Euphemia Among the Pelicans

Frank R. Stockton

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THE sun shone warm and soft, as it shines in winter time in the hemi−tropics. The wind blew strong, as it blows whenever and wherever it listeth. Seven pelicans labored slowly through the air. A flock of ducks rose from the surface of the river. A school of mullet, disturbed by a shark, or some other unscrupulous pursuer, sprang suddenly out of the water just before us, and fell into it again like the splashing of a sudden shower.

I lay upon the roof of the cabin of a little yacht. Euphemia stood below, her feet upon the mess−chest, and her elbows resting on the edge of the cabin roof. A sudden squall would have unshipped her; still, if one would be happy there are risks that must be assumed. At the open entrance of the cabin, busily writing on a hanging−shelf that served as a table, sat a Paying Teller. On the high box which during most of the day covered our stove was a little lady, writing in a note−book. On the forward deck, at the foot of the mast, sat a young man in a state of placidness. His feet stuck out on the bowsprit, while his mildly contemplative eyes went out unto the roundabout. At the tiller stood our guide and boatman, his somber eye steady on the south−by−east. Around the horizon of his countenance there spread a dark and six−days' beard, like a slowly rising thundercloud; ever and anon there was a gleam of white teeth, like a bright break in the sky, but it meant nothing. During all our trip, the sun never shone in that face. It never stormed, but it was always cloudy. But he was the best boatman on those waters, and when he stood at the helm we knew we sailed secure. We wanted a man familiar with storms and squalls, and if this familiarity had developed into facial sympathy, it mattered not. We could attend to our own sunshine. At his feet sat humbly his boy of twelve, whom we called "the crew." He was making fancy knots in a bit of rope. This and the occupation of growing up were the only labors in which he willingly engaged.

Euphemia and I had left Rudder Grange, to spend a month or two in Florida, and we were now on a little sloop−yacht on the bright waters of the Indian River. It must not be supposed that, because we had a Paying Teller with us, we had set up a floating bank. With this Paying Teller, from a distant State, we had made acquaintance on our first entrance into Florida. He was traveling in what Euphemia called "a group," which consisted of his wife, — the little lady with the note−book, — the contemplative young man on the forward deck, and himself.

This Paying Teller had worked so hard and so rapidly at his business for several years, and had paid out so much of his health and strength, that it was necessary for him to receive large deposits of these essentials before he could go to work again. But the peculiar habits of his profession never left him. He was continually paying out something. If you presented a conversational check to him in the way of a remark, he would, figuratively speaking, immediately jump to his little window and proceed to cash it, sometimes astonishing you by the amount of small change he would spread out before you.

When he heard of our intention to cruise on Indian River he wished to join his "group" to our party, and as he was a good fellow we were glad to have him do so. His wife had been, or was still, a school−teacher. Her bright and cheerful face glistened with information.

The contemplative young man was a distant connection of the Teller, and his first name being Quincy, was commonly called Quee. If he had wanted to know any of the many things the little teacher wished to tell he would have been a happy youth; but his contemplation seldom crystalized [sic] into a knowledge of what he did want to

know.

"And how can I," she once said to Euphemia and myself, "be expected ever to offer him any light when he can never bring himself to actually roll up a question?"

This was said while I was rolling a cigarette.

The "group" was greatly given to writing in journals, and making estimates. Euphemia and I did little of this, as it was our holiday, but it was often pleasant to see the work going on. The business in which the Paying Teller was now engaged was the writing of his journal, and his wife held a pencil in her kidded fingers and a little blank−book on her knees.

This was our first day upon the river.

"Where are we?" asked Euphemia. "I know we are on the Indian River, but where is the Indian River?"

"It is here," I said.

"But where is here?" reiterated Euphemia.

"There are only three places in the world," said the teacher, looking up from her book, — "here, there, and we don't know where. Every spot on earth is in one or the other of those three places."

"As far as I am concerned," said Euphemia, "the Indian River is in the last place."

"Then we must hasten to take it out," said the teacher, and she dived into the cabin, soon re−appearing with a folding map of Florida. "Here," she said, "do you see this wide river running along part of the Atlantic coast of the State, and extending down as far as Jupiter Inlet? That is Indian River, and we are on it. Its chief characteristics are that it is not a river, but an arm of the sea, and that it is full of fish."

"It seems to me to be so full," said I, "that there is not room for them all — that is, if we are to judge by the way the mullet jump out."

"I think," said the teacher, making a spot with her pencil on the map, "that just now we are about here."

"It is the first time," said Euphemia, "that I ever looked upon an unknown region on the map, and felt I was there."

Our plans for travel and living were very simple. We had provided ourselves on starting with provisions for several weeks, and while on the river we cooked and ate on board our little vessel. When we reached Jupiter Inlet we intended to go into camp. Every night we anchored near the shore. Euphemia and I occupied the cabin of the boat; a tent was pitched on shore for the Teller and his wife; and there was another tent for the captain and his boy, and this was shared by the contemplative young man.

