

Our Young Folks.

CANOE AND RIFLE ON THE ORINOCO.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

OUR FIRST CROCODILE.

"Hurrah! There's the northeast corner of South America! Come up here, Ben!"

A cheery young voice shouted these words down the companion-way of a vessel just entering the Boca Grande, or "Grand Mouth," which connects the Caribbean Sea with the Gulf of Paria. The vessel was the American brig *Golden Fleece*, Capt. Armstrong, sixteen days from New York, bound for Port of Spain, Trinidad; and the time was early morning in February, not very long ago. The sun was just rising; the breeze was light but steady, and the vessel was carrying every sail to catch it. Viewed from the stern, the low, dark hull was covered by a huge pyramid of motionless milk-white canvas. She seemed to be sailing over the dark blue water with outstretched wings, as an eagle sails, without a flap of his pinions.

In response to the invitation to "come up here," Ben came up with more haste than ceremony.

"Where is your South America?" he inquired, eagerly.

"There it is," answered the first occupant of the deck, pointing westward across the heaving waves toward a chain of hazy blue mountains that seemed to rise abruptly from the sea.

"That's really South America, is it?" said he who came when Ben was called.

"Yes, sir. That's the land of big game!" cried the younger man, with enthusiasm. "Big boa constrictors, big crocodiles and ant-eaters and pumas and jaguars!"

"Hold on! hold on!"

"Coffee's ready, gemmen," said the dusky steward, protruding his woolly head from the hatchway; and with merry laughter and jokes the two friends went below for an early breakfast.

Both were young men, full of youthful enthusiasm, bound for the Orinoco River on a hunting expedition. The younger of the two, David King, was not quite twenty, but the other, Benjamin Chester, was six years older. Both were enthusiastic travellers, but they preferred the wilds of nature to all the attractions of cities. The forests and streams of the tropics lured them with irresistible power; this was their second hunting and exploring trip together. David was an ardent amateur naturalist as well as hunter and traveller, and had learned how to pay the expenses of each trip by the collection and sale of natural history specimens. In the city where he had been a college student there was a large scientific museum, in which he not only learned how to collect specimens successfully, but had learned the mysterious art of taxidermy as well.

The director of the museum, Prof. Haward, who was himself a great traveller and collector, took much interest in the schemes of "his boys," as he playfully called the young naturalists, who looked to him for advice, sympathy and assistance; and he had taken great pains to teach David the market value of plants, birds, reptiles and fishes.

It seems almost strange that such things should have a market value, but they have; and like precious stones, the rarest and finest objects are worth the most money. Specimens which are not well preserved are generally worthless; but those which have been selected, prepared and preserved with skill and care are nearly always salable. For example: Prof. Haward had advised David and Ben that the skin and skeleton of a large manatee, or "sea-cow," is worth one hundred dollars; a great ant-eater, fifty dollars; the skin of a large jaguar, thirty dollars, and a capy bara skeleton, twelve dollars. When properly prepared, crocodile skins are worth about three dollars per foot, and rough skeletons the same price.

EQUIPMENTS.

The two hunters were well equipped for work in the tropics. Their outfit included a carefully selected stock of skinning knives and instruments of various kinds, arsenical soap in cans, powdered alum, a barrel of alcohol, and a large scrow-top collecting can. They did not carry salt with them, for that can be bought in nearly every village of civilized inhabitants on the globe.

Benjamin Chester was a man full of ideas and experiments, and his gun was the result of his thirst for improvements. None of his friends had ever seen anything like it, nor had he either for that matter, until it came home from the gun maker, it having been made expressly for him. It was a double barreled breech-loader, of which the right-hand barrel was for shot, and the other a rifle. As a weapon for general use in a country of large and small game, it certainly had its advantages.

David had a beautifully accurate Maynard rifle, calibre 40, and a double breech-loading shot-gun, No. 12. Both hunters were also provided with revolvers, hunting-knives and a fine stock of ammunition. They went with the intention of making a collection which could be sold on their return for enough money to pay the expenses of their, to them, very expensive trip. Their personal means were slender, as those of most western boys are apt to be; and it was really quite necessary that the trip should pay, if they ever wished to take another.

The *Golden Fleece* sailed proudly through the Boca Grande, with the bold, rock cliffs of Trinidad rising perpendicularly out of the deep water three miles to eastward, and the mountains of Venezuela looming up only seven miles distant toward the west. Three hours later the vessel came to anchor in the harbor of Port of Spain, the pretty capital of the island, and the passengers hastened ashore.

