the Anti-Slavery Society just $800 for the venture and $400 more for expenses."

"I thought, George, you took 10—eight grown men and women and two children."

"So I did, but I preferred to bear Lucy's expenses myself."

"Where is she?"

"I placed her in a school at Andover, Mass., deposited $500 to her credit, paid a year's board in advance and left her deep in books and study. Brad, you would have been pleased, could you have seen the expression on the faces of those Yankee schoolmarms' when I introduced Lucy to them. But there, let us talk of something else until I get rested. I have a whole library of adventure to relate."

Adjoining our store we had a little cottage built, containing two rooms, where one and sometimes both of us occasionally slept. When George was at home he usually stopped here, as we did not feel safe to leave our store and stock alone, it being a cross-road store, and no buildings very near.

CHAPTER X.

It was late that night before we got to bed, and the next day was a very busy one, our goods coming from the steamer had to be taken care of, and it was Sunday before we were settled for George's narrative.

"Now," said George, as he took out his tobacco and commenced to roll his cigarette, "we will begin."

"You remember, Brad, when you left me in the little hut it was raining heavily. I am willing to admit that I was a little homesick," he continued, "but the stream was crossed, the bridges burned, and there was no retreat. I wrapped a blanket around me, lay down on the floor and tried to sleep, but was so nervous and excited that I did not succeed very well, although a little drowsy before morning. Impatiently I waited for the light. Before sunrise I was on my feet. Lucy aroused the sleepers, and soon breakfast was ready.

"I was a white man now, and breakfasted by myself. About 8 o'clock the sun came out bright and clear, causing the steam to arise from the wet foliage in such dense masses that it would conceal the smoke, and there was perfect safety in our having a fire. I directed the boys to make a big one out of doors to dry our clothing and cheer the people, for there is nothing so cheers and enlivens one in the woods as a big, bright, crackling fire, and our spirits rose with the sparks.

"A dozen people cannot move so quietly and expeditiously as two men, and I concluded that it would take at least four hours for the party to accomplish the same distance you and I did in two.

"The little brook leading into the Teche was more than bank full and was now merely a deep ditch in the overflowed swamp. Our canoes were quite a distance up the brook, but we had no difficulty in finding them, although there was some trouble in arranging the passengers. The sun was low in the west before we began to make our way toward the bayou.

"In the first canoe was Lucy, together with Pharo—rather a thick-headed, blundering darky, afraid of his own shadow—Tom, Jack and myself. I took the bow, to Jack, who was quite a water man, I gave the stern, telling the others to keep still and watch, but not move.

"I had my rifle and revolvers; none of the others were armed, as I dared not trust them. In the other canoe were the remainder of the party, in charge of Lemuel Mason, with old Moze in the stern. I gave Lemuel one of my pistols and asked him if he could use it. He looked me straight in the eye.

"'Yes, sir, and to kill. I am a free man, now; maybe I'll soon be a dead one, but I'll never again live as another man's property.'

"In each boat were the provisions needed for its occupant. Cautioning Lemuel not to start until our boat was a few rods ahead, I pushed into the sluggish current, heading the canoe toward the bayou.

"'Now for the north,' I whispered to Lucy, as I dipped my paddle and sent the canoe over the water. On, on we went, among the dark cypress and cottonwoods, their overhanging branches touching the water and brushing our canoe. The dip of the paddle and the swish of the branches as we disturbed them in our passage was all that broke the awful silence.

"It was quite dark before we reached the waters of the Teche, and tied up close under the bank, waiting for Lemuel and his canoe. I was tired with waiting before they joined us.

"As we should now have to paddle against the current, and must make a noise, I thought it best to wait until 10 o'clock where we were, for a short distance above us, on the banks of the bayou, was Laurent's plantation. His negro quarters were quite near the water's edge, and as the stream was narrow at this place, it was with no little anxiety that I drew near. Although the night was dark, yet there might be some one around, or some darky fishing. I spoke very softly to Lemuel, and he ranged alongside. With a light cord I fastened both canoes together.

"'Now, my boy, strong but easy'; and we moved slowly on past the house by the quarters unheard and unseen.

"'Ah, what's that?'

"Lemuel stopped his paddle.