Our second night on the river was tinged with incident. We had come to anchor near a small settlement, and our craft had been moored to a rude wharf. About the middle of the night a wind−storm arose, and Euphemia and I were awakened by the bumping of the boat against the wharf−posts. Through the open end of the cabin I could see that the night was very dark, and I began to consider the question whether or not it would be necessary for me to get up, much preferring, however, that the wind should go down. Before I had made up my mind we heard a step on the cabin above us, and then a quick and hurried tramping. I put my head out of the little window by me, and cried: "Who's there?"

The voice of the boatman replied out of the darkness:

"She'll bump herself to pieces against this pier! I'm going to tow you out into the stream." And so he cast us loose, and getting into the little boat which was fastened to our stern, and always followed us as a colt its mother, he towed us far out into the stream. There he anchored us, and rowed away. The bumps now ceased, but the wind still blew violently, the waves ran high, and the yacht continually wobbled up and down, tugging and jerking at her anchor. Neither of us was frightened, but we could not sleep.

"I know nothing can happen," said Euphemia, "for he would not have left us here if everything had not been all right, but one might as well try to sleep in a corn−popper as in this bed."

After a while the violent motion ceased, and there was nothing but a gentle surging up and down.

"I am so glad the wind has lulled," said Euphemia, from the other side of the center−board partition which partially divided the cabin.

Although I could still hear the wind blowing strongly outside, I too was glad that its force had diminished so far that we felt no more the violent jerking that had disturbed us, and I soon fell asleep.

In the morning, when I awoke, I saw that the sun was shining brightly, and that a large sea−grape bush was hanging over our stern. I sprang out of bed, and found that we had run, stern foremost, upon a sandy beach. About forty feet away, upon the shore, stood two 'possums, gazing with white, triangular faces upon our stranded craft. Except these, and some ducks swimming near us, with seven pelicans flying along on the other side of the river, there was no sign of life within the range of my sight. I was not long in understanding the situation. It had not been the lulling of the storm, but the parting of our cable which had caused the uneasy jerking of our little yacht to cease. We had been blown I knew not how far down the river, for the storm had come from the north, and had stranded I knew not where. Taking out my pocket− compass I found that we were on the eastern shore of the river, and that the wind had changed completely, and was now blowing, not very strong, from the south−east. I made up my mind what must be done. We were probably far from the settlement and the rest of the party, and we must go back. The wind was in our favor, and I knew I could sail the boat. I had never sailed a boat in my life, and was only too glad to have the chance, untrammeled by any interference.

I awoke Euphemia and told her what had happened. The two 'possums stood upon the shore, and listened to our conversation. Euphemia was much impressed by the whole affair, and for a time said nothing.

"We must sail her back, I suppose," she remarked at length, "but do you know how to start her?"

"The hardest thing to do is to get her off the beach," I answered, "but I think I can do that."

I rolled up my trowsers, and with bare feet jumped out upon the sand. The two 'possums retired a little, but still watched my proceedings. After a great deal of pushing and twisting and lifting, I got the yacht afloat, and then went on board to set the sail. After much pulling and tugging, and making myself very warm, I hoisted the main−sail. I did not trouble myself about the jib, one sail being enough for me to begin with. As the wind was blowing in the direction in which we wished to go, I let the sail out until it stood nearly at right angles with the vessel, and was delighted to see that we immediately began to move through the water. I took the tiller, and steered gradually toward the middle of the river. The wind blew steadily and the yacht moved bravely on. I was as proud as a man drawn by a conquered lion, and as happy as one who did not know that conquered lions may turn and rend. Sometimes the vessel rolled so much that the end of the boom skimmed the surface of the water, and sometimes the sail gave a little jerk and flap, but I saw no necessity for changing our course, and kept our bow pointed steadily up the river. I was delighted that the direction of the wind enabled me to sail with what might be called a horizontal deck. Of course, as the boatman afterward informed me, this was the most dangerous way I

could steer, for if the sail should suddenly "jibe" there would be no knowing what would happen. Euphemia sat near me, perfectly placid and cheerful, and her absolute trust in me gave me renewed confidence and pleasure. "There is one great comfort," she remarked, as she sat gazing into the water, — "if anything should happen to the boat we can get out and walk."

There was some force in this remark, for the Indian River in some of its widest parts is very shallow, and we could now plainly see the bottom, a few feet below us.

"Is that the reason you have seemed so trustful and content?" I asked.

"That is the reason," said Euphemia.

On we went and on, the yacht seeming sometimes a little restive and impatient, and sometimes rolling more than I could see any necessity for, but still it proceeded. Euphemia sat in the shadow of the cabin, serene and thoughtful, and I, holding the tiller steadily amidship, leaned back and gazed up into the clear blue sky.

