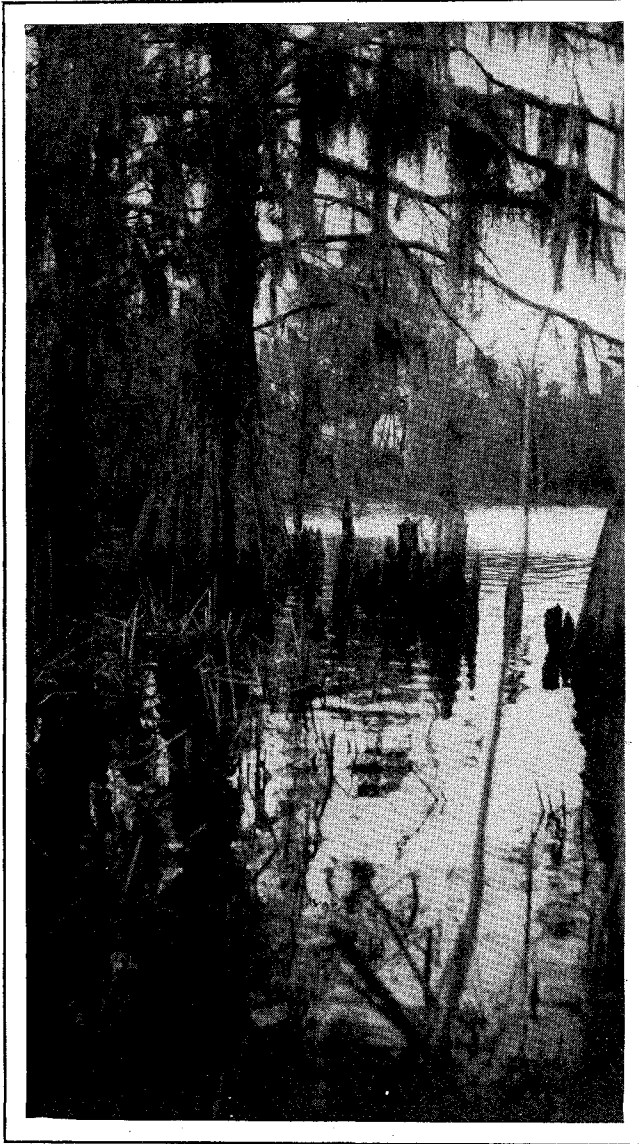


# VENDETTAS OF THE SWAMP

BY ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE

AUTHOR OF "OLD PLANTATION DAYS," "PLANTATION GAME TRAILS," ETC.



THE HAUNT  
OF MOCCASIN,  
ALLIGATOR, AND  
WOOD-DUCK.

brown cotton-fields, into which flights of mourning doves and meadow-larks were even then flying. You saw the melancholy majesty of huge live-oaks. You saw Negro cabins, staggering in their effort to stand, from whose clay chimneys smoke was cheerfully curling. Afar, white against the purple wall of the noble pine forest, you saw a planter's lonely home. But most you were impressed when you entered a dark and dewy gorge of the densest greenery. Here in perpetual mournful beauty the gray-tressed cypresses stood; here giant swamp briars and muscadine vines rioted high among tall trees; here jasmines and smilax festooned with fairy canopies the taller bushes and the shorter trees. An almost impervious undergrowth afforded you only an occasional glimpse beyond the borders of the swamp—a darksome vista where gleamed gloomy waters and where shone afar warm, pale sunlight on gray moss banners and silvered bay leaves. You saw the green shimmer of a brake of dwarf canes, the tall brown skeletons of dead ferns of superb height, the long, level beds of gallberry bushes dipping into savannas carpeted with gay-colored moss. You were, indeed, passing through the northern end of the great Santee Swamp. And you saw glimpses of it from a train rushing at sunrise at a speed of forty-five miles an hour. Though you did not know it, I was then your neighbor; for near the southern end of the swamp I was born and have lived; and all my life I have roamed as a hunter-naturalist through the borders and confines of that swamp and through others like it. I should like to take you with me into the swamp itself. Particularly I should like you to observe with me some of the vendettas waged by wild life of this picturesque and little-known region.

