

SWAMPY FOLKS.

SWAMPY.

A Tale of the "Black Cypress."

BY KIRK MURDOCK.

From a dense thicket of juniper, over which a yellow jasmine had clambered so luxuriantly, and hung such a wreath of sweet-scented flower bells as to form a screen almost impervious to light, a crouching figure peered eagerly out.

The form was that of a boy perhaps 16 years of age, but with a face so thin and shrewd that it might have belonged to a man of 60. It was tanned, freckled, and weather beaten; and was shadowed by a thatch of sun-bleached hair, that the boy every now and then pushed back from his eyes with an impatient gesture. The gray eyes had a stealthy and hunted look like those of a wild animal.

He was bare-footed and bare-headed, while his only garments were a blue cotton shirt and a pair of coarse trousers much too large for him and turned up at the bottoms. They were supported by a leather belt, still showing patches of tawny hair and into this was thrust a knife.

This boy was known far and wide as "Swampy," and if he had ever borne any other name he, as well as others, had forgotten it.

He was the outcast of that thinly settled Southern neighborhood; his hand was against all men and to him was credited all the mischief and thieving of the community.

He was rarely seen by daylight, but at night he prowled about the countryside, and shadowy glimpses of him were always followed by the discovery of looted chicken roosts, spring houses, or melon patches.

Many a fruitless trap was set for him, and he had eluded many a hot chase. He laughed to scorn all efforts to bring him to justice, and defied his pursuer from the trackless fastnesses of the great swamp, in which he always found a secure retreat.

It was generally known that somewhere within its black depths, amid whose tangled cane brakes panthers, bears, and wild cats roamed unmolested, where water moccasins and alligators abounded, and where tempting beds of greenest moss concealed deadly bits of shiny ooze, old Jake Minders had for years maintained a moonshine still, though no living man had ever visited or seen it; and that here his son, the boy only known as "Swampy," had remained alone ever since the disappearance of the old man who, either dead or a fugitive from justice, had now been missing for many months.

How Swampy lived none knew nor cared. His neighbors only swore whenever they spoke of him, and wished he would cease to live at all or would follow his father to parts unknown.

Even Swampy wondered why he stayed where he did. The only reason he could give to himself was that he knew and loved the Black Cypress, with a knowledge and love belonging only to those who have passed their lives in a single house. Amid its gloomy shadows he had dwelt ever since he could remember, and for aught he knew he had been born in the swamp.

His life was as cheerless and lonely as can well be conceived; but although he never worked and knew not the meaning of the word "study," it was a fairly busy one. He had a living to get as well as any one else, and he got it by hunting, trapping, fishing, and stealing, all of which were to him perfectly legitimate occupations. He had never been taught that stealing was wrong, though he had received from his father many lessons of a nature that he was not likely to forget on the enormity and disgrace of being caught at it.

Thus when the boy was thrown upon his own resources he stole whatever he considered necessary to his comfort as naturally as he breathed or slept, and was more proud of the knowledge that he had never been caught at it.

The principal scene of Swampy's depredations was Cypress Knoll, a plantation that bordered on the swamp in which he made his home.

It was near by, abounded in the very things he most needed, and was less carefully guarded than other places whose owners lived on them.

Its owner, whose name was Addis, was compelled by business to spend most of his time in a distant city; but the plantation, left in charge of an overseer, was kept up after a fashion, principally, so Swampy was pleased to fancy, by his special benefit.

Although there was much thieving on this plantation of which Swampy was both innocent and ignorant, it was all credited to him in the reports made to its proprietor.

About a week before the time with which this story opens, Mr. Addis, accompanied by his wife and their only child, a little 5-year-old daughter, arrived unexpectedly at Cypress Knoll, on a visit of inspection.

The proprietor soon discovered that he had been systematically robbed on all sides, but, so far as he could find out, every one was honest and innocent save "Dat tiev'n' young debil of a Swampy. Tell yo', sah, him so keen fer stealin' dat he steal de tooften yo' head, an' nebbet get etoh if yo' ain't look out. Yes, sah, pears like him lottin' fer to car off der whole plantashun fore him dun get troo!"