In the midst of my gazing there came a shock that knocked the tiller out of my hand. Euphemia sprang to her feet and screamed; there were screams and shouts on the other side of the sail, which seemed to be wrapping itself about some object I could not see. In an instant another mast beside our own appeared above the main− sail, and then a man with a red face jumped on the forward deck. With a quick, determined air, and without saying a word, or seeming to care for my permission, he proceeded to lower our sail; then he stepped up on top of the cabin, and looking down at me inquired what in thunder I was trying to do.

I made no answer, but looked steadily before me. Now that the sail was down, I could see what had happened. I had collided with a yacht which we had seen before. It was larger than ours, and contained a grandfather and a grandmother, a father and a mother, several aunts, and a great many children. They had started on the river the same day as ourselves, but did not intend to take so extended a trip as ours was to be. The whole party was now in the greatest confusion. I did not understand what they said, nor did I attend to it. I was endeavoring, for myself, to grasp the situation. Euphemia was calling to me from the cabin, into which she had retreated; the man was still talking to me from the cabin roof, and the people in the other boat were vociferating and screaming; but I paid no attention to any one until I had satisfied myself that nothing serious had happened. I had not run into them head on, but had come up diagonally, and the side of our bow had struck the side of their stern. The collision, as I afterward learned, had happened in this wise: I had not seen the other boat because, lying back as I had been, the sail concealed her from me, and they had not seen us because their boatman was in the forward part of their cabin, collecting materials for breakfast, and the tiller was left in charge of one of the boys, who, like all the rest of his party who sat outside, had discreetly turned his back to the sun.

The grandfather stood up in the stern. He wore a black silk hat, and carried a heavy grape−vine cane. Unsteadily balancing himself on his legs, and shaking his cane at me, he cried:

"What is the meaning of this, sir? Are you trying to drown a whole family, sir?"

"If he'd run his bowsprit in among you," said the boatman from the cabin roof, "he'd 'a' killed a lot of you before you'd been drowned."

Euphemia screamed to me to come to her; the father was standing on his cabin roof, shouting something to me; the women in the other boat were violently talking among themselves; some of the little children were crying; the girls were hanging to the ladies, and all the boys were clambering on board our boat. It was a time of great excitement, and something must be instantly said by me. My decision was quick.

"Have you any tea?" I said, addressing the old gentleman.

"Tea!" he roared. "What do you mean by that?"

"We have plenty of coffee on board," I answered, "but some of our party can't drink it. If you have any tea, I should like to borrow some. I can send it to you when we reach a store."

From every person of the other party came, as in a chorus, the one word, "Tea?" And Euphemia put her pale face out of the cabin, and said, in a tone of wondering inquiry, "Tea?"

"Did you bang into us in this way to borrow tea?" roared the old gentleman.

"I did not intend, of course, to strike you so hard," I said, "and I am sorry I did so, but I should like to borrow some tea."

Euphemia whispered to me:

"We have tea."

I looked at her, and she locked her lips.

"Of course we can give you some tea, if you want some," said the red−faced boatman, "but I never heered of a thing like this since I was first born, nor ever shall again, I hope."

"I don't want you to give me any tea," I said. "I shall certainly return it, and a very little will do — just a handful."

The two boats had not drifted apart, for the father, standing on the cabin roof, had held tightly to our rigging, and the boatman, still muttering, went on board his vessel to get the tea. He brought it, wrapped in a piece of a newspaper.

"Here comes your man," he said, pointing to a little boat which was approaching us. "We told him we'd look out for you, but we didn't think you'd come smashing into us like this."

In a few moments our boatman had pulled alongside, his face full of a dark inquiry. He looked at me for authoritative information.

"I came here," I said to him, "after tea."

"Before breakfast, I should say!" cried the old gentleman. And every one of his party burst out laughing.

Much was now said, chiefly by the party of the other part, but our boatman paid little attention to any of it. The boys scrambled on board their own vessel. We pushed apart, hoisted sail, and were soon speeding away.

"Good−bye!" shouted the father, a genial man. "Let us know if you want any more groceries, and we'll send them to you."

For six days from our time of starting we sailed down the Indian River. Sometimes the banks were miles apart, and sometimes they were very near each other; sometimes we would come upon a solitary house, or little cluster of dwellings; and then there would be many, many miles of wooded shore before another human habitation was to be seen. Inland, to the west, stretched a vast expanse of lonely forest where panthers, bears, and wild−cats prowled. To the east lay a long strip of land, through whose tall palmettos came the roar of the great ocean. The blue sky sparkled over us every day; now and then we met a little solitary craft; countless water−fowl were scattered about on the surface of the stream; a school of mullet was usually jumping into the air; an alligator

might sometimes be seen steadily swimming across the river, with only his nose and back exposed; and nearly always, either to the right or to the left, going north or going south, were seven pelicans, slowly flopping through the air.

