

"It's Ralph and his comrades," said Ned. "I can make out their faces distinctly now."

In fact, in a few minutes the party on the island seemed aware of the location of Ned and Ernest, and signalled them wildly.

"The rain seems to have stopped," said Ernest. "The water may subside."

"Not for many days," replied Ned. "The floods from the mountains will keep the level the same for some time to come. Ernest, we must reach the boys yonder."

"But how?"

"By swimming from tree to tree, if no other way."

Ned bade his companion hold the gun and provision bag, and, divesting himself of his coat, climbed down to the water's edge.

He found that the water was over his head, and that its surface was covered with floating vines, in which he became entangled dangerously.

Then Ned Darrow exercised all his ingenuity to reach the boys imprisoned on the island.

It was a slow and laborious task. He made a strong rope of some thick tough vines, and, attaching a piece of wood, flung it to the nearest tree. Here he would swim or climb his way, secure the rope, and Ernest would follow along this improvised bridge.

This operation the boys repeated for nearly two hours. At the first Ralph Warden and his companions had stood on the edge of the island, but for some reason they had returned to the vicinity of the fire.

At last they reached a clump of trees only a few yards from the island, and boldly swam the distance, undaunted by the presence of turtles, lizards, and snakes, which abounded on every floating piece of dead wood.

"The boys act strangely," said Ernest, as they shook the water from their clothing.

"They are gathered about the fire," replied Ned.

But as they toiled towards the centre of the swampy little island, they found a curious state of affairs.

Of the six boys, three lay prostrate on the ground, pale and groaning as though with some deathly sickness, while the others were wandering blindly about, filling the air with strange, incoherent mutterings, and gesticulating deliriously.

Ernest was quite frightened as Ralph Warden stared at Ned when the latter touched his arm, with the words—

"What's the matter, Ralph?"

Ralph's eyes were glazed, and his face was a white blank. He did not seem to recognize Ned, and continued muttering vaguely.

"What can it mean?" said Ernest. "The boys act as if they were crazy."

"They are, temporarily, at least. See, Ernest, this accounts for their strange condition."

As Ned spoke he picked up a small, round apple, of which there were several on the ground, some of them half-eaten.

"What is it, Ned?"

"A kind of thorn apple, and probably poisonous or narcotic. They have been overcome with hunger, and have eaten recklessly without counting the cost."

"Cannot we do something for them? They may be dying."

"We can try," said Ned. "Get some water in this, Ernest."

Ned handed his companion the tin cup they carried with them, and hurriedly built a small fire of twigs.

He heated the water, brought from the bayou, and then poured its luke-warm contents down the throats of each of the sick boys.

This he continued until they had ejected the fruit they had eaten, and had the satisfaction of seeing them finally recover their natural health, except for a slight pallor and weakness.

The food in the provision bag was ravenously devoured by the hungry boys, whose story of their wanderings and sufferings was briefly given, and their sorrow for running away freely expressed.

The rain continued to fall, ever and anon, all through that day, and the water increased steadily. Ned noted with some alarm that their stock of provisions was entirely gone, and that the chances of obtaining much game were very frail.

He began to scheme for escape from the island, and perfected a plan by the following morning.

An immense log had floated to the island, and he tested its capacity by having his companions get upon it. Its base was heavy, and it neither sank nor turned in the water with their additional weight.

He made a rope of vines, attached a stone, and all announced their willingness to trust themselves to the rudely improvised float.

By paddling and pulling their way by the trees, as also by flinging the stone ahead to a tree and dragging along on the rope, the eight boys managed to navigate the bayou.

Half-starved and woe-begone in appearance they reached the river the next day, and that evening the camp near the coast welcomed them home again.

Their adventures thrilled the twelve boys who had not been with them, but the lesson of Ralph Warden's foolish venture was too powerful to excite any to follow his example.

It was two nights later when a new and startling episode occurred at the camp.

About midnight Ned Darrow, awakening, saw moving towards their camp-fire two stealthy forms.

"Savages," he murmured, as he reached for the loaded gun.

He could make out that the intruders were human beings, and he determined to awaken the camp.

He fired the gun in the air, its echoes reverberating far and wide.

At that moment, however, from the foremost of the two advancing figures came the words, in a gruff, hearty tone of voice—

"Avast there, my hearty! Don't you know me?"

(To be Continued.)

A DOG'S HUMANITY.

A correspondent sends to the London *Spectator* the following anecdote illustrative of a dog's "humanity":—The servant man of one of my friends took a kitten to a pond with the intention of drowning it. His master's dog was with him, and when the kitten was thrown into the water the dog sprang in and brought it back safely to land. A second time the man threw it in, and again the dog rescued it; and when, for the third time, the man tried to drown it, the dog, as resolute to save the little helpless life as the man was to destroy it, swam with it to the other side of the pool, running all the way home with it, and safely depositing it before the kitchen fire, and ever after they were inseparable, sharing even the same bed!

There are many people in the world who laugh all the way home, and stop as soon as they reach the door.