

her and the little charges, from head to foot, paying attention to hair, ribbons and finger rings. Etta, the nurse, who could not conceal her dislike of *country negroes*, attempted to remove the children by force, at which Olivia as a means of making peace, threw them a handful of nuts and some small coin, in the midst of the scramble for which the new-comers escaped into the house. Next day Miss Rothwell made a strange acquaintance, and met with a singular adventure. "I believe rowing a boat is one of your accomplishments, is it not?" said Mr. Colby soon after breakfast.

"I've had some experience in boating on our own little lake," said Olivia.

"That would hardly fit you for pulling through our swamp and backwater. I'm to take a rough trip this morning but am afraid to propose that you and the children shall accompany me."

Miss Rothwell was eager to go, as Mr. Colby had expected. His manner of proposing the trip, was a sort of finesse to shift the responsibility, while accomplishing his object. A light cart drawn by a mule, carried the women and children through the regularly plowed fields to the place where they entered the boat. Mr. Colby riding along reined up his horse now and then to explain the topography of his estate. It was new land, recently prepared for cultivation. Even the fields around the house, from which all timber had been eradicated, were primeval soil ten years before. They passed later through some deadening where huge trunks, made black and white by the action of the fire, still remained defiantly erect.

"They choose their own time for falling," he said, "as far as our efforts are concerned, but succumb by hundreds to a high wind. At such a time one had better be under fire on the field of battle than here."

He presently dismounted, and after seeing the cart party on their feet, sent that vehicle and his horse back again. The skiff, rowed by four stout oarsmen shot swiftly through the barren trunks of the deadening where the back water had risen to the height of four or five feet. By and by they reached a ridge, where in spots it was nearly dry. Here Mr. Colby's prophecy of difficulties was fulfilled. When the skiff would not float, it had to be pulled, and Olivia thought the black men showed themselves each as strong as Hercules, in performing that duty.

"You are going to a raftsmen's camp," said Mr. Colby when they were again afloat, "and you can write home that no white woman has been there before you. The singular person who makes it his abode was born in Wisconsin. He came down here some years ago and began to cut logs and float them out into the river, when the water rose in the spring. I found him frantic with rage, when he heard I had entered the land where he was, to add to my own tract, and could only be conciliated when I offered him a partnership. My negroes join him in cutting when the crop is laid by, and there is nothing to do. We let the logs accumulate until what we call an overflow comes, and then float them out to the nearest saw-mill. The water has been low for three years, so there are several large rafts cut and dried. My business with Knox is to try and contrive a route to get our wares to market. My own of course is the lion's share and will, I hope, amount to many thousand dollars."

"What a lonely, isolated life!" exclaimed Olive.

"And yet he likes it! Nothing annoys Knox more than to have other men sleep about his camp. He has become a

mighty hunter before the Lord, and wants no poaching on his preserves. He has not near the dread of fighting with a bear that you would have with a mouse, and has taken the prize of five dollars, offered for a wolf's scalp by our county authorities, half a dozen times."

Knox here met the party in a dug out, and giving them a rough but apparently sincere welcome, proceeded to pilot them to a high ground. In the thickest part of a magnificent forest one of three Indian mounds had been selected by the man as his abiding-place. Here, at the foot of a giant gum tree, he had made a rude cabin of logs. Its roof and the crude furniture within, seemed made, for the most part, from trophies of the chase. There were hides and skins and furs hung up promiscuously. The late hairy covering from the bear was thrown across a log to make a seat for Miss Rothwell and the little girls, by Knox, who seemed anxious to do them honor. He was a sinewy, hard-featured man, embarrassed, though gratified by the influx of company, and trying hard to tone down his language and manners to suit the occasion. He gave a nervously quick stir to the boiling pot with a long stick, saying that the beans might stick, and then going into the hut brought out some wings of birds and a string of alligator's teeth which he offered as gifts.

"I told Miss Rothwell a white woman had never visited your camp before, Knox."

"Yes there were."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Colby. "Is it possible?"

"You bet!"

"Where did she come from?" called out one of the children.

"Mister Knox only jokin', chile," said Etta.

"No I ain't joking," responded Knox. "There has been a woman here, and I wish she hadn't. You know I told you Jack Hindman was cuttin' just over the line? Well, thar's a woman campin' with him, and the way the dog beats her is ridic'lus."

"Good heavens!" burst from Olivia.

"You would say so for true, if you could have seen her shoulders the day she first run over here. There warn't no skin left on 'em. I swar I couldn't sleep none that night."

"Is she his wife?" asked Mr. Colby.

"That or the same thing. She's a little woman, but game. She says she fit him back till he knocked her down. I wanted to take her over to Vaucuse, but she 'low'd she was 'fraid. She had sumthin' rit on paper she begged me to send somewhere, but I couldn't read it, and no more can you."

"Let me see it," said Olivia quickly.

"Lord, mum," said Knox, "I lost it 'rectly after she left. I never could keep nothin' of that sort. Pin it as fast as you please to a tree, and the first wind comes it's gone."

"I'm so sorry," said Olivia.

"Don't you go for to think I didn't befriend her. I told her to tell Hindman if I heerd his doin' the like again, I'd send a ball through him sooner than if he was a buzzard."

"Bless me!" said Olivia, "is there no law to fit the case?"

"Law! law!" said Knox with a loud laugh, "there ain't no law in the swamp! If a man acts the bear or the skunk, you are at him with your shotgun. That's the way we settle it. When the officer comes for you, you run, and he never finds you."

"Don't tell Miss Rothwell such things, Knox," said Mr. Colby, "she'll be frightened and insist on going home."

"Scuse me! I don't suppose a young lady do care to hear 'bout such trash as that women."