

great city. He himself had probably returned to the north in a steamer; having found the substantial floating mansion, in which he had lived for several weeks or months, quite unsaleable, although containing so much good timber shaped into planks. It is the duty of the wharfinger at New Orleans to see that the river is not blocked up with such incumbrances, and to set them adrift. After wandering for several hundred miles in the Gulf, they are sometimes cast ashore at Pensacola.

Soon afterward, when we were taking in wood at a landing, I entered another of these flat boats, just arrived there, and discovered that it was a shop, containing all kinds of grocery and other provisions, tea, sugar, lard, cheese, flour, beef, and whiskey. It was furnished with a chimney, and I was surprised to see a large family of inmates in two spacious cabins, for no one would suspect these boats to be so roomy below water, as they are usually sunk deep in the river by a heavy freight. They had a fiddle on board, and were preparing to get up a dance for the negroes. A fellow-traveler told me that these peddlers are commonly called chicken-thieves, and, the day after they move off, the planters not unfrequently miss many of their fowls.

Pointing to an old levee with a higher embankment newly made behind it, the captain told me, that a breach had been made there in 1844, through which the Mississippi burst, inundating the low cultivated lands between the highest part of the bank and the swamp. In this manner, thousands of valuable acres were injured. He had seen the water rush through the opening at the rate of ten miles an hour, sucking in several flat boats, and carrying them over a watery waste into a dense swamp forest. Here the voyagers might remain entangled among the trees unheard of and unheeded till they were starved, if canoes were not sent to traverse the swamps in every direction, in the hope of rescuing such wanderers from destruction. When we consider how many hair-breadth escapes these flat boats have experienced,—how often they have been nearly run down in the night, or even in the day, during dense fogs, and sent to the bottom by collision with a huge steamer, it is strange to reflect, that at length, when their owners have caught sight of the