

TO THE END.

Oh, fair, swift river, go on and go by!
Go on and go down, till the voice of the sea
And the white lips of surf and the hands of
the tide—
And the white lips of surf and the hand of
the tide—
And the might of the deep where great ships
ride—
Reach out and give welcome to thee!

Oh, fair, sweet life, go on and go by!
Go on and go down to eternity;
And welcome thy end as the river is lost,
Where the wrecks lie thick, and the dead are
lost

On the limitless waste of the sea!

—J. H. Kennedy, in the *Current*

A Serious Encounter.

We had been watching an opportunity to talk with father for a week, but to tell the truth, he had not been in a very good humor. The crops were light, pork bade fair to be low too, and we knew he had interest money to make out on the first of December, a fact that troubled him a good deal, for it was October already. However, he looked rather more cheerful this morning; so my brother, Ad, mustered up courage, and said:

"If you will let Lew and me go after 'cons' this fall, we will engage to pay you fifteen dollars a month for our time, and board ourselves."

Father looked at him a moment, and then sharply at me. He evidently did not favor it.

"Who will do the fall's work?" he exclaimed. "Who will look to the hogs?"

Ad did not like to say, "It will be necessary for you to do that yourself," so he simply said, "It seems to me that ninety dollars would help a good deal on the bills that are coming due."

Father rose and went to the door, then, as mother had breakfast about ready, he sat down at the table. "Well, you may as well eat your breakfast, boys," he said.

We ate in silence. Just as we were getting up from the table father said: "If you feel quite sure that you can save thirty dollars a month, as I need the money, I think I will try to spare you."

That was enough. Weren't we glad, though?

Perhaps the reader is wondering what we meant by going "after 'cons.'" Did you ever eat a pecan nut? Here in Northern Texas, and in the Indian Territory, along the upper course of Red river, boys earn pocket money by gathering and selling pecans. It is quite a business, in fact. We make camping-out trips of a month or six weeks' duration. The nuts are ripe by the 1st of October, and the gathering season lasts till the 1st of the following January. The pecan nut tree is a variety of hickory, as many know.

At this season of the year our climate is almost perfect. There is an occasional "norther," of course; but a day or two of cold north wind may well be served up as a spice for the long desert of genial sunshine with which the winter solstice favors us.

Our summers, however, cannot be so highly recommended; for though the thermometer stands at ninety-six degrees in the shade nearly all day, one-half of the inhabitants are commonly shivering every other day with the cold. Chills and fever! These are the blots on our summer climate.

Pecan trees are very numerous on the banks of all the wooded streams of Texas and the Indian Territory, but it is among the groves along Red river that the nuts are most abundant. There, too, the "camp of the picker" will be most often seen.

Let me say here that gathering pecans, as a business, involves work; and the industrious picker goes from his camp in the morning provided with a "strap sack" and a long slender pole. The sack, made of stiff ducking, with leather-covered bottoms, will hold a peck or more of nuts, and carried by a broad strap thrown over the shoulder. The pole is a light, strong sapling, as long as the picker can conveniently carry or handle. This is a very necessary part of his outfit. Without it he could accomplish little, for the pecan-tree is tall and slender, with slim branches that offer little aid to climbers; while the nuts themselves are incased in hard, oblong shucks, that fall very slowly to the forces of nature, very quickly to the smart raps of the picker's pole.

The picker will gather from two bushels a day. When gathered

the nuts are worth, on an average, two dollars and a quarter per bushel at the nearest "store," or frontier town.

Thus the sons of farmers living along Red River frequently make good wages during the pecan months, and get some sport in the bargain. Not that there is much sport in the picking of the nuts, but the deep woods into which the picker must penetrate are still well stocked with game. Deer, turkeys, wild cats and panthers are to be met in these wild places. The wild turkeys are especially abundant, and the nut-gatherers carry guns, of course.

Another kind of game is met in some places, too frequently met, let me say, and this is the wild hog. These vicious brutes, like those in the swamps of Mississippi, the descendants of the domestic animals,—are indeed a "thorn in the flesh" to the pecan-picker. Not only do they devour bushels of the wind-falls, but they often make a raid, in the absence of the picker, into his camp and plunder his larder.

Nor is this all. The old boars are fierce and vicious, and many of them seemed determined to drive all trespassers from the weeds through which they roam. The pecan-picker is very willing to avoid encounters with them, and never shoots one unless compelled to do so to escape injury, for many of them bear the brand of an owner.

But occasionally a pitched battle takes place between some savage old "tusker" and an exasperated picker, which usually ends in the death of the brute. It is a dangerous encounter, however, even when well armed, for the brush and the sweet-briars are usually more than waist-high, and a boar's motions are very rapid and uncertain.