WHEN, at Richmond, night closed down on the world in general, and in particular on the long vestibuled train headed toward Florida, you had not seen the real South. You had marveled at the broadening, dream-like reaches of the lower Potomac; you had had the war vividly recalled as you sped through Quantico, with its quarters for the famous Marines; and thoughts of an earlier war had come to you as you saw the marker, near Chancellorsville, showing where Stonewall Jackson had died. Between that place and Richmond you had run through a country of much broom-sedge and scrub-pine thicket, of stunted oaks and dwarfed bushes—how different from the lovely Valley of the Shenandoah to the westward, and of the James to the east! At dusk you had rolled into Richmond, perhaps just a little disillusioned.

Where, you wondered, was the South of romance? Had it vanished as completely as some other dreams vanish? Night had then closed down, and your rest had been disturbed, for at least two definite reasons: you were sleeping in perfect vertical alignment with the rear bumpers of the car, and your mind was haunted with the thought that the South of your dreams was a snare and a delusion.

Dim daybreak found you nearly four hundred miles south of Richmond. You had slept through North Carolina. Through northern South Carolina you had uneasily dreamed. Now you were nearing Charleston. You lay in your berth and looked out in pleasant drowsiness at the fleeting landscape; and you realized that you had come into a new land—that, after all, there was a romantic South. You saw the bowed and

PERHAPS more than any other one matter, this thing has been impressed upon me by my years of roaming and study in the swamps and pine-lands of the South: that the whole earth is a battleground for wild life, and that, even among the insects, on a contracted stage, war is a constant and apparently a necessary condition. Conflicts rage about us and above us and under our feet. Indeed, if mankind can really succeed in putting an end to wars we shall be subverting what appears to be one of nature's originally immutable laws. Though Matthew Arnold had no swamp in mind, his description of life as "full of confused alarms of struggle and flight" is admirably suited to my meaning. Here in the Santee Swamp there is observable one of the most startling contrasts imaginable; it is the contrast

between the apparent peace of the dreamy woodland—its lustral silence, its lethal ease, its listless quiet, its haunting and ancient sense of rest—and the actual grim warfare which, under cover of all this curtain of beauty and apparent calm, is constantly and remorselessly waged. It is a land filled with timid fugitives and merciless crafty followers; but so furtive are both fleers and pursuers that only the most careful watching, the most guarded self-effacement, can yield a true disclosure of these age-old, strange, implacable, sinister feuds. The first I shall describe is that between the rattlesnake and the small mammalia.

In the swamp and pine-land country adjacent to the delta of the Santee there are three varieties of the rattlesnake: the hognose, the timber, and the diamond-back. The first of these, a curious dwarf, seldom over eighteen inches long, is of restless, fidgety habits, savage disposition, and a mien rendered strangely distorted by an oddly upturned nose. This little snake is the one which, somewhat the color of gray sand, lies half buried in it, and strikes viciously the foot of the unwary Negro. I never knew its bite to be fatal; but I knew a fisherman who, seeing one swimming near his boat in a lagoon, essayed to pick it up, not recognizing that it was a rattlesnake. The snake struck him in a finger, and the victim was unconscious for ten hours. He recovered; and he will never pick up a hognose again. The venom of this diminutive reptile is exceedingly virulent; it probably is less effective than that of the larger varieties of pit-vipers solely because of its limited quantity. Such a snake will eject through its fangs merely a drop or two of poison. I have teased a seven-foot diamond-back into striking, and the yellowish venom which he left on the pine pole with which he was prodded was enough to fill a teaspoon. The second kind of rattlesnake is the timber rattler, whose range is the widest of any of the twelve varieties of American rattlers. It would be interesting but for the presence in the same country of a far lordlier serpent of the same type—the great diamond-back, a superb reptile of gorgeous color, formidable size, and most interesting personality. Berkeley County, of which I write, probably represents the extreme northern limit in the East of the range of this splendid chimera, whose known presence in any forest haunts it with an indefinable sense of danger, even of terror. I should put eight feet six inches as the utmost limit of length to which this regal snake ever attains. Specimens over eight feet are rare; those six feet long are uncommon, but probably because the true diamond-back is nowhere positively abundant, at least not east of Texas. The largest serpent of this kind which I ever saw was killed about a mile from my home, at a place called Jones's Pond, in July, 1916. It measured seven feet eleven and one-half

