

CHAPTER XVII.

Charleston to Savannah.—Beaufort River, or Inland Navigation in South Carolina.—Slave Stealer.—Cockspur Island.—Rapid Growth of Oysters.—Eagle caught by Oyster.—Excursion from Savannah to Skiddaway Island.—Megatherium and Mylodon.—Cabbage Palms, or Tree Palmettos.—Deceptive Appearance of Submarine Forest.—Alligators swallowing Flints.—Their Tenacity of Life when decapitated.—Grove of Live Oaks.—Slaves taken to Free States.

Dec. 28, 1845.—A FINE steam-ship, the General Clinch, conveyed us to Savannah. I was surprised, when sailing out of the beautiful harbor of Charleston, on a bright scorching day, to see a cloud of smoke hanging over the town, and learned that they burn here not a little of what is called Liverpool coal. Among others on board, was a female passenger from one of the western states, who, having heard me make inquiries for my wife, went up to her in the ladies' cabin and said, "Your old man is mighty eager to see you;" "old man," as we afterward found, being synonymous with husband in the West. We were to go by the inland navigation, or between the islands and the coast. After passing Edisto Point, we ran aground at the entrance of St. Helena's Sound, in mid-passage, and were detained some hours till the tide floated us off to the westward, through the winding mazes of a most intricate channel, called the Beaufort River. We passed between low sandy islands, and an equally low mainland, covered with evergreen oaks, and long-leaved pines and palmettos, six or seven feet high. Sometimes we sailed by a low bluff or cliff of white sand, two or three feet in height, then by a cotton plantation, then by large salt marshes covered with reeds, on which the cattle are supported when fodder is scarce in winter. The salt water in this narrow channel was as calm as a lake, and perfectly clear. Numerous wild ducks were diving as our steamboat approached, and beds of oysters were uncovered between high and low water mark. It