So against Swampy was the proprietor's wrath directed, and vowing to bring the young rascal to justice before he left the neighborhood he laid many plans for the lad's capture.

Of all this the boy remained in such ignorance that he found no reason for ceasing his stealthy visits to Cypress Knoll whenever his hunger or other necessities seemed to demand them.

He even began to visit the place by daylight and more frequently than ever, for he had learned that it possessed a new attraction for him, and one so fascinating that he could not resist it. Dainty little Mildred Addis, with her happy laughter and bewitching ways, was a revelation to the young outcast of the swamp, and to lie hidden in some tangled thicket from which he could watch her became his great pleasure.

He soon discovered the favorite haunts to which Mrs. Addis always accompanied by Mildred, took her work or book on warm, drowsy afternoons. Near one of these he would wait for hours, and when they appeared would watch with almost breathless delight the butterfly movements of the child.

Swampy had never heard of angels, but he was intimately acquainted with birds, and to his untutored mind the little one, with her brightness, softness, and incessant

sant motion, was like one of the exquisite, ruby-throated humming birds that flashed to and fro among the jasmine flowers, and to himself he called her "humming-bird."

On this particular afternoon Mrs. Addis had sought the shade of a giant, live-oak, beneath which she sat absorbed in a book, while Mildred played near her, and Swampy from the thicket in which, crouched like a wild animal, he had long waited for their appearance, watched her with a swelling heart and a strange longing to be in some way different from what he was, and more like the people whom this child could know and love.

At times the child came so close to gather the yellow flowers that hung about him that he could have touched her, but he crouched low and she did not discover his presence.

Suddenly on one of these occasions a half-grown Newfoundland pup appeared from behind a clump of shrubbery, and with awkward gambolings and loud barking made straight for the little girl. With a frightened cry she ran toward her mother. An instant later Swampy, fancying that the child was in danger, and naturally hating dogs because they were always set onto him, had sprung from his concealment, seized the animal's throat in his sinewy young hands, and would have choked it to death had he not in turn been grasped from behind and forced to loose his hold.

Mr. Addis and the owner of an adjacent plantation, who had been but a few steps behind the dog, and who misunderstood the cause of Swampy's attack on him, had sprung to his rescue.

"Who are you? You young villain! What are you doing here? And what do you mean by this outrage?" demanded Mr. Addis, sternly, as he tightened his clutch on the lad's arm, and slightly shook him. To these questions Swampy, angry and sullen, made no reply.

"It's that young cub of old Jake Minders'!" exclaimed the other gentleman, with a keen look at the boy's face. "The most audacious young scoundrel in all these parts, and one who ought to have been sent to the chain gang long ago. Swampy, they call him, and—"

"Swampy!" interrupted Mr. Addis, "why, that is the name of the thief who has been robbing me right and left for some years past. I was going to ask you to help me organize a hunt for him. Well this is a bit of luck. Aha, you young villain! So you thought you'd kill my dog, did you, for fear he'd interfere with your thieving. His services won't be needed now, though for to-morrow I'll put you in a place where you won't have a chance to steal anything more for some years to come. In the meantime I guess the smoke-house will be a good enough place for you to spend the night in."

So the unhappy lad, still doggedly silent, and feeling humiliated as never before in his life, was led away and thrust into the darkness of the stout log smoke-house, the heavy door of which was securely padlocked behind him.

For the rest of the afternoon he remained there, and late at night the negro who carried him a supper of corn bread and a jug of water reported that he was still safe.

In the morning when they came to take him to the county jail he had disappeared. A hole burrowed as though by a fox through the solidly packed earth underneath one of the walls showed how he had escaped.

Not only had he departed, but every ham and side of bacon that had hung in the smoke-house had gone with him.

When this was reported to Mr. Addis that gentleman's chagrin knew no bounds, and he vowed he would not rest until Swampy was again a prisoner.