inches. Its girth at the largest part of the body was thirteen inches (nor had it just taken a meal). Its tail was a positive triumph of rattledom; for it bore twenty-nine rattles. But as rattles are continually being broken and torn off, the number is seldom an accurate indication of the snake's age; size is the better criterion.

ONE day late in August I was in swampy country near the river, at a place known as Bowman's Run. In these Southern woods every dark water-course, every airy pine ridge, every lone pond, every alluring savanna retiring mistily among the pines, is likely to have its name. Many of these are associated with the old families of the region; in the wilder woods the appellations have usually been conferred for convenience by hunters, and that great fraternity passes on the picturesque names by word of mouth from one generation to another. I mention a few of these to show what I mean: Bull Hole, Buck Ridge, Blacktongue Branch, Rattlesnake Drive, Old Harry's Bridge, Fawn Pond, the Crippled Oak, Gum Swamp, Pinckney Run, and a hundred others of distinctive character. Nor let it be thought that a swamp is necessarily a place of darksome treacherous bogs, with water, water everywhere. Adjacent to the river there is likely to be more or less water, but in the swamp are high ridges, sunny and dry, where the sand is clean and white, and where white oaks grow and sweet-gums and hollies. I often think, when on such a lone ridge, that some day this whole country will be properly drained, and then these ridges will be choice sites for winter homes. But I must return to my little story of Bowman's Run.

A dark wood stream, after traversing leagues of lonely pine forest, there flowed with a sibilant, listless ripple into the broad yellow Santee. I was sitting on a log, and all about me the level green of gall-berries and huckleberries stretched away in shimmering sunlight. The world appeared steeped in a warm dream of summertime peace. But well I knew that a vendetta would soon be disclosed to me. And it was.

On the ground, only fifty yards distant, a gray squirrel gave a sudden bark: *Quack! quack! squacy!!* This instantly changed into a wild chattering, a furious tirade of excited denunciation. Now a gray squirrel is a comparatively silent creature. In parks, where he is protected, he seldom makes a sound; in the wild, when he barks he means something. Perhaps it is one male challenging another; perhaps two mates are calling; oftenest it is an indication of sudden and startled terror. This is especially true of the rapid, chattering tone.

The squirrel that I heard did not stay on the ground. It leaped on a black-gum tree and dashed ten feet up its trunk, where it hung for a moment, visibly palpitating. Then it agilely

turned head downward, and at once it recommenced its furious barking at some object hidden in the bushes at the foot of the tree. It descended a foot or two, and its extreme valor in so doing was apparent because the poor creature's utter fright was so patent. But it never got nearer the ground than about seven feet.

I left my log and walked over slowly, assuming that gingerly, conciliatory attitude toward everything stepped on which is most natural to one who knows that he is in snaky country. The squirrel, seeing the approach of a new enemy, fled chattering up to the first fork of the tree. When within twenty feet of the tree, I marked a slight stir in the bushes, discerned a slow weaving movement; I even heard the soft rasp of cold scales on cold scales. I halted, and the movement ceased. I stepped forward; then the diamond-back's rattles whirred in that arid, intense, ventriloquistic song of death. To locate the position of a rattler in dense brush merely by the sound of his rattling is a most difficult and baffling matter. Knowing where this serpent was, I now plainly discerned him, the color of autumn-strewn oak leaves, fearsomely heaped in his ashen coil. I went nearer, whereupon the rattles whirred more swiftly—indeed, wildly—and the whole huge body of the snake rose gradually as if on slow springs, while all of it distended strangely, ominously. I do not think that many observers have noticed this distention and this rising in his coil, as if gathering his strength for a mighty assault, in a coiled rattler. I was close enough to see the glare in the baleful cold yellow eyes, the massive articulation of the wide jaws, the faint chill pallor of lips as hard as steel and as contemptuous as death itself. While I stood still the body of the snake would subside; its size would gradually shrink before my very eyes, and the song of the rattles would fade into a sinister whir less importunate and imperative. But at my slightest movement all the formidable and grim menaces would be repeated.

