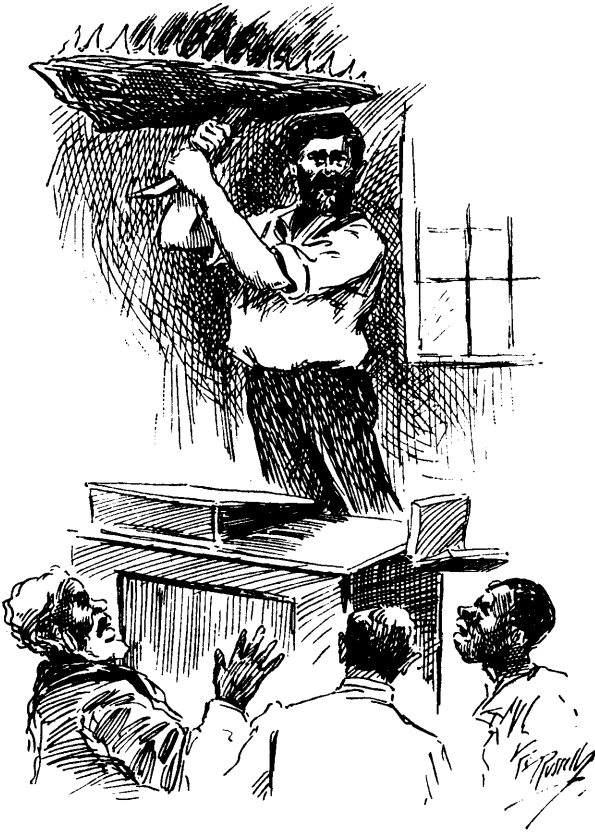


had not slain Jim Wattle. Look at the teeth of this monster; one nip, and they would have met in the vitals of that boy, whom Providence had protected from a worse place than room in the alligator. I related the story of Jonah and the whale. I addressed myself to Jim Wattle, and holding up the alligator's jaw, asked him how he passed that gate of death unharmed.



"Brought it down upon the pulpit."

Jim broke down, and very soon all the rest followed. When I gesticulated with that alligator snout, they fairly leapt from their seats, and yelled as if it were the doom of death to them all. Old Judge Long became excited, and, seeing the effect of striking the pulpit with the alligator's jaw, took hold with me to give greater emphasis to my remarks.

"They were a changed community. Jim Wattle ever after helped the old man in his Sunday meetings. The Judge himself went his circuit without his rifle, and took an interest in the plantation meetings when at home.

"Boys, this is a cold climate, far too cold to look for alligators. But since I left Pensacola, I have never seen so many boys and young men, in one place, who are in need of an alligator reformation."

The old man had finished his story. He lighted his pipe, and walked about to receive congratulations. The post-man arrived a minute later. Many did not express the utmost confidence in the old man's veracity. But he had been the story-teller for the evening. He had been listened to with interest, and like the story-teller at the Arab tent door, he departed with the day.

Sometimes more than one old settler told a story in the evening, at the village post office, while waiting for the mail, about difficulties surmounted, hardships endured, dangers escaped, and lives sacrificed, in the courageous efforts put forth to make the wilderness and solitary places glad: how men and women helped each other, and how all were pleased to see the humble log cabin give place to the frame farm house, and to observe the first orchards that began to bear fruit. These stories were interesting incidents in the annals of the place, important events in the lives of well nigh forgotten heroes in the cause of peaceful industry, whose names are not even perpetuated by a grave stone. But old Mack's story, which I