

fire of musketry, and which was repeated at short intervals. Each time it was heard our horses appeared scared and trembling.

The whole prairie, the whole horizon to the southwest was one mass of dense smoke, through which the sun's disc looked scarcely brighter than a paper lantern. Behind the thick curtain which thus concealed everything from our view, we heard a low hissing, like that of a multitude of snakes. The smoke was stifling and unbearable; our horses again turned panting round, and tore madly towards the creek. — On reaching it we dismounted, but had the greatest difficulty to prevent them from leaping into the water. The streaks of red to our right became brighter and brighter, and gleamed through the huge dark trunks of the cypress trees. The crackling and hissing grew louder than ever. Suddenly the frightful truth flashed upon us, and at the very same moment Carleton and I exclaimed, "The prairie is on fire!" As we uttered the words there was a loud rustling behind us, and a herd of deer broke headlong through a thicket of tall reeds and bulrushes, and dashed up to their necks into the water. There they remained, not fifty paces from us, little more than their heads above the surface, gazing at us, as though imploring our help and compassion. We fancied we could see tears in the poor beasts' eyes. We looked behind us. On came the pillars of flame, flickering and threatening through the smoke, licking up all before them; and, at times, a gust of so hot and blasting a wind as seemed to dry the very marrow in our bones. The roaring of the fire was now distinctly audible, mingled with hissing, whistling, rattling, and crackling noises, as if of mighty trees falling. "Birds only a bright flame shot up through the smoky smoke, and immediately afterwards a sea of fire burst upon our aching eyeballs. The whole palmetto field was in flames. — The heat was so great that we every moment expected to see our clothes take fire. Our horses dragged us still nearer to the creek, sprang into the water, and drew us down the bank after them. Another rustling and noise in the thicket of reeds. A she bear, with her cubs at her heels, came towards us; and, at the same time, a second herd of deer rushed into the water twenty yards from where we were standing. — We pointed our guns at the bears; they moved off towards the deer, who remained undisturbed at their approach; and there they stood, bears and deer, not five paces apart, but taking no more notice of each other than if they had been animals of the same species. Most beasts now came flocking to the river. Deer, wolves, foxes, horses, all came in crowds to seek shelter in one element from the fury of another. Most of them, however, went further up the creek, where it took a northeasterly direction, and widened into a sort of lake. Those that had first arrived began to follow the new comers, and we did the same. Suddenly the baying of hounds was heard. "Hurra! these are dogs; men must be near." A volley from a dozen rifles was the answer to our explanation. The shots were fired not two hundred yards from us, yet we saw nothing of the persons who fired them. The wild beasts around us trembled and crouched before this new danger, but did not attempt to move a step. We ourselves were standing in the midst of them up to our waists in water. "Who goes there?" we shouted. — Another volley, and this time not one hundred yards off. We saw the flashes of the pieces, and heard voices talking in a dialect compounded of French and Indian. We perceived that we had to do with Acadians.

A third volley, and the bullets whistled about our ears. It was getting past a joke. "Halt!" shouted we, "stop firing till you see what you are firing at." There was a dead silence for a moment, then a burst of savage laughter. "Fire! fire!" cried two or three voices. "If you fire," cried I, "look out for yourselves, for we shall do the same. Have a care what you are about." "Mouille! Sacré!" roared half-a-score of voices. "Who is that who dares to give orders? Fire on the dogs!" "If you do we return it." "Sacré!" screamed the savages. "They are gentlemen from the towns. Their speech betrays them. Shoot them, the dogs, the spies! What do they want in the prairie?" "Your blood be on your own heads," cried I. And, with the feelings of desperate men, we levelled our guns in the direction in which we had seen the flashes of the last volley. At that moment, "Halt! what is here?" shouted a stentorian voice close to us. "Stop firing, or you are dead men," cried five or six other voices. "Sacré! ce sont des Américains," muttered the Acadians. "Monsieur Carleton!" cried a voice. "Here!" replied my friend. A bat shot out of the smoke, between us and our antagonists. Carleton's servant was in it. The next moment we were surrounded by a score of Acadians and half-a-dozen Americans. It appeared that the Acadians, so soon as they perceived the prairies on fire, had got into a boat and descended a creek that flowed into the Chicott creek, on which we now were. The beasts of the forest and prairie, flying to the water found themselves inclosed in the angle formed by the two creeks, and their retreat being cut off by the fire, they fell an easy prey to the Acadians, with a few savage fellows, who slaughtered them in a profusion and with a brutality that excited our disgust, a feeling which the Americans seemed to share. "Well, stranger!" said one of the latter, an old man, to Carleton, "do you go with them Acadians, or come with us?"

