

retaining one mark of his ax. He concluded that some evil spirit had, in a single night, undone all the labors of many weeks; and, seized with superstitious terror, he fled from the enchanted wood, never to return.

In order that I might not spend an indefinite time on the Mississippi, I determined to be prepared for a start in the first chance steamer which might be bound for Natchez, 140 miles distant, whenever an opportunity should offer, whether by day or night. I was told by my host that a trusty black servant had been already appointed to look out for a steamer, which was to convey some farm produce to a proprietor far off on the Red River. He proposed, therefore, to give orders to this negro to wake me if any boat bound for Natchez should appear in sight before morning. Accordingly, about an hour after midnight, I was roused from my slumbers, and went down over a sloping lawn to the steam-boat landing on the river's bank. The sky was clear, and it was bright moonlight, and the distant cries of the owls, and other night birds around Lake Solitude, were distinctly heard, mingled with the chirping of myriads of frogs. On the low bank my watchman had lighted a signal fire, and I heard the puffing of a steamer in the distance ascending the stream. She soon neared us, and, on being hailed, answered, "La Belle Creole, bound for Bayou Sara." This port was far short of my destination, and when we shouted "Natchez," the captain first asked if we had any wood to sell, and on learning there was none, sailed away. I returned to the house, and took another nap of several hours, when I received a second summons from my faithful sentinel. The scene was entirely changed; it was nearly day-break, and the fogs rising from the marshes had begun to cover the river. I was in despair, fearing that our signal fire would not be discerned through the mist. Soon, however, we heard the loud gasping of the two steam-pipes sounding nearer and nearer, and a large steamer coming suddenly close to the landing, was announced as "the Talma of Cincinnati." In a few minutes I was crossing the narrow plank which led from the steep bank to the vessel, which was actually in motion as I walked over it, so that I was glad to find myself safe on deck.