

CHAPTER XXXII.

Natchez.—Vidalia and Lake Concordia.—Hybernation of Alligator.—Bonfire on Floating Raft.—Grand Gulf.—Magnolia Steamer.—Vicksburg to Jackson (Mississippi) by Railway.—Fossils on Pearl River.—Ordinary at Jackson.—Story of Transfer of State-House from Natchez.—Vote by Ballot.—Popular Election of Judges.—Voyage from Vicksburg to Memphis.—Monotony of River Scenery.—Squall of Wind.—Actors on Board.—Negro mistaken for White.—Manners in the Backwoods.—Inquisitiveness.—Spoiled Children.—Equality and Leveling.—Silence of English Newspapers on Oregon Question.

March 15, 1846.—FROM Natchez we crossed the river, by the ferry, to Vidalia, situated on the low river plain, on a level with the base of the bluffs before described. We were accompanied by Mr. Davis, a large proprietor, who took us to see his negro-houses, all neatly built and well whitewashed. Even in this cursory view we could perceive how much the comfort and bodily wants of the slaves had been attended to. We had now left the country where sugar and cotton are the staple products, and had just entered the region where cotton and Indian corn are cultivated together. Here, as in Louisiana, the negroes constitute half, and sometimes more than half, the population on the borders of the Mississippi.

At Vidalia we were joined by Mr. Forshey, the engineer, who went with us to Lake Concordia, a fine example of an old bend of the Mississippi, recently detached and converted into a crescent-shaped lake, surrounded by wood. It is a fine sheet of water, fifteen miles long, if measured by a curved line drawn through the middle. The old levee, or embankment, is still seen; but it is no longer necessary to keep it in repair, for, a few years ago, the channel which once connected this bend with the main river was silted up. Opposite Natchez the depth of the Mississippi varies from 100 feet to 150 feet, but Lake Concordia has nowhere a greater depth than 40 feet. There are