Finally I came close enough to see that a young squirrel lay on the ground just in front of the great reptile. The squirrel was dead. Many of us talk of the cruelties of war; in the swamp there is warfare all the time. Knowing from experience that it is no great feat for a mature gray squirrel to bite through a human hand, I think that it is possible for a squirrel, if he could nerve himself to the risk of getting the proper grip, to take a terrible revenge on even the largest diamond-back. But I never knew a squirrel to fight a rattler, even in defense of its young. The chattering rodent will make a lot of noise, but in vapid barking, the counterfeit of valor, all his courage is vaped away. Like some people, he feels but he does not act. If he were like the mongoose, a creature of the same general size and build, he would soon become the terror of the rat-



tlar, as the mongoose is of the cobra. But nature will not have it so. Therefore a mother squirrel will watch a diamond-back take her baby, and she will have her revenge out in feeling.

The great rattler of which I write, in this particular region described, feeds almost wholly on young mammals or grown mammals of smaller size. My observations have led me to know that chief among these are young squirrels, rabbits, opossums, sometimes baby raccoons, minks, and full-grown wood rats and mice. He is also very fond of certain small birds, of toads, of other snakes, and of frogs. I have killed a rattler that had just eaten about a dozen large tadpoles, which he had evidently caught in very shallow water among the sedges on the borders of a pond. The Seminole Indians called the diamond-back "the Great King." And toward practically all the animals and birds and reptiles that inhabit his domain he bears a certain significance of relationship.

That this relationship is not wholly one of masterdom is readily shown. The razorback hog delights in tearing to pieces and devouring the largest serpent of this species. Neither this formidable reptile, the cottonmouth moccasin, the coral snake, nor the copperhead (and this list exhausts the list of venomous snakes of North America, if we consider the diamond-back as representative of the great rattler family) appears to have any power over a genuine native razorback; and I attribute partly to the presence of this savage forager over the huge free ranges of the Southern forest the comparatively small number of venomous snakes that one encounters in this otherwise reptilian paradise. But let it be known that we are considering no ordinary pig, which has been known to die of snake-bite in a manner ignominious to his race. I mean the real razorback, the kind that I myself have seen tearing to pieces a deer that careless hunters had left on the ground—a deer whose remnants were diaphanous when we arrived. I have seen a savage old razorback sow, frantic for food while trying to suckle eleven pigs, run down and kill a lamb and bear it away in barbarous triumph in her crocodile-like mouth. A razorback is a pine-land pirate; and he is a buccaneer that makes short shrift of any snake. His insurance against snake-bite is his hide. The serpent strikes, and the poison is deadly; but it seldom penetrates to the circulation.

**A**NOTHER enemy of the diamond-back is the whitetail deer, almost incredibly abundant in the swamp. He kills the reptile by leaping on it with all four feet drawn into a four-headed lance, weighted by the weight of the deer. Dogs are victims, and often with terrible swiftness. Many an old hunter has heard his favorite hound baying off at a little distance, and has reached the spot to find that the sudden hush in the bay-

ing meant that the hound was already dead. Stock suffers from the attacks of the diamond-back. I have seen cows that had been struck. The wound is commonly on the udder, and I have wondered whether the serpent did not recognize that as a peculiarly vulnerable place. Stock so injured usually dies. Of course the larger rattlers give off a distinctive odor, recognizable by man and readily apprehended from afar by the keener sense of smell of animals.