We glanced at the Acadians, who were still firing and dragging the beasts they slaughtered into their boat and to the shore. They appeared perfect rascals, and there was little temptation to seek guidance or assistance at their hands. "If it is agreeable to you, we will accompany you," said I to the American, making a step towards the boat. We were eager to be off, for the heat and smoke were unbearable. The Yankee answered neither yes nor no. His attention seemed taken up by the proceedings of the Acadians. "They're wuss than Injuns," said he to a young man standing by him. "They slood more in an hour than they could eat in a year, in their tarnation French wastefulness." "I've a notion of makin' 'em leave off," replied the young man. "The country's theirs, or their masters' at least," rejoined the other. "I reckon it's no business of ours."

Carleton and myself, up to our waists in water, and the Americans, chattering together as unconcerned as if they had been sitting under the roofs of their own blockhouses. "My good man," said I, "will you take the trouble to put your hospitable offer into execution, and take——" I could not continue, for I was literally suffocated with the heat and smoke. The very water of the creek was getting warm.

"I've a notion," said the Yankee with his usual drawl, and apparently only just perceiving our distress, "I've a notion we had better be movin' out o' the way o' the fire. Now, strangers, in with you." And he helped Carleton and myself into the boat, where we lay down, and became insensible

from heat and exhaustion. When we recovered our senses we found ourselves in the bottom of the boat, and the old Yankee standing by us with a bottle of whiskey in his hand, which he invited us to take. We felt better for the cordial, and began to look around us.

Before us lay an apparently interminable cypress swamp; behind us, a sheet of water, formed by the junction of the two creeks and at present overhung by a mass of smoke that concealed the horizon from our view. From time to time there was a burst of flame that lit up the swamp, and caused the cypress trees to appear as if they grew out of a sea of fire. "Come," said the old Yankee, "we must go on; it is near sunset, and we have far to go."

"And which way does our road lie?" I asked.

"Across the cypress swamp, unless you'd rather go around it."

I had found myself once or twice upon the borders of the swamp that now lay before us, but had always considered it impenetrable; and I did not understand, as I gazed into its gloomy depths, how we could possibly cross it.

"Is there any beaten path or road thro' the swamp?" inquired I of the old man.

"Path or road! Do you take it for a gentleman's park? There's the path that nature has made."

And he sprang upon the trunk of a tree covered with moss and creepers, which rose out of the vast depth of mud that formed the swamp.

"Here's the path," said he.

"Then we will wait and come around with our horses," I replied.

"Where shall we find them?"

"As you please, stranger. We shall cross the swamp. Only, if you can't do like your horses, sup off bulrushes, you are likely to fast for the next twenty-four hours."

"And why so? There is game and wild fowl for the shooting."

"No doubt there is, if you can eat them raw, like the Injuns. Where will you find within two miles round, a square foot of dry land to make your fire on?"

"I've a notion," said one of the younger men, "the stranger don't rightly know what he wants."

"Joot," said the elder Yankee, "where are the torches? We shall want 'em."

"Torches!" exclaimed I.

The Yankee gave me a look as much as to say, you must meddle with everything.

"Yes," replied he, "and if you had ten lives it would be as much as they are all worth to enter this swamp without torches."

So saying he struck fire, and selected a couple of pine splinters from several lying in the boat, he lighted them, doing everything with such extraordinary deliberation, and so oddly, that in spite of our unpleasant situation, we could scarce help laughing. — Meantime, the boat pushed off with two men in it, leaving Carleton, myself, the old man, and another American standing at the edge of the swamp.

"Follow me, step by step, and as if you were treading on eggs," said our leader; "and you, Jonathan, have an eye to the strangers, and don't wait till they are up to their necks in the mud to pick them out of it."

We did not feel much comforted by this speech, but mastering all our courage, we strode on after our plain-spoken guide. We had proceeded but a very short distance into the swamp before we found out the use of the torches. The huge trunks of the cy-