A portion of the river, far southward, called "The Narrows," presented a very peculiar scene. The banks were scarcely fifty feet apart, and yet there were no banks. The river was shut in to the right by the inland shore, and to the left by a far−reaching island, and yet there was no inland shore, nor any island to the left. On either side were great forests of mangrove trees, standing tiptoe on their myriad down−dropping roots, each root midleg in the water. As far as we could see among the trees, there was no sign of ground of any kind — nothing but a grotesque network of roots, on which the forest stood. In this green−bordered avenue of water, which extended nine or ten miles, the thick foliage shut out the breeze, and our boatman was obliged to go ahead in his dinky, as he called the little boat, and tow us along.

"There are Indians out West," said Euphemia, as she sat gazing into the mangroves, "who live on roots, but I don't believe they could live on these. The pappooses [sic] would certainly fall through."

At Jupiter Inlet, about a hundred and fifty miles from our point of starting, we went into camp, in which delightful condition we proposed to remain for a week or more. There was no trouble whatever in finding a suitable place for a camp. The spot selected was a point of land swept by cool breezes, with a palmetto forest in the rear of it. On two sides of the point stretched the clear waters of the river, while half a mile to the east was Jupiter Inlet, on each side of which rolled and tumbled the surf of the Atlantic. About a mile away was Jupiter Light−house, the only human habitation within twenty miles. We built a palmetto hut for a kitchen; we set up the tents in a permanent way; we constructed a little pier for the yacht; we built a washstand, a table, and a bench. And then, considering that we had actually gone into camp, we got out our fishing−lines.

Fishing was to be the great work here. Near the Inlet, through which the waters of the ocean poured into and out of our river, on a long, sandy beach, we stood in line, two or three hours every day except Sunday, and fished. Such fishing we had never imagined! — there were so many fishes, and they were so big. The Paying Teller had never fished in his life before he came to Florida. He had tried at St. Augustine, with but little success. "If the sport had been to chuck fish into the river," he had said, "that would be more in my line of business; but getting them out of it did not seem to suit me." But here it was quite a different thing. It was a positive delight to him, he said, to be obliged so often to pay out his line.

One day, when tired of struggling with gamy blue−fish and powerful cavalhos (if that is the way to spell it), I wound up my line, and looked about to see what the others were doing. The Paying Teller stood near, on tiptoe, as usual, with his legs wide apart, his hat thrown back, his eyes flashing over the water, and his right arm stretched far out, ready for a jerk. Quee was farther along the beach. He had just landed a fish, and was standing gazing meditatively upon it as it lay upon the sand. The hook was still in its mouth, and every now and then he would give the line a little pull, as if to see if there really was a connection between it and the fish. Then he would stand a little longer, and meditate a little more, still looking alternately at the line and the fish. Having made up his mind, at last, that the two things must be separated, he kneeled down upon his flopping prize and proceeded meditatively to extract the hook. The teacher was struggling at her line. Hand over hand she pulled it in. As it came nearer and nearer, her fish swam wildly from side to side, making the tightened line fairly hiss as it swept through the water. But still she pulled and pulled, until, red and breathless, she landed her prize upon the sand.

"Hurrah!" shouted the Paying Teller. "That's the biggest blue−fish yet!" But he did not come to take the fish from the hook. He was momentarily expecting a bite.

Euphemia was not to be seen. This did not surprise me, as she frequently gave up fishing long before the others, and went to stroll upon the sea−beach, a few hundred yards away. She was fond of fishing, but it soon tired her. "If you want to know what it is like," she wrote to a friend in the North, "just tie a long string around your boy

Charlie, and try to haul him in out of the back yard."

But Euphemia was not upon the sea−beach to−day. I walked a mile or so along the sand, but did not find her. She had gone around the little bluff to our shark−line. This was a long rope, like a clothes−line, with a short chain at the end and a great hook, which was baited with a large piece of fish. It was thrown out every day, the land end tied to a stout stake driven into the sand, and the whole business given into the charge of "the crew," who was to report if a shark should bite. But to−day the crew had wandered away, and Euphemia was managing the line.

"I thought I would try to catch a shark all by myself," she said. "I wonder if there's one on the hook now. Would you mind feeling the line?"

I laughed as I took the rope from her hand.

"If you had a shark on the hook, my dear," said I, "you would have no doubt upon the subject."

"It would be a splendid thing to catch the first one," she said, "and there must be lots of them in here, for we have seen their back fins so often."

I was about to answer this remark when I began to walk out into the water. I did not at the time know exactly why I did this, but it seemed as if some one had taken me by the hand and was leading me into the depths. But the water splashing above my ankles and a scream from Euphemia made me drop the line, which immediately spun out to its full length, making the stake creak and move in the sand.

"Goodness gracious!" cried Euphemia, her face pale as the beach. "Isn't it horrible? We've got one!"

"Horrible!" I cried. "Why, didn't you want to get one?" and seizing the ax, which lay near by, I drove the stake down deep into the sand. "Now it will hold him!" I cried. "He can't pull that out!"

"But how are we to pull him in?" exclaimed Euphemia. "This line is as tight as a guitar−string."

This was true. I took hold of the rope, but could make no impression on it. Suddenly it slackened in my hand.

"Hurrah!" I cried. "We may have him yet! But we must play him."