Nor is it in the summer alone that snakes are to be dreaded, for this region marks the southern limits of the latitude of hibernation. Usually snakes, frogs, alligators, turtles, and the like hibernate here; but if the winter is warm their hibernation may end prematurely. They may make the proper gestures toward a winter's retirement; but all such plans may be abandoned if a warm sun begins to shine insinuatingly on the creatures' dens, wherever they may be. I have at times seen supposedly sleeping creatures abroad in December, January, and February; and when they do come forth of their own volition they appear to have all their wits about them. However, I have seen whole rafts and shoals of moccasins washed out of winter quarters by a flood in the river; and they appeared numb, dazed, and stupid in every respect save one—the power to strike with swiftness and accuracy.

There is a general belief that before striking a rattlesnake "charms" or hypnotizes his victim. There is more truth in this than one might suppose; but the so-called charm is due less to any deliberate exercise of unusual power by the serpent than to the dread, frantic, fascinated fear of his intended prey. This understanding of the matter can be readily substantiated.

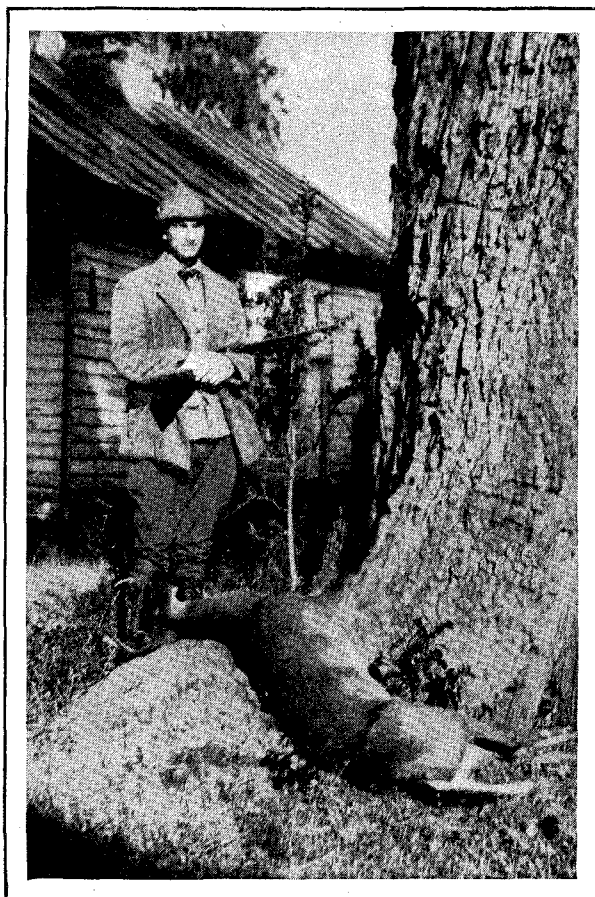
A load of rough firewood had been hauled into my yard on the plantation. Some of the big logs were hollow. A short time after the wood had been heaved off the wagon I heard some chickens setting up a racket near the wood-pile. On going there, I saw that several of the flock were greatly excited; but one, an old hen, was in mortal terror. Ordinarily her feathers decorated her normally; but now she had the appearance of a frizzled chicken. Before her, and within striking distance, high in his menacing heap, a huge diamond-back, which had evidently been brought in from the woods in one of the hollow logs, was "charming" her. There are ways and ways of charming; and this serpentine way is by the fascination of terror. The hen was crouched, and I am sure that her knees were shaking. At this moment an old hound ambled around the corner of the house. When he saw and smelled the snake, he put his head back and howled lugubriously. But most dogs would have barked, and some fools would have rushed in. The hound had attained an age of wisdom, discretion, and the power to speak sagely and warningly. But the strangest part of the performance was

yet to come. A cat had been dozing beside the wood-pile, and this general alarm had awakened her. With one eye of ancient craftiness fixed on the hound, she began one of those amazing feline stretches; she lifted her tail vertically, humped her back loftily, and stood absolutely on tiptoe. While thus elevated in tense muscular relaxation she saw the snake. Immediately she faced it, the serpent then being about eight feet distant from her. Her extraordinary posture did not change; but her tail furred out, her hair rose, and she assumed the typical attitude of a cat cornered by a dog. Meanwhile she rocked back and forth, swaying as if hypnotized. Now and then she would lift a foot warily, but it would be replaced with great care. She seemed to be going through some mystic Egyptian or modern dance. As you can imagine, all these performances made me uneasy; I felt as if, unless I were careful, I might begin to be antic also. In such a case a small rifle is a handy weapon, and such a piece ended the career of the diamond-back and the paralysis of some of my domestic circle. I give this example to show that a rattler, when he is operating close to his victim, does have a certain dread power to fascinate; but of course he is powerfully assisted by his prey's shocked state of mind.

