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THE LAST STAGE

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There was nothing for it but to pull in our belts and foot it to the next place, Whitely's, ten miles farther. As we issued out of the gate at Smith's Natty Bumpus came limping along the road. We called to him that it was no use trying there, but he went on in, making believe not to hear us. Natty's feelings were hurt. We never saw him again.

Fortunately we had bread and cheese and raisins and tea, and we supped beside a little stream. It was the last time that the copper kettle was hung over the fire, and we sat in the grass eschewing forks and spoons.

It was a warm, steamy night after the rain, and as black as lamp-black. The trail divided more than once, and we were none too sure of the way. Monteith was our guide, and when he admitted that he was anxious, we were discouraged. Walking at night has its charms, just the same. Across the open spaces, the sandy track stretched ahead of us like a pale ribbon. In the fragrant piney woods we had literally to feel for the trail with our feet. How cheering it was on issuing from such a patch of woods to be greeted by a welcoming yellow eye in the distance. We fairly ran the rest of the way for fear they would go to bed before we got there.

But these were Christian people; they did not