"'Hist! hist! It was the dip of a paddle from up the river, and before we could make a movement, crash came a canoe, containing two darkies returning from a chicken steal.

"'Hi, what dis?' one cried.

"A sweep of my paddle, and he lay in the bottom of his dugout; another moment and I had sprung into his boat and had my hand upon his partner's throat.

"'A word, a lisp, and you are a dead man!'

"'Jack,' I whispered, move on, and you'—to the darky I had by the windpipe—'take that paddle and follow. Not a lisp!'

"He obeyed. I examined the one to whom I had introduced the paddle. He was just coming to his senses. His head was bleeding pretty badly, and his face showed white spots even in the darkness.

"Their canoe was a small dugout about 15 feet long. Stepping back toward the stern, I motioned to the fellow who was paddling to go forward and then ordered him to drag his companion into the center of the canoe and let him lay there until he recovered his senses. He was frightened clear through, but had the good sense to obey.

"'Now, my boy, go forward; paddle for your life, and don't let the dip of your paddle be heard two feet from the canoe,' I ordered. He was glad to obey, and the three canoes went speeding by the plantation, and in a few minutes were safe for the night.

"I had intended to reach the little run-around before daylight. If you recollect, that was a few miles above Lochee's, and was the only place that offered a safe haven, as the banks of the bayou were too thickly settled for us to attempt to pass them by daylight.

"I was hampered with my two prisoners, and, hugging the east bank of the stream, made redoubled exertions to urge the canoes forward.

"The bank was dimly outlined, and I could tell very nearly where we were. We had made seven or eight miles, when, to my great joy, our canoe ran over the buoy we had placed below the outlet, and in a few moments we were pushing our way through reeds and bushes of the run-around, I did not try to go far, but halted both canoes a few rods from the bayou, and waited for daylight.

"The sky had begun to redden in the East before we moved again. At sunrise we were a mile up the stream and secure from observation. The two canoes were fastened to the bank, and I remained alone with the prisoners in the captured canoe. The boys on shore built a little fire, and soon the smell of hot coffee and fried bacon told me that they were well employed.

"This branch, you will remember, was more of a natural ditch than a stream, as it was not more than eight feet wide but quite deep—perhaps four feet or more. I sat in the stern of the canoe, looking at the prisoners and thinking what I could do with them. Finally, I drew my revolver. At the sight of it they turned a clear pigeon blue, and shook like an ague chill. 'Well, boys,' said I, 'it will be my unpleasant duty to shoot you both. I don't really like to do it, but I know of no other way. I am going to the free states with these folks, and don't want to have you go back and set the whole country after us, as you would if we let you go. Say, you chap with the cracked head, drop your hand from your skull, will you? I want a fair shot, for I don't want you to be a long time dying, and again, you would upset the canoe if you kicked much.'"

"'O, massa; let us go norf, too! Let us go! We'll work for you and pay our way and will stick forever, 'deed an' we will, sir; 'deed we will!'

"I called old Moze down. 'Moze,' said I; 'is it best to shoot these fellows or take them along?'

"Moze did not know me, and felt rather inclined to be frightened himself, but finally he stammered out: 'I wouldn't shoot 'em, massa; let's take 'em along; there's room enough in my canoe for one.'

"So I concluded, not to kill them, much to their satisfaction. On further questioning I found out to whom they belonged. They were Lanman's boys, and had been up the bayou fishing, probably for chickens, as there were two then in the canoe. I did not like to deprive Lanman of a couple of his hands or rob him of $1500, but, having left my conscience at home, I certainly could not send them back. The only other resource was murder, and I thought on the whole I would be justified in committing the theft. I therefore ordered the men shore to get their breakfast.

"After breakfast, more trouble. Jim, the youngest, had a wife at Lanman's, and had told his story to the party. Lucy had heard it, and her heart was touched. She followed me to the boat. 'Only one more, just one; we can crowd her in somewhere. Just think, suppose I were her, would you leave me?'

"'He must leave her,' said I, for I knew enough about plantation negroes to know that it would be posting a handbill to allow him to return.

"'His wife's at Stephenson's,' she replied, 'and cannot know of her husband's absence, and laying here a day he could get her.'