I have said more about serpents than I intended to say; but this is because these creatures live by preying, therefore they are forever on the war-path. I shall now try to tell of a vendetta of the water, and though I mention a reptile, this time the creature is an alligator.

**I**F you walk through the swamp in a moderately dry season you can go for miles without wetting your feet; but of course part of the time you will be crossing fallen logs that span watercourses. Now and then you will come to ponds or lakes—lone, placid, beautiful places; sometimes they are mere earthquake holes, small but very deep; again they will stretch for a mile or more, with edges of lily-pads and with a fathomless black channel. Sometimes these lakes will have little islets where grow cypresses, in whose friendly dense tops many aquatic birds nest—blue herons, egrets, and cranes. In the waters themselves fish abound—black bass, mudfish, pike, bullheads, perch, and mormouth. Here, too, are whole battalions of frogs, water snakes of many kinds, turtles, and alligators. It is of the war waged by these last that I wish to tell.

The American alligator is a survivor of the Pleistocene Age. He should perhaps have disappeared with some of the other aquatic monsters. But sometimes nature is very whimsical. She often makes mistakes, and she permits the survival of creatures with which we could well dispense. In the Santee Swamp and in the streams and lakes adjacent thereto the alligator attains a maximum length of about sixteen feet.



A TROPHY  
FROM  
THE SWAMP

But a twelve-foot bull will anywhere be accounted a big one. There are larger alligators in this region than there are in Florida, probably because they have been less mercilessly hunted. But nothing could be more merciless than the manner in which the alligator himself hunts. He is a vendettist of major dimensions. His life is one long criminal career—if, indeed, anything natural is criminal. His existence is nothing but a prolonged and sinister stalk, with many cruel endings and many beginnings.

First of all, the alligator is a cannibal. The bull will eat his own young. If in some manner one alligator is rendered helpless, others will kill him and devour him. I have seen a huge old saurian of this type kill a smaller 'gator that I had caught on a line. They feed constantly on fish, on water-fowl, particularly on wood-ducks, and on almost anything that swims into their waters. It is said that an alligator will not attack a man. This is not true. I know of one Negro who was thrown down in shallow water and terribly injured by a bull alligator. I think that a man might swim across an alligator-infested lagoon; but this fact would not prove that the 'gator will never attack. There are as many authentic instances of attack by alligators as there are of attack by sharks on our coasts. The thing is rare, but it is not impossible. Alligators are hesitant about troubling a deer. Apparently there is a wholesome respect for the deer's sharp hoofs, which are

truly admirable defensive weapons. But to ordinary animals the 'gator is an implacable foe. The hog that roots on the marshy edges, the calf that wanders with its mother to the brink of the lagoon, the hound that, in pursuit of a deer, swims into these mysterious waters—each has his fate sealed. When his victim is swimming, the 'gator simply drags him down grimly, usually with a silent ferocity that is appalling. If he is on the shore, a mauling blow from the creature's powerful, muscular, wedge-shaped tail stuns the prey until the attacker seizes it in his jaws of iron. I have never known an alligator to attack anything on land, and I have never seen it actually eat its prey; I have seen it catch and kill its prey.