"Play him!" exclaimed Euphemia. "You can never play a huge creature like that. Let me go and call some of the others to help."

"No, no!" I said. "Perhaps we can do it all by ourselves. Wind the line quickly around the top of the stake as I pull it in."

Euphemia knelt down and rapidly wound several yards of the slack cord around the stake. In a few moments it tightened again, jerking itself out of my hand.

"There, now!" said Euphemia. "He is off again! You can never haul him in, now."

"Just wait," I said. "When he finds that he cannot break away he rushes toward shore, trying to bite the line above the chain. Then I must haul it in and you must wind it up. If you and I and the shark continue to act in this way, perhaps, after a time, we may get him into shallow water. But don't scream or shout. I don't want the others to know anything about it."

Sure enough, in a minute or two the line slackened again, when it was rapidly drawn in and wound around the stake.

"There he is!" exclaimed Euphemia. "I can see him just under the water, out there."

The dark form of the shark, appearing at first like the shadow of a little cloud, could be seen near the surface, about twenty− five yards away. Then his back fin rose, his tail splashed violently for an instant, and he disappeared. Again the line was loosened, and again the slack was hauled in and wound up. This was repeated, I don't know how many times, when suddenly the shark in his desperation rushed into shallow water and grounded himself. He would have floundered off in a few moments, however, had we not quickly tightened the line. Now we could see him plainly. He was eight or nine feet long and struggled violently, exciting Euphemia so much that it was only by clapping her hand over her mouth that she prevented herself from screaming. I would have pulled the shark farther in shore, but this was impossible, and it was needless to expect him to move himself into shallower water. So, quickly rolling up my trowsers, I seized the ax and waded in toward the floundering creature.

"You needn't be afraid to go right up to him," said Euphemia. "So long as he don't turn over on his back he can't bite you."

I had heard this bit of natural history before, but, nevertheless, I went no nearer to the shark than was necessary in order to whack him over the head with the ax. This I did several times, with such effect that he soon became a dead shark.

When I came out triumphant, Euphemia seized me in her arms and kissed me.

"This is perfectly splendid!" she said. "Who can show as big a fish as this one? None of the others can ever crow over you again."

"Until one of them catches a bigger shark," I said.

"Which none of them ever will," said Euphemia, decidedly. "It isn't in them."

The boatman was now seen approaching in his dinky to take the party back to camp, and the crew, having returned to his duty, was sent off in a state of absolute amazement to tell the others to come and look at our prize. Our achievement certainly created a sensation. Even the boatman could find no words to express his astonishment. He waded in and fastened a rope to the shark's tail, and then we all took hold and hauled the great fish ashore.

"What is the good of it now you have got it?" asked Quee.

"Glory is some good!" exclaimed Euphemia.

"And I'm going to have you a belt made from a strip of its skin," I said.

This seemed to Euphemia a capital idea. She would be delighted to have such a trophy of our deed, and the boatman was set to work to cut a suitable strip from the fish. And this belt, having been properly tanned, lined, and fitted with buckles, is now one of her favorite adornments, and cost, I am bound to add, about three times as much as any handsome leathern belt to be bought in the stores.

Every day the Paying Teller, his wife, and Quee carefully set down in their note−books the weight of fish each individual had caught, with all necessary details and specifications relating thereunto; every day we wandered on the beach, or explored the tropical recesses of the palmetto woods; every evening the boatman rowed over to the

light−house to have a bit of gossip, and to take thither the fish we did not need; every day the sun was soft and warm, and the sky was blue; and every morning, going oceanward, and every evening, going landward, seven pelicans flew slowly by our camp.

My greatest desire at this time was to shoot a pelican, to have him properly prepared, and to take him to Rudder Grange, where, suitably set up, with his wings spread out, full seven feet from tip to tip, he would be a grand trophy and reminder of these Indian River days. This was the reason why, nearly every morning and every evening, I took a shot at these seven pelicans. But I never hit one of them. We had only a shot−gun, and the pelicans flew at a precautionary distance; but, being such big birds, they always looked to me much nearer than they were. Euphemia earnestly desired that I should have a pelican, and although she always wished I should hit one of these, she was always glad when I did not.

"Think how mournful it would be," she said, "if they should take their accustomed flights morning and evening with one of their number missing."

"Repeating Wordsworth's verses, I suppose," remarked the little teacher.

I had been disappointed in the number of pelicans we had seen. I knew that Florida was one of the homes of the pelican, and I had not expected to see these birds merely in small detachments. But our boatman assured me that on our return trip he would give me a chance of seeing and shooting as many pelicans as I could desire. We would touch at Pelican Island, which was inhabited entirely by these birds, and whence the parties of seven were evidently sent out.

One day, the boatman told us that a man at the light−house was an amateur photographer, and that, if we liked, he would come down and take a picture of us in camp. This idea was received with great favor. I have noticed that everybody who goes into camp, or engages in outdoor sports of any kind, likes to be photographed in some phase of his untrammeled life. Thus it is that no living creature prowls more frequently through our woods and wilds than the photographer.

