THE GREAT MIGRATION

may follow whichever is first scared up. The grand game, however, is the bear; and the capture of bruin is not a feat of  
everyday occurences. To find his haunts it is necessary to make an excursion into the more unfrequented and  
inaccessible solitudes of the forest in places often many miles from a settlement. Not unfrequently, however, the old  
gentlemen wanders abroad from the unknown retreat, and seeks the plantations where in the night time he skulks round  
the edges of the fields, and commits serious depredations on the young maize plants, or the succulent stalks of the sugar  
cane, of which he is immoderately fond. Like his brown congener of europe he has a sweet tooth, and is greatly given to  
honey. To get at it he climbs the bee trees and robs the hive of its stores. In all these respects he is like the brown bear;  
but otherwise he differs greatly from the latter species, so much indeed, that it is matter of surprise how any naturalist  
should have been led to regard them as the same. Not only in colour, but in shape and other respects, are they totally  
unlike. While the fur of the brown bear is tossed and tufty having that appearance usually termed shaggy that of the  
american black bear is of uniform length, and all lying, or rather standing, in one direction, presenting a smooth surface  
corresponding to the contour of his body. In this respect he is far more akin to the bears of the Asiatic islands, than to  
the ursus arctos. In shape, too, he differs essentially from the latter. His body is more slender, his muzzle longer and  
sharper, and his profile is a curve with its convexity upwards. This last characteristic, which is constant, proclaims him  
indubitably a distinct species from the brown bear of Europe; and he is altogether a smaller and more mild tempered  
animal. As the grand chasse had been arranged to come off on the third day after their arrival, our young hunters  
determined to employ the interval in ranging the neighbouring woods; not with any expectation of finding a bear as  
their host did not believe there was any so near but rather for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the character of  
the north american sylva. That of south america alexis had carefully observed and studied in their long journey across that  
continent. He had noted the grand tropical trees the palms and pothos plants the mimosas and musaceae the magnificent  
forms of the lombax and bertholletia the curious cecropias and fig trees the giant cedrelas and the gum yielding siphonias.  
On the andes he had observed the agaves, the cycads, and cactaceae all strange to the eye of a russian. He was now  
desirous of making himself familiar with the forests of north america: which, though of a sub tropical character in  
louisiana, contained forms altogether different from those of the amazonian regions. Here he would meet with the famed  
magnolia, and its relative the tulip tree; the catalpa and flowering cornel, the giant cypress and sycamore, the evergreen  
oak, the water loving tupelo, and the curious fan like palmetto. Of these, and many other beautiful trees belonging to the  
north american sylva, alexis had read in fact, knew them botanically; but he wished to cultivate a still pleasanter  
acquaintance with them, by visiting them in their own native home. For this purpose he and ivan set out alone, with only  
a negro for their guide: the planter being engaged, visiting his different friends, and warning them from the grand hunt.  
Pouchskin remained behind. He had been left at the house to do some necessary repairs to the travelling traps both of  
himself and his young masters, which, after their long south American expedition, needed looking to. At this work had  
pouchskin been left, surrounded by a circle of grinning darkies, in whose company the old grenadier would find material  
to interest and amuse him. It was only for a stroll that our young hunters had sallied forth, and without any design of  
entering upon the chase; but they had become so accustomed to carrying their guns everywhere, that these were taken  
along with them. Some curious bird or quadruped might be started whose fur or feathers they might fancy to make an  
examination of. For that reason, both shouldered their guns. The lone lagoon. They were soon beyond the bounds of the  
plantation, and walking under the dark majestic woods the darkey guiding them on their way. They had heard of a curious  
lake or lagoon, that lay about a mile from the plantation. There they would be likely to witness a spectacle characteristic  
of the swamps of Louisiana; and thither they directed their steps. Sure enough, on arriving at the borders of the lagoon, a  
singular scene was presented to their eyes. The whole surface of the lake appeared alive with various forms of bird and  
reptiles. Hundreds of alligators were seen, lying like dead trees upon the water, their corrugated backs appearing above  
the surface. Most of the, however, were in motion, swimming to and fro, or darting rapidly from point to point, as if  
in pursuit of prey. Now and then their huge tails could be seen curling high up in the air, and then striking down upon the  
water, causing a concussion that echoed far through the forest. At intervals a shining object, flung upwards by their tails,  
could be seen for a moment in the air, amidst the showery prey that was raised along with it, it was easy to see that the  
glittering forms thus projected were fishes, and that it was the pursuit of these that was causing the commotion among

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