"'Lucy,' I replied, 'you and Jim must bear with disappointment this time. If Jim goes for his wife and gets her, the whole country will be scoured, for it will be known at once that they have run away. We shall run great risk of being caught, and then what would become of you and the rest? I shall run the canoe into the bayou, upset it, and then Mr. Lanman will think he has lost a couple of niggers in the bayou. Next trip I will take Jim's wife!'

"She said no more. Jim felt bad to think he was to be kidnaped, but he was determined to make the best of everything, and did not make much demonstration. I do not think he was quite heartbroken. The canoe I took down to the bayou that afternoon and upset her, and let her float to tell the tale to Lanman that he was out a couple of niggers. I reckon we may as well take our next invoice from there. Obed, the other one, was 40 years old. He had left a wife and two little ones 10 years ago, in Louisville, Ky. He had no loves to leave behind. He is the devil's own. It was he whom I paddled. I talked to him as I should have sent four shots home, if interfered with. They seemed as anxious to avoid us as we were them, and in a few seconds they passed into the darkness.

"'What are they, Obed, do you think?'

"'Hoss thieves, I reckon, massa; dey is powerful plenty 'roun' de Teche. Dey steal canoe up country, run down 40 or 50 miles and steal hoss or mule, dan run back again. Dat's de way dem peoples work. Big lot ob munny a feller'd ge; to take 'em, Sheriff, he after 'em—nebber catch 'em. Dem chaps is too smart for de Sheriff. One day, ole man, next day some oder body.'

"I was not particular as to who they were; but if they were horse thieves, we were not liable to be followed by them. Brad, it is hard work paddling a heavily loaded canoe against even a slow current. I was fast getting tired and my hands were blistered so they bled. It was a relief to me to know that Obed was good at that sort of engineering. I settled down then and concluded that my particular forte lay in commanding the expedition, and as commander, of course, I could not well be engineer. Therefore, I sat resignedly in the stern of the canoe and kept a good lookout. By hard work we made four miles an hour against the current. At midnight we pulled up for a short time, ate a luncheon, and got well rested. Twelve miles further would take us to the mouth of a chute, the course of which was up the river. As it was too small for steamers, and no person had settled there, I felt safe in attempting to make the passage by daylight. We must enter before morning light, however, or go ashore and lay in the woods all day. We made every exertion and before daylight had the good fortune to enter the mouth of the chute. A couple of miles up and we felt safe.

"'Unload, boys,' said I, 'and we will rest and have our breakfast, for here we stay until 4 o'clock. Three short hours will take us into the bayou again, and then look for trouble, for you will find plenty of danger and scores of steamers.'

"We landed and breakfast was soon under way. Coffee, fresh fish and bacon, with a few cakes of pilot bread—it was a good, square meal, and ravenously devoured by as hungry a set of runaways as ever left the sunny South. After breakfast we lay down and slept soundly until 3 o'clock, when I aroused all hands. Hard bread and coffee, then off again on our uncertain journey.

"I had calculated to strike the bayou again about dark and as it was quite wide at the mouth of the chute, we would have no difficulty. The chances of any notice being taken of us by passing steamers were well in our favor. Usually they had enough of their own business to attend to and would not suspect us of being a lot of runaways unless news had been spread abroad that we were off for the North. Of this there was no great danger unless, as there is no telegraph in the region, the news had just reached there. In that instance, even, it would be very unlikely that we were canoeing our way to Canada, but if we were overhauled, we could not answer, as the very fact of travelling by canoe and without baggage in that steamboat country would be a dead giveaway.

"Three hundred miles of water journey lay before us. Six days and nights carried us 180 miles, without sign of danger. At last I became careless, and did not take the extra precautions needed, and this carelessness came very near costing us dear, and ruining the whole expedition.

"One Sunday night I was sitting in the stern of the canoe, perhaps 20 rods in advance of the other one. Obed was in the bow, doing most of the labor. The night was warm, and very pleasant, and perhaps I got a little drowsy myself. I know the rest were, for all hands were nodding. I took the steering of the canoe after dark, for by that means I was sure to be awake. We were close to the bank; in fact, quite under the overhanging branches of the trees, when the largest alligator I ever saw raised his head within a foot of the gunwale of our canoe, and snapped my paddle with his ponderous jaw. I was awake enough then. Two of my passengers screamed, and sprang to the further side of the canoe. The craft never too staunch, careened to the water's edge.