This introduction was necessary before beginning my story, in order that I may be understood.

Our home is on the south side of Red river; and having made up an outfit, something as above indicated, and procured a six weeks' stock of bacon, lard and corn meal, we set off on the morning of the 4th of October with old "Buck"—one of our horses—harnessed into a farm wagon, containing tent, blankets, etc.

Fording the river, we went ten or fifteen miles up Cache creek, to a tract of timber which he had previously "picked." It was a good place for nuts, and one not likely to be visited by other pickers.

Our method of disposing of the nuts, which, otherwise, would accumulate on our hands, or cause much waste of time in hauling across the river, was a very convenient one. We were within half a day's drive of one of the numerous freight roads into the Territory; and the "freighters" returning without load, from a trip to one of the northern posts, or agencies, willingly gave us two dollars per bushel for all the nuts we chose to bring to them; for they were sure to sell them at an advance of from twenty-five to fifty cents per bushel.

There is no trouble in catching a "freighter" at the creek crossings, on almost any morning or evening.

Our camping-place was near a little tributary of the Cache, called the Deep Red, in the midst of the pecan and hackberry woods. For the first two weeks, we did not see a man except the passing freighters. By the afternoon of the fourteenth day, we had gathered over fifty bushels of nuts, for which we had received from the freighters over one hundred dollars; more than enough for our "freedom money" till January. There seemed no limit to the quantity of pecans on the trees. Turkeys were plenty; and as yet we had not heard a hog, nor seen a trace of one.

That afternoon Ad took old Buck and the wagon, to go up the creek a few miles after a load of "windfall" nuts, which we had scraped together on the ground under the trees, the afternoon before, leaving me to pick as usual, nearer the camp. We had seen deer signs on the creek, and he took our breech-loading carbine (a Winchester) along with him. There remained to me only the light shotgun.

"Bring back a deer," I called to him, as he drove out through the timber, "and I will have a turkey all cooked when you get here."

"I'll do it," he said. "Have your turkey ready, for I shall be hungry."

For three or four hours I was busy, rapping limbs with my pole and gathering the nuts that fell; and, in fact, came near forgetting the turkey altogether, in the castles I was building for expending the three hundred dollars which I hoped to clear that fall, and by which I could make a grand tour to New York and

Boston. The late afternoon sun-rays falling in between the hickory trunks, at last reminded me of my duties as cook, and hastily taking my fourth sack-load of nuts to camp, I loaded the shotgun and started for my turkey.

From previous experience I knew that the creek bank was the place to look for them at this time of day; and, indeed, I had scarcely reached it when a plaintive "Yeap, yeap, yeap, yop, yop!" came to my ear from a few rods below. The bird had evidently strayed away from its mates, and was complaining loudly of its separation. I had to make my way very cautiously through a thick growth of young hackberries, but at length reached the desired position, and peering through the bushes from the top of the bank, was rewarded by the sight of a fine young gobbler trotting back and forth upon a sand bar on the opposite side of the creek. The turkey seemed bewildered and unable to decide which direction to take; but in a moment I raised my gun and the stricken turkey lay dead on the sand.

With the report of the gun, however, quite another sort of game turned up. Close at hand, in the thicket, I heard a surprised Whoogh! whoogh! then a crash in the brush followed by the angry chop! chop! chop! of a boar's jaws.

Knowing how rapid these brutes sometimes are in their rushes, I lost no time in jumping down to the partly dry bed of the creek, and wading quickly through the water, caught up my turkey, with the intention of leaving such a dangerous neighborhood, without loss of time. But the thicket was very dense on the other bank, and I was obliged to follow up the bed of the creek, for a few rods, to get out of it. I went on tip-toe, and it seemed to me I hardly stirred a pebble, yet I had not gone more than twenty yards, when with another gruff whoogh, and a clash of his long tusks, a great, gaunt, spotted boar plunged out from amongst the sweet-briars, and throwing the froth from his mouth high into the air as he "clacked," came at me like a shot.

My gun was empty. I knew that I stood no chance with such a creature by clubbing the breech. To run was all that I could do, and run I did, down the bed of the creek, at my very best pace.

But let no one think that he can outrun a wild boar; I had not taken ten jumps, when a loud whoogh at my very heels told me that the brute was upon me and would the next moment rip me up.

I did what most any one, overtaken, will do—leaped aside as far and as lithely as I could.

The boar went by me with a rush, plowing through the sand and making the pebbles fly, as if a hundred-pound shot had struck beside me!

I did not wait to even look at him, but tacked about, as if on a pivot, and ran up stream, with all my might and main! But the boar pursued almost as quickly as I, and I had not run a hundred feet before he was at my heels again!

