THE GREAT MIGRATION

for before he had made steps to the rear, the bear more frightened at the adversaries behind him than the one in front  
rushed right on, and in the next instant pushed his snout, head, and neck between the darkey’s legs long before this the  
negro had lost his senses, but now came the loss of his legs; fer as the thick body of the bear passed between them, both  
were lifted clear up from the log, and hung dangling in the air. For several feet along the log was negro carried  
upon the bear’s back, his face turned to the tail; and no doubt had he preserved his equilibrium, he might have continued  
his ride for some distance further. But as the darkey had no desire for such a feat of equestrianism, he kept struggling to   
clear himself from his involuntary mount. His body was at length thrown heavily to one side, and its weight acting like a   
lever upon the bear, caused the latter to lose his balance, and tumbling off the log, both man and bear fell slap dash into  
the mud. For a moment there was a confused scrambling, and spattering, and splashing, through the soft wire a growling  
on the part of the bear, and the wildest screeching from the throat of the affrighted negro all of which came to an end  
by bruin whose body was now bedaubed all over with black mud once more regaining his feet, and shuffling off up the  
bank, as fast as his legs could carry him. Alexis now fired, and hit the bear behind; but the shot, so far from staying his  
flight, only quickened his pace; and before the darkey had got to his feet, the shaggy brute had loped off among the trees,  
and disappeared from the sight of everybody upon the ground. The grostesque appearance of the negro, as he rose out of  
the mire in which he had been wallowing, coated all over with black mud which was a shade lighter than his natural hue   
was too ludicrous for ivan to resist laughing at; and even the more serious alexis was compelled to give way to mirth. So  
overcome were both, that it was some minutes before they thought of reloading their guns; and giving chase to the bear.  
After a time, however, they charged again; and crossing back over the log, proceeded in the direction in which bruin had  
made his retreat. They had no idea of being able to follow him without dogs; and it was their intention to send for one   
or to the house, when they perceived that the bear’s trace could be made out at least for some distance without them.  
The inky water, that had copiously saturated his long fire, had been constantly dripping as he trotted in his flight;  
and this could easily be seen upon the herbage over which he had passed. They determined therefore, to follow this trail  
as far as they could; and when it should give out, it would be time enough to send for the dogs. They had not proceeded  
more than a hundred yards; when all at once the trail trended up to the bottom of a big tree. They might have examined  
the ground further, but there was no need; for, on looking up to the trunk, they perceived large blotches of mud, and  
several scratches upon the bark evidently made by the claws of a bear. These scratches were, most of them of old date  
but there were one or of them quite freshly done; besides, the wet mud was of itself sufficient proof that the bear had  
gone up the tree, and must still be somewhere in its top. The tree was a sycamore, and therefore only sparsely covered  
with leaves; but from its branches hung long festoons of spanish moss (tillandsia usneoides), that grew in large bunches in   
the forks in several of which it was possible even for a bear to have stowed himself away in concealment. After going   
round the tree, however, and viewing it from all sides, our hunters perceived that the bear was not anywhere among the  
moss; but must have taken refuge in a hollow in the trunk the mouth of which could be seen only from one particular  
place : since it was hidden on all other sides by great limbs that led out from it, and between which the cavity had been  
formed by the decaying of the heart wood. There could be no doubt that bruin had entered this tree cave; for all around  
the aperture the bark was scraped and worn : and the wet mud lately deposited there, was visible from below. Cutting out   
the bear. The question was, how he was to be got out perhaps by making a noise he might issue forth this plan was at   
once tried, but without success. While the negro rasped the bark with a pole, and struck the stick at intervals against the  
trunk, the hunters stood, with guns cocked, watching the hole, and ready to give the bear a reception, the moment he  
should, show himself outside. It was all to no purpose. Bruin was too cunning for them, and did not protrude even the   
tip of his snout out of his secure cavity. After continuing the rasping, and repeating the blows, till the woods echoed the  
sonorous concussions, they became convinced that this plan would not serve their purpose, and desisted from it. On   
examining the track more closely, they now perceived spots of blood mixed among the mud which the bear had rubbed  
off upon the bark. This convinced them that the animal was wounded, and therefore there would be no chance of  
starting him out from his hole. It was no doubt the wound that had led him to retreat to this tree, so near the place   
where he had been attached, otherwise he would have led them a longer chase through the woods before attempting to  
hide himself. When severely wounded, the black bear betakes himself to the first hollow log or tree he can find and

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