"'Don't move!' cried I; 'for if we overset you are 'gator meat, every one of you—'

"In less than a minute a dozen ugly heads broke the muddy water, and it seemed as if every alligator in the bayou had gathered around the boat. I ordered Lemuel to close his canoe up quick, and he did, but I dare not attempt to transfer for fear of sinking his canoe. Obed, understanding the situation, kept beating the water with his paddle to frighten them and keep them at bay; thus we got our boat ashore, landed our wet and scared passengers, then bailed the water out of our drowned craft.

"I can't say that I was frightened, but I afterward thought perhaps I might have been. I did not relish having my career cut short by an alligator, for I wanted to again see some lively work in the Attakapas country.

"This affair consumed an hour, and about daylight we landed; hauled up our canoes and prepared to pass another day watching passing steamers, and waiting for night.

"Twenty-one days from our first embarking, without further mishap, we hauled our canoes ashore at the entrance of a little bayou, in sight of the great Red River. You recollect when we were that way planning the route we pushed boldly out. It was different now.

"I was too ignorant of the river to make my debut on it by night, as quantities of driftwood were liable to be running at this stage of the water. Next morning, therefore, while yet dark, we moved along to the river, and as daylight approached pushed our canoes into the swiftly moving currents. As I had anticipated, the surface was thickly sprinkled with driftwood. This was with great difficulty avoided. Although doing our best, the current carried us a mile below our starting point, and it was a relief when, without accident, our canoes were close under the opposite bank of the river.

"There were so many steamers moving that I did not feel quite easy, and about 9 o'clock, hearing the threshing of an upward-bound one, we ran the canoes into a little cove, where we were secure from observation. Here the banks of the river were well wooded, the foliage thick and overhanging.

"The swift rolling river eddied and sparkled in the bright sunlight, as loaded with drift, is rushed past. From our secure place in the cove I closely watched it, and reluctantly concluded we must continue our voyage to the mouth of the Black mostly by daylight. The risk from the curiosity of people on passing steamers being much less than the danger from collision with the floating debris, and it would not be an unusual sight for a couple of canoes to be seen paddling up the Red River, I therefore determined to remain here the balance of the day and the coming night.

"As this was to be our first all-night rest, we made quite an extensive preparation, putting up a light frame of poles and stretching our tent over it as a protection from the heavy dew and fog. I was a little wary about fire, but by digging a hole a few feet deep and making our fire in that, we had quite a lively blaze, that could not be seen a dozen yards away. Hot coffee, fried bacon and catfish, with hardtack for a relish, made an excellent repast, and as the epicurean tastes of my passengers had never been extensively cultivated, they found no fault. As for me, I was so confounded hungry that I was not particular and would have relished the food equally as well had it been raw.

"After supper we lay down, and in a few minutes all but myself were asleep. I was too tired and anxious to sleep soundly, and perhaps I was a trifle nervous. I lay thinking and planning until almost midnight.

"From here to the White River was a long distance. I had become accustomed to the danger, and thought chiefly of the fatigue.

"In the morning we were off again. For 10 days we voyaged, sleeping at night and resting our tired limbs. The strain and fatigue were very wearing. The women and children were mere shadows. Lucy could walk but a few steps when ashore, and from sharing my care and anxiety, together with the self-restraint imposed to conceal her previous knowledge of me from the rest, she had become so nervous as to be almost hysterical. In view of these facts, I determined to rest at least one week, and on the evening of the 21st day from the rendezvous, then being about 70 or 80 miles from the mouth of the Tensas, I reluctantly gave orders to haul up the boats. We landed about 1 o'clock P. M. on the west bank of the bayou. The shores were very low, but I judged, and rightly, that a little way inland there was dry ground enough for a safe and pleasant camp. After much labor we dragged our heavy canoes, perhaps a quarter of a mile, through mud and water, and left them secure from observation."

(To be continued.)

LUCY GAZED AT US A MOMENT AND GAVE HER HAND TO WESNER.

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