Again I leaped for life, to one side; and again the boar plowed by! The next instant I was running for dear life's sake down stream again! Four times I ran back and forth in this manner, and every time, the boar came so close that he threw the froth from his mouth all over by back! It seemed as if he came closer to me each time. I felt my strength, or at least my breath, failing me. The thought that I must be ripped and killed by that savage animal was an awful one; and catch me I knew he would in less than an other minute. But just as I tacked the fourth time, my eye fell on a hackberry sapling that leaned out from the thicket on the bank, over the creek bed. The trunk was, perhaps, four feet up from my head. As I ran under it, I summoned all my energy, jumped and caught it with my hands. It bent under the weight, but I drew legs up, and clapped my feet round it, just in time to escape a spiteful upward slash of the boar's tusks! He just missed my body. Another foot and he would have struck me!

I wiggled round to the top side of the sapling, into a more secure position, and was now, perhaps, six feet above the boar's head.

There I lay and panted; while beneath, the old tusker stood and looked up at me, whetting his tusks, his wicked little red eyes fairly sparkling with fury, and the long bristles standing up all along his fore shoulder and back.

Finding that he could not reach me, the boar began rooting and tearing out

the bank at the roots of the sapling. Rip, rip went his old tusks through the turf and fibers. I felt the sapling jar, and soon began to fear that he might tear enough of the roots and the earth away so that it might fall over into the creek bed.

Every few moments the malignant brute would stop and eye me for an instant, then fall to ripping at the roots again. I really think that the creature had some plan of getting me down.

Already it was past sunset, and twilight would soon come on. Ad ought to be back by this time, I thought, and in hopes of his assistance, I now began to shout for help. For a time the forest echoes were my only responses, but I kept shouting at intervals of half a minute, or less; and at last got an answering hullo! from away up the creek.

"Help!" I shouted. "Help, help!"

Ad was at this time about half a mile from camp, coming home with a wagon-load of pecans. When he heard me call "help!" he unhitched old "Buck" from the wagon, jumped on his back and came down at a gallop. In a minute or two I heard him dashing in through the sweet-briars at a great pace.

"Hold on!" I shouted. "Get your gun ready. I am treed by a savage old boar. You must look out for him. He's full of fight."

"I'll settle him!" cried Ad, cheerily.

But the boar no sooner heard his voice than he gave one of his whooghs; rushed up the bank and out through the brush, toward the sound.

I could just see Ad over the briars.

"Look sharp!" I called out. "He's coming for you!"

"Let him come!" Ad exclaimed; I heard the hammer click; then crack went a shot! Old "Buck's" head reared up in sight at the same instant. The boar had charged blindly at the horse. In the fracas Ad was thrown violently into the briars.

Fearing the worst, I jumped down from the sapling, and ran through the brush on the trail of the boar. But before I got through, another shot cracked, and Ad cried out—"All right! I've settled him this time!"

When I got through the thicket, he was standing in triumph, over the still heaving body of the boar.

"Missed him the first time," said he. "Then the horse jumped before I could catch the reins an' threw me. Old 'Buck' ran off in no time; and then the boar turned on me, as I lay sprawled out here. I continued to work the lever and shove the muzzle down, as he came toward me. See, the bullet went in at his mouth, an' came out at the back of his head."

I got the turkey and the shot-gun; and we went back to camp—where the first living objects we saw were fifteen or twenty sows—the old tusker's family, probably, champing up our supplies, and ripping our tent and blankets to pieces. In fact, they had pretty nearly ruined our domestic arrangements, and it was four or five days before we got fresh provisions, and were in trim to resume pecan-picking.

Yet, despite our misadventure, we made a very handsome sum of money—for boys—that year.—F. W. Calkins, in *Youth's Companion*.

Riding Behind a Team of Deer.

The object that attracts most attention from strangers in the neighborhood of the town of Butte, Colorado, is a team of tame deer. These pets were caught when very young, in the hunting grounds called the Big Meadows. Their captor was an Indian, named Buckhorn, a guide and trapper of the Digger tribe. Indeed, Buckhorn is a man of authority among his people, being the head chief of the Diggers in the vicinity of the Big Meadows. He owns a drove of ponies, but prefers to ride behind his deer. The animals are quite docile. They have large antlers, and as they hold their heads high, the team, when hitched to a buckboard wagon, present a very imposing appearance. The harness does not contain a buckle or clasp; it is made of buckskin from halter to name strings. The deer are fleet of foot, of course, and it is the boast of Chief Buckhorn that they can outrun any other team.

All the great rivers of Russia are interlaced by artificial canals, through which thousands of barges, some as high as 1,000 tons burthen, make their way every navigation season from the Volga to the Neva. The cost of maintaining these waterways reaches \$1,200,000 annually.