One day I was walking down an open pine ridge in the swamp when I came upon a splendid bull alligator. He was a quarter of a mile from the nearest water. The time was midsummer, and the pond in which he had been staying had evidently become uncomfortably shallow. He was heading for the river, about a mile distant. As it is unusual to encounter so large a 'gator so far from his element, I decided to try some experiments with him. I walked straight at him, when, to my astonishment, he suddenly rose high on his blunt legs, opened wide his cavernous mouth, and rushed at me savagely but very awkwardly. His advance did not bring him more than fifteen feet when he subsided and his jaws closed with a loud, menacing, hissing sigh. Several times he

made the same kind of attack. But he seemed to sense that I had the advantage of him. A green-pine pole that I presented for his close inspection he broke in half in spasmodic fury with a single champ of his jaws. I came almost near enough for his tail to reach me, just to see him use it. He did, with incredible skill and force. When I let him alone, he began to crawl away in a slow and dignified fashion. But such a creature is a menace, especially to young stock. I shot him. Later we got a wood-cart within reach of him and hauled him to the plantation, where the Negroes cut huge slablike steaks from his tail. They claim that one is made courageous by eating the flesh of this reptile. If heroism depends on this contingency, I fear that I shall never be decorated for bravery. I am rather of the opinion that it takes heroism to partake of such a repast.

The alligator is one of those wild creatures that have few natural enemies. Man is decidedly the worst. The young 'gators, in crawling from their sand-hill nest to the water, run a gamut of dangers, as they do in the water while they are small. There is probably much cannibalism among this strange family. But this saurian enjoys comparative freedom from natural foes.

In looking at the swamp from the train, one may imagine that it is a region of delight, where flowers festoon all trees and where mocking-birds carol night and day. The only mocking-bird I ever saw in the swamp was lost. And, while I do hear the parula warbler singing and, in certain seasons, Bachman's finch and the veery, with occasionally a far call from a wild turkey or a scattered covey of wood-quail, the swamp is not a place of music; unless, indeed, we accept as music those grim bellowings which resemble the bass profundities of the dragon in "Faust"—I mean the roar of the bull alligator. This is to me the most impressive sound in all nature, for I know of no sound to compare with it in depth, subterranean quality, and awesome grim grandeur.

I AM sensible that I have merely touched upon some of the more significant vendettas of the swamp. The subject is as vast as the territory itself. But no man can traverse these wild regions year after year without coming to know that, as far as the wild life is concerned, a desperate, stern struggle is constantly being waged. Those who pity beasts and birds in pens and cages should remember that at least these captives are shut away from all their wild enemies, and from that desolate freedom which is less than liberty because it is haunted.

Six miles from home, on a causeway in the swamp, there is a big pine with a bullet scar in it. There, long ago, one man killed another. It is a place of dread. Yet to me the beauty of the whole wide swamp, shimmering in nameless and dewy allurements, has



dread about it; for its loveliness cannot hide the reality that even this beauty and this charm are mere physical, almost inanimate, aspects of the land-

scape, and that they do not represent the life of the place. I love the beautiful in nature, but nature I fear. She is an inexorable mistress; and vaguely out

of every wildwood scene she looks at me, inscrutably smiling, but not as a human mother smiles, and not as smiles upon her lover a mortal sweetheart.

## THE ADOPTED NEPHEWS OF SAMUEL<sup>1</sup>

### TREATING 'EM HUMAN

BY PAUL LEE ELLERBE

FORMERLY CHIEF NATURALIZATION EXAMINER AT DENVER

THERE was a judge who naturalized foreign-born men and women once a month for years and years and almost never spoke to them.

He had been selected by the Republic to clothe them with rights and privileges equal to his own, to make them members of the largest and most democratic political fellowship on earth, and he almost never spoke to them.

His white marble and carved oak court-room was kept in a condition of chill and hushed sacrosanctity by a uniformed bailiff at the door and another at the bench—old men, but with their fingers constantly on their lips like coy maidens in a chorus.

The one at the door spent the fifteen minutes before the naturalization hearing began in lecturing the would-be Americans and their witnesses on the propriety of silence. It was his great moment. The entrance of the judge always threw him into a panic, so that he swallowed the rest of the sentence he was sure to be in the middle of and frantically shoed the crowd to its feet like chickens.

Then he led them down the aisle by threes whenever the clerk called out a name; the applicant in the middle and his witnesses on either side of him. Then the naturalization examiner, sent there for that purpose by the Government, asked them questions designed to test their fitness to come in, while the judge sat high above them, pensive, refined, and remote, and toyed with the slender gold chain that held his eyeglasses. His detachment gave him an awful impersonality. The examiner came to be, as the years stretched into a decade and then beyond it, thoroughly accustomed to him, but he never failed to feel it. It froze most of the foreigners.