By noon messengers sent far and wide had summoned to Cypress Knoll half a dozen neighboring land owners, as many servants, and a score of dogs. With this assistance, Mr. Addis proposed to draw the swamp covers and hoped to speedily run this human fox to earth.

After lunch as the hunt was about to start the shouting men, neighing horses, loud-tongued dogs, created a merry confusion on the broad lawn that sloped down from the house to the very edge of the great swamp.

"Remember," called Mr. Addis, "the thief must surely be taken this time. He is the curse of this community, and deserves no more mercy at our hands than the beasts with which he shares his hiding-place."

"Aye, aye! We'll have the young catamount before night, never fear!" was shouted in reply as the noisy cavalcade dashed away.

Their leader was the last to mount; and as he did so, little Mildred, joyously excited by the confusion which had no meaning to her beyond that of a frolic, darted from her mother's side and begged her papa to take her with him.

Laughing at the child's request, and in spite of her mother's protesting exclamation, the indulgent father swung his darling up on to the saddle in front of him, put spurs to his horse, and was off like a shot.

At the bottom of the lawn he set the little one gently down and bidding her run back to her mother plunged into the gloomy shadows of the swamp, amid which his companions had already disappeared.

The sounds of merry horns, baying hounds, shouts and barking grew fainter, until finally they were lost in the forest's depths, and the peace of silence once more brooded over the borders of the dark swamp, and the sun-bathed plantation beyond.

It was dusk ere the weary hunters, angered by failure, began to struggle back from the glades among which their unsuccessful quest had been made. Men, horses and dogs were alike covered with the ooze and slime of the swamp. All were scratched and torn by the thorns of briars and tatty bushes, wait-a-bits and wild rattan.

Mr. Addis was among the first to emerge into the open, and as he did so he was met by a group of frightened women, one of them sprang forward crying shrilly, "Mildred, my baby! where is she? Give her to me at once! Oh, it was cruel! cruel! to take her into that awful place!"

The hunters reined shortly up, and gazed at one another with blanched faces. "What do you mean?" demanded their leader huskily. "The child has not been with us. I sent her back from this very spot hours ago."

He had hardly spoken, and had no time to spring to her aid, ere his wife fell senseless to the ground.

Quickly, and far, the dread news spread. Mildred Addis was lost! She had not returned to the house after dashing away in that mad gallop with her father, and must

have followed him into the awful shadows of the swamp.

Strong men shuddered as they pictured the helpless little one wandering, terrified and alone, amid the horrors from which they had just emerged, her tender flesh torn by thorns, and her uncertain footsteps dogged by prowling beasts.

Fearful concerning her fate, dismayed and helpless as they were, they were also prompt to act and, as quickly as torches could be brought, they plunged again into the weird darkness of the vast swamp.

Within an hour and less than a mile away they found the child sitting between two buttresses of a great, moss-hung cypress and sobbing as though her little heart would break. Her dainty dress was torn, mud-stained, and thickly splattered with blood, although she herself was as safe and unharmed as when last held in her mother's arms.

Directly in front of her, and barring the recess formed by the projecting buttresses of the tree, lay a confused mass, which, as the torches were held lower for a closer inspection, resolved itself into two dead bodies.

One was that of a huge panther, bleeding from a dozen wounds and with the knife that had dealt them driven deep into his heart.

The other body, frightfully torn and mangled, but with a hand still clutching the death-dealing knife, was that of a mere lad.

As one of the men turned it over and revealed the white, set face, he started back with an oath. "By—men, it's Swampy! and we've been hunting him while he's been here fighting to the death to save the child!"

They laid Swampy away next day in the family burying ground of Cypress Knoll. The place from which he had been driven was proud to receive him. From those who had scorned him he had won the homage due only such as are willing to lay down their lives for their fellows.

All this happened many years ago. But to this day no stranger is allowed to pass through that section of the far South without listening to the story of Swampy, the young outcast of the Black Cypress Knoll.

THE SCHIPKA PASS.

Archibald Forbes' Stirring Picture of Defence.