Euphemia had very strong ideas on this subject. "I would associate the photographer," she said, "more closely with our social and domestic being. Instead of going to him to have our heads taken, as if we were a lot of Bluebeard's wives, he should come to us and photograph us in our homes. How many an absent husband would be overjoyed to see his wife sitting at her sewing, with all the familiar objects cluttered about her in the way he knew so well! How many a loved one, far, far from home, would be gratified to receive a picture of the family at supper, where he could recognize even the cracks in the familiar cups and plates! And how charmed an absent wife would be to get a photograph of her husband at work in his office, or, if belonging to a lower class, digging with his spade, or carrying his hod! Such a picture would be infinitely more comforting than his unfamiliar appearance with merely head and shoulders."

This eloquent pleading was scarcely necessary. We all wanted the photographer anyway, and we sent for him. When he came, a great deal of time was taken up in the composition and grouping of the intended picture. We tried to manage matters so that everything would show — the palmetto hut, with as many kitchen utensils as possible disposed near the door, the boat moored by the shore, the tent, the wash−stand, the table, the bench, some choice fish hung up in prominent positions, and, lastly, ourselves, grouped with natural ease. The photographer interfered a good deal with our arrangement of ourselves, as he desired each face should show as plainly as possible, and that no one of us should be more prominent than the others. The consequence of this was that, after many changes, we gradually became arranged in a straight line. The boatman and his boy were allowed to place themselves as they chose, and they, therefore, took admirable positions on one side.

When the pictures were finished, we looked at them rather blankly. Everything was there, to be sure, but the palmetto hut looked very much like the tree it was under; and only a few of the pots and pans, on which we had

relied to give a gypsy or backwoods look to our encampment, peered through the gloom of that corner of the picture; the hull of our yacht was almost entirely out of sight behind the bank on which we stood; the top of the palmetto tree, under which our tents were pitched, had been greatly influenced by the wind at the critical moment, and appeared to be spread along the sky in irregular patches; while, as for ourselves, it was impossible to recognize any one of us. I, by Euphemia's command, had stood up as straight as I could; the Paying Teller, who had a habit of sinking into his sockets, shut himself up as much as possible; while Quee had stood on a little elevation between us. Thus, we all appeared of about the same height, and, indeed, like little triplicates of the same man.

"Our friends can tell which is you," said Euphemia, "by your standing next to me."

But as it was impossible to distinguish Euphemia from the teacher, this method of identification did not appear to me to possess much value.

One figure, however, took admirably. A large fish which hung on a pole was placed so far in the foreground that it looked a little larger than any of us. As the portrait of a big fish, with the camp and figures in the distance, our photograph was a success.

It was a great thing, however, to have pictures of ourselves showing exactly how we looked when in camp, and as soon as we reached a post−office, we mailed copies to our distant friends. If the big fish had had any friends they would have been, perhaps, the most appropriate individuals to receive the pictures.

A few days after this, we broke up our camp, and started northward. We had all been very happy and contented during our ten days' sojourn in this delightful place; but when at last our departure was determined upon, the Paying Teller became possessed with a wild desire to go, go, go. There was some reason, never explained nor fully expressed, why no day, hour, minute, or second should be lost in speeding to the far North−west. The boatman, too, impelled by what impulse I know not, seemed equally anxious to get home. As for the Paying Teller's "group," it always did exactly as he wished. Therefore, although Euphemia and I would have been glad to linger here and there upon our homeward way, we could not gainsay the desire of the majority of the party, and consequently we sailed northward as fast as wind and sometimes oars would take us.

Only one cause for delay seemed tolerable to the Paying Teller. This was to stop at every post−office. We had received but one mail while in camp, which had been brought in a sail−boat from an office twenty miles away. But the Paying Teller had given and written the most intricate and complex directions for the retention or forwarding of his mail to every postmaster in the country we had passed through, and these directions, as we afterward found, had so puzzled and unsettled the minds of these postmasters that for several weeks his letters had been moving like shuttle−cocks up and down the St. John's and Indian rivers — never stopping anywhere, never being delivered, but crossing and recrossing each other as if they were imbued with their owner's desire to go, go, go. Some of the post−offices where we stopped were lonely little buildings with no other habitation near. These we usually found shut up, being opened only on mail−days, and in such cases nothing could be done but to slip a protesting postal into the little slit in the wall apparently intended for letters. Whether these postals were eaten by rats or read by the P. M.'s, we never discovered. Wherever an office was found open, we left behind us an irate postmaster breathing all sorts of contemplated vengeance upon the disturbers of his peace. We heard of letters that had been sent north and sent south, but there never was any at the particular place where we happened to be, and I suppose that the accumulated mail of the Paying Teller may for several years drop gradually upon him through the meshes of the Dead−Letter Office.