If there was something wrong with a man's proof and his application had to be denied, the judge told him so, *through the examiner*, in language he couldn't understand. If the applicant had intelligence enough to ask for details, the examiner was told to explain to him afterwards, and call the next case. And it wasn't a matter of time, either. There was oceans of time in that court. In fact, it seemed to function in eternity.

When there were no objections and

the applicants had been accepted for naturalization, the judge didn't speak to anybody, but just waved a languid white hand toward the clerk's desk. The people for whose benefit the gesture was made didn't know what it meant, and he knew they didn't, but he never repeated it or said anything—just let them stand there and wriggle. There's no other inference to draw: he liked to see them wriggle.

One of the underlings—bailiff, clerk, or examiner—always told them, after a discreet interval, in a properly modulated voice, what it was his Honor wished to convey by his wigwagging and got them into position for the oath of allegiance, but his Honor never noticed or added a jot or a tittle to his gesture. He made it serenely, over and over, on the day of the month set by his rule of court, on down the years.

Now the point is that men who had sat in the examiner's office before the hearing and given clear, comprehensive answers to precisely the same questions acquitted themselves in that court like blundering fools.

And the more they floundered, the better the judge seemed to like it. It fed his vanity. His unimaginative mind took it for a tribute to his personal puissance.

Or, to put it quite differently, there was nobody home—only a judge. And what this Republic needs—at least on naturalization day—is a man.

It makes a whole world of difference. When you deal with people, the manner of your dealing is sometimes as important as the matter. There's a frigidity about a court-room, anyway, that congeals a simple man's wits under even the most favorable conditions.

It is pleasant to remember a Cornish miner, stricken well-nigh dumb by the might, majesty, power, and dominion of a small court out West, who was returned swiftly and happily to his status as a human being by a word of honest kindness from the judge.

He was so embarrassed that he actually had difficulty in telling where he was born.

When at last he remembered the name of the place, "My father," said the judge, "was born there too. On such and such a street. Do you know that street?" And they sat there after that and spoke to each other like men.

To be naturalized now you must show

that you know enough to cast an intelligent vote. It is pretty hard to do it if you are very poor, badly dressed, speak English that makes everybody smile, and have never been in court.

It is harder yet if you live in the West and have a homestead at stake—are desperately aware that your ability to acquire final title to the land you have tilled and built on and made your home on for three years or five is directly dependent upon the correctness of your answers to questions asked you during the terrifyingly few minutes you sit there before the judge. No wonder strong, intelligent men of poise and dignity break into heavy sweat and shuffle their feet and stutter.

One of them gave such an extremely poor account of himself that the judge was puzzled.

"I cannot possibly naturalize you," he said, "on the showing you've made. And yet I feel that you know more than you can tell. Mr. Examiner, what do you say to taking this man into chambers and talking to him there?"

In his chambers the judge pointed to a chair and produced cigars.

"Sit down, Mr. Pedersen, and tell me about your crops."

The man's children came next. And then the county roads. From things he could talk about almost automatically the judge led him back quietly, as they sat side by side and smoked together, into that debatable land of Constitution and Congress, Legislature and Town Council, Sheriff, Mayor, County Superintendent of Schools, and all the rest of it. The man had studied hard and long; he produced three little thumb-worn books to prove it. All half-Englished as he was, he had extracted information from the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, and knew what it meant. He read his daily American newspaper, slowly, but intelligently.

He was much better informed than the average citizen of his station, and bursting with a desire to tell what he knew.

The judge took him back into the court-room and naturalized him, with the examiner's hearty approval.

If the judge hadn't had the time and the inclination to do that extremely unconventional and unjudicial thing and take the man out of surroundings where he couldn't think, an intelligent person

<sup>1</sup>This is one of two articles by Mr. Ellerbe on the problem of making immigrants into citizens. The second article, "The Goats," will follow in an early issue.