This moment of confusion and wavering was well chosen by the Turks for an advance in great force from the western flanking spur toward the high road in rear of the Russian position, while another column from the eastern spur moved down simultaneously to join hands with it. Well might Captain Greene, the American military attaché with the Russians, whose admirable work is the authentic record of the war—well might he write that "the moment was the most critical of the campaign."

The moment was dramatic, with an intensity to which the tameness of civilian life can furnish few parallels. The Russian general, expecting momentarily to be environed, had sent out from between the fast-closing tentacles of the great octopus which was embracing him, a last telegram to the Czar, defining the inevitable issue, telling how his brave men had striven to avert it, and pledging them and himself to hold out, with the help of God, to the bitter end and the last drop of their blood. As the afternoon shadows were falling, the Turkish fire on the peak of St. Nicholas. Along the bare ridge below them lay the grimed, sun-blistered men, beaten out with heat, fatigue, hunger, and thirst; reckless in their despondency, that every foot of ground was swept by the Turkish rifle fire. Others still doggedly fought on down among the rocks, forced to give ground, but doing so with sullen reluctance. The cliffs and valley echoed with triumphant shouts of "Allah il Allah!"

Stolietoff cries aloud in sudden excess of excitement, grasps Darozhinski by the elbow, and points down the Pass. The head of a long black column is plainly visible against the reddish-brown bed of the rock. The troops about them spring to their feet.

The Turkish war-cries were drowned in the wild clamor of cheering which the wind carried from the sore-pressed defenders of the Schipka, in glad welcome to the comrades hurrying to help them.—[Archibald Forbes, in the April Scribner.]

The Pioneer.

Just a hundred years ago (in 1792) an inventive English nobleman declared that it was possible to make a ship move by the aid of "steam," without "masts or sails," and, having spent as much as he was prepared to afford on repeated costly plans, craved some assistance from the States. Of course the department (being a wet blanket) strenuously tied up its loan, but, having been persuaded by the result of his experiments that he had hope of success, it undertook to build a small vessel for the would-be inventor, to be navigated "by the steam engine" on the condition that if it failed "all the expense should be made good by him." This generous enterprise of Lord Stanhope was highly lauded at the time, the popular verdict being thus expressed: "If it answer, the advantage to the public, particularly in inland navigation, will be immense."

In this case the recognition of a pioneer's possible "usefulness" was exceptionally favorable. If the Inquisition had then held power in England his ignoring of the mystic wind's influence might have got him into mischief. But the courage of the true discoverer seldom fails. When Galileo was compelled to recant his heresy about the motion of the earth he whispered to a friend, as he rose from his knees, "It moves for all that." So, too, at last does the cautious world when some one audaciously proposes to find his way over a stream or gulf which has never been crossed, or about even the existence of which none have ever troubled themselves at all.

He Was Sorry.

Housekeeper—"This is the twentieth time to-day that I've had to come to the door to tell peddlers that I did not want anything."

Peddler—"Very sorry, mum?"
Housekeeper—"It's some comfort to know that you are sorry, anyhow."
Peddler—"Yes, mum, I'm very sorry you don't want anything, mum."

THE ATLANTIC FLOATING ISLAND.

A Detached Piece of the Continent Said to be Floating in Mid-Ocean.

Unless the latest news of the drifting island in the Atlantic has failed to reach us, nothing has been heard of the remarkable mass of earth, roots, and verdure since it was sighted on September 19 last. At that time this bit of the New World seemed destined to add a trifle to the area of the Old.

It was far north and east, and, considering its limited experience in navigation, was making good progress toward Europe. It is probable, however, that the October storms tore it to pieces and scattered its fragments over the ocean floor.

Several months ago some information about this remarkable sailor was given. Reports as to its size, printed soon after its discovery, seem to have been exaggerated. The mass was said to have an area of about two acres. We have no reason, to believe, however, that it was seen before July 28, when it appeared to be nearly square in outline, with a length of about a hundred and ten feet on each side, which would give it an area of less than a third of an acre. At that time it was nearly in the longitude of the Bermudas and the latitude of Wilmington, Del.