There were a great many points of interest which we had passed on our downward trip, the boatman assuring us that, with the wind we had, and which might cease at any moment, the great object was to reach Jupiter as soon as possible, and that we would stop at the interesting places on the way up. But now the wind, according to his reasoning, made it necessary that we should again push forward as fast as we could; and, as I said before, the

irresistible attraction of the North−west so worked upon the Paying Teller that he was willing to pause nowhere, during the day−time, but at a post−office. At one place, however, I was determined to land. This was Pelican Island. The boatman, paying no attention to his promise to stop here and give me an opportunity to shoot one of these birds, declared, when near the place, that it would never do, with such a wind, to drop anchor for a trifle like a pelican. The Paying Teller and Quee also strongly objected to a stop; and, while the teacher had a great desire to investigate the subject of ornithology, especially when exemplified by such a subject as a pelican, she felt herself obliged to be loyal to her "group," and so quietly gave her voice to go on. But I, supported by Euphemia, remained so firm that we anchored a short distance from Pelican Island.

None of the others had any desire to go ashore, and so I, with the gun and Euphemia, took the dinky and rowed to the island. While we were here the others determined to sail to the opposite side of the river to look for a little post−office, the existence of which the boatman had not mentioned until it had been determined to make this stoppage here.

As we approached the island we saw hundreds of pelicans, some flying about, some sitting on trunks and branches of dead trees, and some waddling about on the shore.

"You might as well shoot two of them," said Euphemia, "and then we will select the better to take to Rudder Grange."

The island was very boggy and muddy, and, before I had found a good place to land, and had taken up the gun from the bow of the boat, every pelican in sight took wing and flew away. I stood up and fired both barrels at the retreating flock. They swerved and flew oceanward, but not one of them fell. I helped Euphemia on shore, and then, gun in hand, I made my way as well as I could to the other end of the island. There might be some deaf old fellows left who had not made up their minds to fly. The ground was very muddy, and drift−wood and underbrush obstructed my way. Still, I pressed on, and went nearly half around the island, finding, however, not a single pelican.

Soon I heard Euphemia's voice, calling loud. She seemed to be about the center of the island, and I ran toward her.

"I've got one!" I heard her cry, before I came in sight of her. She was sitting at the root of a crooked, dead tree. In front of her she held, one hand grasping each leg, what seemed to me to be an ungainly and wingless goose. All about her the ground was soft and boggy. Her clothes were muddy, her face was red, and the creature she held was struggling violently.

"What on earth have you got?" I exclaimed, approaching as near as I could, "and how did you get out there?"

"Don't you come any closer!" she cried. "You'll sink up to your waist! I got here by treading on the little hummocks and holding on to that dead branch; but don't you take hold of it, for you'll break it off, and then I can't get back."

"But what is that thing?" I repeated.

"It's a young pelican," she replied. "I found a lot of nests on the ground over there, and this was in one of them. I chased it all about, until it flopped out here and hid itself on the other side of this tree. Then I came out quietly and caught it. But how am I going to get it to you?"

This seemed, indeed, a problem. Euphemia declared that she needed both hands to work her way back by the means of the long, horizontal limb which had assisted her passage to the place where she sat, and she also needed both hands to hold her prize. It was likewise plain that I could not get to her. Indeed, I could not see how her light steps had taken her over the soft and marshy ground that lay between us. I suggested that she should throw the

pelican to me. This she declined to do.

"I could never throw it so far," she said, "and it would surely get away. I don't want to lose this pelican, for I believe it is the last one on the island. If there are other young ones they have scuttled off by this time, and I should dreadfully hate to go back to the yacht without any pelican at all."

"I don't call that much of one," I said.

"It's a real pelican for all that," she replied, "and about as curious a bird as I ever saw. Its wings wont [sic] stretch out seven feet, to be sure."

"About seven inches," I suggested.

"But it is a great deal easier to carry a young one like this," she persisted, "and I expect a baby pelican is a much more uncommon sight in the North than a grown one."

"No doubt of it," I said. "We must keep him now you've got him. Can't you kill him?"

"I've no way of killing him," returned Euphemia. "I wonder if you could shoot him if I were to hold him out."

This, with a shot−gun, I positively declined to do. Even if I had had a rifle, I suggested that she might swerve. For a few moments we remained nonplussed. I could not get to Euphemia at all, and she could not get to me unless she released her bird, and this she was determined not to do.

"Euphemia," I said, presently, "the ground seems hard a little way in front of you. If you step over there I will go out on this strip, which seems pretty solid. Then I'll be near enough to you for you to swing the bird to me, and I'll catch hold of him."

Euphemia arose and did as I told her, and we soon found ourselves about six feet apart. She took the bird by one leg and swung it toward me. With outstretched arm I caught it by the other foot, but as I did so I noticed that Euphemia was growing shorter, and also felt myself sinking in the bog. Instantly, I entreated Euphemia to stand perfectly still, for, if we struggled or moved, there was no knowing into what more dreadful depths we might get. Euphemia obeyed me, and stood quite still, but I could feel that she clutched the pelican with desperate vigor.