In the sights to be seen at Port of Spain alone the travellers could have found enough to interest them for several weeks. Just then, however, they had only time for a quick, absorbing glance at the beautiful coconut groves and the gardens full of wonderful palms, orange and banana trees, cacti, ferns and oleanders: at the gaily-dressed, much-bejewelled and comely coolies from far-off Calcutta, the homely, hard-working Chinese from Hong Kong, and the wonders of the fish market—sharks, turtles and curious smaller fry. For the mysterious Orinoco lay afar then, and beckoned them on. No one could tell them what they would find there, nor how they would find it.

"There is a boat called the *Heroe* which plies between this port and the city of Bolivar up the Orinoco, and it starts day after to-morrow, late in the afternoon. The fare is twenty dollars." Such was David's report to his friend after a tour of inquiry.

"All right!" answered Ben. "We can send our luggage aboard of her from the *Fleece*, and save the trouble of bringing it ashore."

"And the captain of the *Heroe* says," continued David, "that we ought to take enough provisions from here to last us while we are in the jungle; for everything is very dear in Bolivar, and a great many things cannot be bought at all."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

TIED TO THE MAST.

BY DAVID KER.

"Tell us a story, Papa," chorussed half a dozen voices. "We must have a story."

"Oh, you've heard all my yarns already," answered Captain Martingale laughing. "If you want a story, this gentleman will tell you one."

"This gentleman" was a tall, broad-chested man, with a thick black beard which was fast turning gray, who had come in just before dinner, and had been warmly welcomed by the Captain. A very grim fellow he looked as he sat in the great oaken chair, with the fire-light playing fitfully on his dark, bearded, weather-beaten face; and Robert, the eldest boy (who was very fond of books of travel and adventure,) whispered to his brother Dick that "this man looked just like one of the pirates who used to haunt the Gulf of Mexico."

"Am I to tell you a story?" asked the visitor, in a deep, hoarse voice, quite as practical as his appearance. "Well, then,

listen: There was once a poor boy who had no father or mother, no friends, and no home except the wet, dirty forecastle of a trading schooner. He had to go about barefoot in the cold and rain, with nothing on but an old ragged flannel shirt and a pair of sail-cloth trousers; and instead of landing on beautiful islands, and digging up buried treasures, and having a good time all round, like the folks in the story-books, he got kick and cuff from morning till night, and sometimes had a sound thrashing with a rope's end into the bargain."

Bob's bold face grew very blank as he listened. He had privately a great longing for a sailor's life, and this account of it (given, too, by a man who seemed to know what he was talking about) was very different from what he had dreamed of.

"All the sailors were very rough and ugly to him," went on the speaker, "but the worst of all was the Captain himself. He had been very badly treated himself when he was a boy, and so (as some men will) he took a delight in ill-treating somebody else in the same way. Many a time did he send the poor little fellow aloft when the ship was rolling and the wind blowing hard, and more than once he beat him so cruelly that the poor lad almost fainted with the pain."

"Wicked wretch!" cried Bob, indignantly. "I hope he got drowned, or eaten up by savages!"

"Or taken for a slave himself, and well thrashed every day," suggested Dick.

"Oh no, Bob," said little Helen, who was sitting on a low stool at her father's feet; "I hope he was sorry for being so cruel, and got very good."

The strange guest stooped and lifted the little girl into his lap and kissed her. Helen nestled close to him, and looked wonderingly up in his face; for he bent his head toward her, something touched her forehead in the darkness that felt very much like a tear.

"Well," resumed the speaker, after a short pause, "the schooner, heading eastward across the Indian Ocean, came at last among the Maldivé Isles, where it's always very dangerous sailing. The coral islands, which lie in great rings or 'atolls' all around like so many strings of beads, are so low and flat that even in the daytime it's not easy to avoid running aground upon them; but at night you might as well try to walk in the dark through a room full of stools without tumbling over one of them."

"Of course the Captain had to be always on deck looking out, and that didn't make his temper any the sweeter, as you may think. So that very evening, when the cabin-boy had displeased him in some way, what does he do but tell the men to sling him up into the rigging and tie him hand and foot to the mast."