It was in the centre of the Gulf Stream, a mass of earth thickly covered with tropical grass and bushes, whose roots apparently held it together. The mass was elevated above the general level, in one part, until the bushes that crowned it were thirty feet above the sea. It was in plain view at a distance of seven miles.

Nearly a month later the floating island was seen again. It was August 16, and the Gulf Stream had carried it a little north of the latitude of Boston. It was south of Newfoundland, was approaching the Grand Banks, and was in the track of transatlantic travel. More than two weeks later, on September 13 and 14, two vessels came across the wanderer. There was a heavy sea, and the traveller from the tropics was having a hard time of it. The floating mass was not, however, demolished by the violence of the waves, for it was seen again on September 19. It was then in the latitude of Cape Breton Island, was northwest of the Azores, and almost in mid-ocean. It has not been reported since, and probably failed to reach Europe. From the first to the last reports, this waif from tropical America certainly travelled 1,075 miles, and its total journey may have been at least twice that distance.

Floating islands are not a novelty. Parts of large river banks, particularly within the tropics, are sometimes torn away, carrying not only a great mass of vegetation, but also insects and reptiles, hundreds of miles down stream. These floating masses are a very common occurrence in the river Plate of South America. Floating islands are also observed at sea now and then, but we are not aware that they have ever before been reported at so great a distance from land, or that they have been found hitherto in the northern track of the Atlantic commerce. The island whose progress over the ocean has just been traced for a remarkable distance, suggests an idea that is of great interest to geographers and geologists.

The fact that many close or complete resemblances were found to exist between the fossil and living flora and fauna of parts of the earth that are separated by great oceans, has long been regarded as evidence that these widely severed regions were once connected by a land bridge which, in the course of time, sank beneath the sea. It is well known that seeds enclosed in shells not easily penetrable may float in ocean currents for many hundreds of miles and produce their kind on the foreign shores they reach: but scientific men have not been able to see how land animals and many varieties of plants, most of them now known only as fossils, could be identically the same or very closely allied in regions severed by wide seas unless these regions were once connected by a land bridge.

We have now undoubted proof that a little speck of land, torn from some coast or river bank, crowned with vegetable if not animal life, has drifted half way across the ocean. It seems reasonable to suppose that floating islands, some of them many times larger than the island we have described, may have played an important part in the distribution of species with which they have not generally been credited.

The Most Careless Creatures that ever Lived.

He came home some nights ago a bit tired from a busy day's work, and his wife waited until he had got off his overcoat and sat down.

"Did you get that piece of silk I asked you to bring?" she inquired, seeing that he had not laid it before her.

"Yes, dear; I left it out there in the hall."

"Did you get the pins?"

"Yes, dear."

"And the ribbon?"

"Yes."

"And Bobbie's shoes?"

"Yes."

"And a hearth broom?"

"Yes."

"And a wick for the kitchen lamp?"

"Yes."

"And some matches?"

"Yes, they are with the other bundles."

"And did you see the man about the coal?"

"Yes, it will be up on Monday."

"And the man to fix the grate in the dining-room?"

"Yes, he's coming as soon as he can."

"And did you go and pay the gas rate?"

"Yes, dear."

"And—and—oh, yes, did you order a new shovel for the kitchen?"

"N—n—no," he hesitated, "I forgot it."

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "What did you do that for? You know we needed that shovel, and I told you about it the very first thing when you went to town this morning. I do think you men are the most forgetful and careless creatures that ever lived."

"And she was cross for the rest of the evening."

The Chinese detective force is a secret body, and the best organized in the world. They have an eye upon every man, woman, and child, foreign or native, in China, and in addition watch over each other.

The Old Cemetery of Barcelona is in truth a "city of the dead." Streets upon streets of walls, with five or six stories of niches, into which the coffins are placed, give one indeed the idea of a deserted city. This fashion obtains all over Spain and in some parts of Italy.

THE INSTINCT OF LOCALITY.

Men Possess It in Common With the Lower Animals.