"How much farther down do you think we shall sink?" she asked, her voice trembling a little.

"Not much farther," I said. "I am sure there is firm ground beneath us, but it will not do to move. If we should fall down we might not be able to get up again."

"How glad I am," she said, "that we are not entirely separated, even if it is only a baby pelican that joins us."

"Indeed I am glad!" I said, giving the warm pressure to the pelican's leg that I would have given to Euphemia's hand, if I could have reached her. Euphemia looked up at me so confidently that I could but believe that in some magnetic way that pressure had been transmitted through the bird.

"Do you think they will come back?" she said, directly.

"Oh, yes," I replied, "there's no manner of doubt of that."

"They'll be dreadfully cross," she said.

"I shouldn't wonder," I replied. "But it makes very little difference to me whether they are or not."

"It ought to make a difference to you," said Euphemia. "They might injure us very much."

"If they tried anything of the kind," I replied, "they'd find it worse for them than for us."

"That is boasting," said Euphemia, a little reproachfully, "and it does not sound like you."

I made no answer to this, and then she asked:

"What do you think they will do when they come?"

"I think they will put a plank out here and pull us out."

Euphemia looked at me an instant, and then her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, "it's dreadful! You know they couldn't do it. Your mind is giving way!"

She sobbed, and I could feel the tremor run through the pelican.

"What do you mean?" I cried, anxiously. "My mind giving way?"

"Yes — yes," she sobbed. "If you were in your right senses — you'd never think — that pelicans could bring a plank."

I looked at her in astonishment.

"Pelicans!" I exclaimed. "Did you think I meant the pelicans were coming back?"

"Of course," she said. "That's what I was asking you about."

"I wasn't thinking of pelicans at all," I answered. "I was talking of the people in the yacht."

Euphemia looked at me, and then the little pelican between us began to shake violently as we burst out laughing.

"I know people sometimes do lose their minds when they get into great danger," she said, apologetically.

"Hello!" came a voice from the water. "What are you laughing about?"

"Come and see," I shouted back, "and perhaps you will laugh, too."

The three men came; they had to wade ashore; and when they came they laughed. They brought a plank, and with a good deal of trouble they drew us out, but Euphemia would not let go of her leg of the little pelican until she was sure I had a tight hold of mine.

Day after day we now sailed northward, until we reached the little town at which we had embarked. Here we discarded our blue flannels and three half−grown beards, and slowly made our way through woods and lakes and tortuous streams to the upper waters of the St. John's. In this region the population of the river shores seemed to consist entirely of alligators, in which monsters Euphemia was greatly interested. But she seldom got a near view of one, for the sportsmen on our little steamer blazed away at every alligator as soon as it came into distant sight; and, although the ugly creatures were seldom hit, they made haste to tumble into the water or disappear among the

tall reeds. Euphemia was very much annoyed at this.

"I shall never get a good close look at an alligator at all," she said. "I am going to speak to the captain."

The captain, a big, good−natured man, listened to her, and entirely sympathized with her.

"Tom," said he to the pilot, "when you see another big 'gator on shore, don't sing out to nobody, but call me, and slow up."

It was not long before chocolate−colored Tom called to the captain, and rang the bell to lessen speed.

"Gentlemen," said the captain, walking forward to the group of sportsmen, "there's a big 'gator ahead there, but don't none of you fire at him. He's copyrighted."

The men with the guns did not understand him, but none of them fired, and Euphemia and the other ladies soon had the satisfaction of seeing an enormous alligator lying on the bank, within a dozen yards of the boat. The great creature raised its head, and looked at us in apparent amazement at not being shot at. Then, probably considering that we did not know the customs of the river, or were out of ammunition, he slowly slipped away among the reeds with an air as if, like Mr. Turveydrop, he had done his duty in showing himself, and if we did not take advantage of it, it was no affair of his.

"If we only had a fellow like that for a trophy!" ejaculated Euphemia.

"He'd do very well for a trophy," I answered, "but if, in order to get him, I had to hold him by one leg while you held him by another, I would prefer a baby pelican."

Our trip down the St. John's met with no obstacles except those occasioned by the Paying Teller's return tickets. He had provided himself and his group with all sorts of return tickets from the various points he had expected to visit in Florida. These were good only on particular steam−boats, and could be used only to go from one particular point to another. Fortunately he had lost several of them, but there were enough left to give us a good deal of trouble. We did not wish to break up the party, and consequently we embarked and disembarked whenever the Paying Teller's group did so; and thus, in time, we all reached that wide− spread and sandy city which serves for the gate to Florida.

From here, the Paying Teller and his group, with complicated tickets, the determinate scope and purpose of which no one man living could be expected to understand, hurried wildly toward the far North−west; while we, in slower fashion, returned to Rudder Grange.

There, in a place of honor over the dining−room door, stands the baby pelican, its little flippers wide outstretched.

"How often I think," Euphemia sometimes says, "of that moment of peril, when the only actual bond of union between us was that little pelican!"