"But the cowards were soon paid for their cruelty. They were so busy tormenting the poor lad that none of them noticed how the sky was darkening to windward; and all at once a squall came down upon them as suddenly as the cut of a whip. In a moment the sea all round was like a boiling pot, and crash went the ship over on her side, and both the masts went by the board (fell down into the sea, that is,) carrying the boy with them."

"It was just as well for poor Harry that he had been tied to the mast, otherwise the sea would have swept him away like a straw. Even as it was, he was almost stifled by the bursting of the waves over his head. He was still peering into the darkness to try if he could see anything of the ship, when there came a tremendous crash and a terrible cry and then dead silence. The vessel had been dashed upon a coral reef and stove in, and the sea, breaking over her, had swept away every man on board."

"But storms in those parts pass away as quickly as they come; and it was not long before the sea began to go down, the clouds rolled away, the moon broke forth in all its glory. Then Harry, finding that the rope which tied his arms had been a good deal strained by the shock that carried away the mast, managed to free one hand and unbind the other arm and his feet. Just then a face rose from the water within a few yards of him and Harry recognized his enemy, the cruel Captain."

"There he was, the man who had abused, starved, and beaten him, dying, or just about to die, almost within reach of safety. Though barely twice his own length divided him from the floating mast, so strong was the eddy against which the Captain was battling in vain that he had no more chance of reaching it than if it had been a mile

away. A few moments more, and he would have sunk, never to rise again; but the sight of that white, ghastly face, and those wild, despairing eyes were too much for Harry. He lunged out the rope that he held; The Captain clutched it, and in another minute was safe on the mast, rescued by the boy he had been so cruel to."

"Oh—oh!" said Bob, drawing a long breath.

"I'm so glad!" piped Helen's tiny voice. "I was so afraid he would let the poor Captain drown."

"About sunrise," continued the guest, "Some natives, who were out fishing in a small boat, caught sight of them and came to the rescue. The Maldivé islanders are much better fellows than the Malays, farther east, and they took good care of them both for a month or so, till at last an outward-bound English brig that had been blown out of her course touched at the island where they were, and took them off."

"And what happened to them after that?" asked all the children at once.

"The little cabin-boy," answered the story-teller, "became as smart a seaman as every walked a deck, and got the command of a fine ship by-and-by; and now" (laying his hand upon their father's shoulder) here he sits."

"Papa!" cried the amazed children. "Were you the little boy?"

"But what became of the Poor Captain who was so cruel?" asked little Helen, wistfully.

"Why, here he sits," said her father, grasping the story-teller's hand, "and he's the best friend I have in this world."

He Would Rather not Tell.

Children, as a rule, do tell the truth in situations which are often very trying to their elders. The *St. Paul Globe* gives an illustration of an embarrassing position, and the way in which it was mastered. "For long time," said a pretty society lady, "I used every Sunday to teach a class of little boys at the Mission School, which was a branch of our church."

"There was quite a large number of scholars, ranging from eight to fourteen years old, and they were just as bright and good-natured as I could have wished. But the first day of my taking the class I was amused. I wanted to know the names of the children, where they lived, and all about them."

"I questioned each in turn, and found the answers quite satisfactory, until I came to a bright little fellow about ten years old. He told me his name and where he lived, but when I asked his father's business, he did not at once reply."

"I reassured him with my brightest smile, but he still insisted that he 'guessed he couldn't tell me that.'"

"My curiosity was roused, and I made up my mind to know all about it. Thinking of dynamiters, burglars and all sorts of dreadful people, it was with some trepidation that I insisted on the truth. His confession came in a whisper—

"My papa is the bearded lady twice a week at the Dime Museum!"

The Dancing Pea.

Push a pin half-way through a green pea, making the two ends as nearly as possible the same weight; i. e., let the point come a little more than half-way through. Then break off the stem of a common clay pipe, and the toy will be complete.

To make the pea dance, put it on top of the pipe stem, the point of the pin sticking down the bore. Throw your head back, so that the stem may be held vertically, and blow gently. This will make the pea rise; keep blowing harder, until the pea rises entirely from the pipe and is supported in the air. It will now begin to spin round and round and turn over and over, all the while bobbing up and down, as long as the current of air is kept up.

The dance may be changed by pushing the pin up to its head. The pea will now rise to the top of the pipe, and dance slowly and with great dignity around the edge; or, if the blast is a little stronger, it will spin rapidly, unless the blower stops to laugh, when it is apt to fall into the open mouth below.