A cat carried 100 miles in a basket, a dog taken, perhaps, 500 miles by rail, in a few days may have found their way back to the starting point. So we have often been told, says a writer in the London Spectator, and no doubt the thing has happened. We have been astonished at the wonderful intelligence displayed. Magic, I should call it. Last week I heard of a captain who sailed from Aberdeen to Arbroath. He left behind him a dog which according to the story had never been in Arbroath, but when he arrived there the dog was waiting on the quay. I expected to believe that the dog had known his master's destination, and been able to inquire the way overland to Arbroath. Truly marvelous! But really, it is time to inquire more carefully as to what these stories do mean; we must cease to ascribe our intelligence to animals, and learn that it is we that often possess their instinct.

A cat on a farm will wander many miles in search of prey and will, therefore, be well acquainted with the country for miles round. It is taken fifty miles away. Again it wanders and comes across a bit of country it knew before. What more natural than that it should go to its old home? Carrier pigeons are taught "homing" by taking them gradually longer flights from home, so that they may learn the look of the country. We cannot always discover that a dog actually was acquainted with the route by which it wanders home, but it is quite absurd to imagine, as most people at once do, that it is a perfect stranger to the lay of the land. To find our way a second time over ground we have once trod is scarcely intelligence; we can only call it instinct, though the word does not in the least explain the process. Two years ago I first visited Douglas in the Isle of Man. I reached the station at 11 p. m. I was guided to a house a mile through the town. I scarcely paid any attention to the route, yet next morning I found my way by the same route to the station, walking with my head bent, deeply thinking all the time about other things than the way. I have the instinct of the locality.

Most people going into a dark room that they know are by muscular sense guided exactly to the very spot they wish; so people who have the instinct of locality may wander over a moor exactly to the place where they wish to reach, without thinking of where they go. There may be no mental exercise connected with this. I have known a lady of great intelligence who would lose her way within half a mile of the house she had lived in forty years. This feeling about place belongs to that part of us that we have in common with the lower creatures. We need not postulate that the animals ever show signs of possessing our intelligence; they possess in common with us what is not intelligence, but instinct.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA.

No Wreckage in the Deepest of the Ocean Depths.

An extraordinary circumstance that has been noticed with interest and that always creates surprise when learned, is the entire absence of foreign matter in the deeper part of the ocean's floor. Of all the vessels lost in mid-ocean, of all the human beings that have been drowned, of all the marine animals that have perished, of all the clay, sand and gravel let fall by dissolving icebergs, of all the various substances drifted from every shore by shifting currents—not a trace remains, but in their place water from 1,000 to 2,500 fathoms in depth covers the uniform deposit of thick, bluish, tenacious slime called globigerina ooze.

A bit of this under a powerful lens is a revelation of beauty not readily forgotten. The ooze is composed almost entirely of the daintiest, most delicately beautiful shells imaginable. At depths greater than 2,500 fathoms the bottom of the sea consists mainly of products arising from exposure, for almost incalculable periods, to the chemical action of sea water, of pumice and other volcanic matters. This finally results in the formation of the red clay deposits that are considered characteristic of the profoundest depths of the ocean. Carbonate of lime, which, in the form of the shell of foraminifera, make up so large a part of the globigerina ooze, is here almost entirely absent.

Timely Appearance.

"May I ask you, madam," inquired the gentlemanly caller at the front door, removing his hat, "if there has been a large and successful cooking school in this neighborhood for some weeks?"

"There has," replied the lady.

"Some member of your family has been in attendance, perhaps," he ventured.

"Yes. Two of my daughters attend it."

"Ah!" rejoined the caller, pleasantly. "A good cooking school is one of the adjuncts of an advanced civilization. I am always interested to notice the advance of a community in the knowledge of the gentle arts and sciences that go to make up the sum of human happiness. But I have allowed myself to forget the business upon which I have ventured to call," he continued, briskly opening a small valise.

"I am introducing a small but comprehensive work, entitled 'The Horrible Curse of Dyspepsia and Indigestion; How Cured and How Removed.' The price is only seventy-five cents and I can assure you, madam—Thanks. Good morning!"

The line of railway which was first constructed cost £37,568 per mile, about 60 per cent. above the estimate.