

A SHRINE.

No sanctuary can compare
With an orchard that I know,
When April slips into its aisles
And swinging censurs blow—
When, 'neath its wondrous traceries,
The choristers that sing
Are robins, at their matins or
Their vespers in the Spring.
A deep sky stains its windows blue,
And the nun-like breezes pass,
Embroidering bright petals on
Its altar-cloth—the grass.
No guide is needed but the heart,
For every passer there
May pause and see its loveliness
And offer up a prayer.
Each one can say his vespers well
In that old orchard close,
When the Sun sends dying blessings down
Its deep aisles, as he goes—
And through those aisles an acolyte
Comes stealing from afar—
It is the Dusk, and in the East
He lights the Evening Star!
—Virginia Jeffrey Morgan in the March
Scribner's Magazine.

WHAT THE MOVIES SHOWED.

Federal Conservation Agent Jimmy May, and Bill West of the Louisiana commission, were delayed two weeks "up front" on the river while their stout little launch was being repaired after the adventure that pretty nearly put them out of business for good down in the coast swamps. Bill was especially impatient; he wanted to be down in the heronries after his motion pictures of the egrets during the nesting season to aid the great cause of saving the bird life of America, for it was during the time of rearing their young that the beautiful herons had their best plumage, and the pictures were designed to show the cruelty of killing them then and leaving the young to starve.

"What we want to do," said Bill "is to make it so that every boy in America who sees his mother, sister or cousin in wearing an aigrette plume will make a holler until every woman realizes what a heartless business she is helping to support. So, Jimmy, this trip it's more important to get pictures than it is to make arrests."

"Go to it," said Jimmy, "but I'm going in to have a mix-up with the plume hunters themselves. Also get in touch with this kid, Paul, and pull him over to our side of this war."

Consequently when the Pelican poked her nose again into the shallow lakes that led to the haunts of the egrets, Bill talked movies incessantly, while Jimmy discussed stratagems to get the evidence on Joe Abadie and his chief lieutenant, a "Manilaman" named Mariano. The last worthy had just been driven out of the Rockefeller Refuge by a raid of the conservation men and had joined the Abadie clan, the wardens learned. Also, he was a "bad man," a gun fighter, and as dangerous as Felix Abadie, the outlaw son of Old Joe who was reputed to cautious to mix in a real battle with the deputies.

"Hum," mused Jimmy, when the Pelican was chugging through the mud flats as close in to the cypress woods as her depth would let her. "Mariano—hey? More bad company for our reluctant young friend, Paul. Going to get this kid away from 'em now for sure."

But even after the affair of the big falling cypress, when Paul had endangered himself to save the wardens, Bill was skeptical of the boy's worth to the cause of the law. He just liked Jimmy May because Jimmy was a good deal of a youngster himself, and appealed to the self-reliant swamp lad.

The Pelican came to anchor in the mud where Bayou Traverse led northward through the great grassy morasses towards the gloomy cypress woods. They wouldn't take a chance up in the bayou where the misadventure befell them last month. Bill took a skiff and made a survey into the marsh that brought him out enthusiastic. Not only did the higher tides float him in near the herons' nesting places, but he discovered multitudes of wading birds—gallinules, grosbeaks, and even a beautiful roseate spoonbill almost as rare as the trumpeter swan, of which there was reputed to be but one alive in all the State and federal refuges.

"Great!" said Bill. "Tomorrow we go in and build a blind for the camera. Great location Jimmy! I'll take my lunch and mosquito bar and stuff into the blind with the pirogue and hang out from dawn to dark and you can go round sleuthing your Abadie friends if you want."

Jimmy paddled his own canoe in with the motion picture expert. They poled over mud flats among big black "congo" snakes, hammered a ten-foot alligator over the snout with a paddle when he poked an inquiring nose out of the lilies, and then fell to work on the blind.

It was just across a little lagoon on the other side of which was the thicket of trees that comprised the heronry. From the branches a score of beautiful snowy egrets arose and sailed off in the sunlight. A mother bird circled back and watched the wardens sharply.

"Great stuff!" repeated Bill. "Don't think the plume hunters ever so much as scared these birds, they're that friendly."

Crawling up on the trembling soil the wardens built a blind of sticks and then covered it with green cane. Bill had some trouble in getting firm support for his tripod, and the tarpaulin that he laid for a floor kept sinking in the ooze. But he had no prejudice against getting wet, if he could get his pictures. Mosquitoes were far more of a nuisance. But when the photographer crawled into the blind he whistled his satisfaction. The motion picture machine was entirely hidden but it covered the whole field—the lagoon, the clump of trees where the herons' nests were visible, and the whole marshy bank across.

"Good bye, Jimmy! Hate to chase you off, but you ain't needed here!" Jimmy laughed and paddled his canoe out of the lagoon. A half mile down the bayou, he changed his mind about returning to the launch and dragged his pirogue up on the sinking grass roots to get an observation of the distant woods. Then a gunshot attracted him far over the cane prairie. He caught a glint of white wings against the blue.

"Well, looks as if the plume hunters were out, too," he muttered. Then Jimmy whistled softly. Coming from the marsh by the tiny slough were three pirogues. One he swiftly recognized as Paul, the youngster whose life he had saved; the other man was Mariano, the Manilaman; and the third, who had just fired at a heron apparently, was Felix Abadie.

"Going to raid the roosts, too," whispered Jimmy. "Lucky I just passed out of that lagoon. But Paul—I didn't think of him!"

And then, as he watched the three swamper, thinking discouragingly of his vain efforts to detach the lad he liked so well from this lawless gang, he noticed that Paul idled along the canebreak when the two men had paddled out unsuspectingly to the bayou and turned westward—toward the lagoon where the heronry was situated. Crouched up in the concealing cane, Jimmy watched curiously. It was not until the two plume hunters had rounded a bend of the channel that the lad came to life. Then he whirled his canoe and began paddling swiftly toward Jimmy, and on past him as if his life depended on it.

From the cane Jimmy arose and hailed him softly. The boy started, then stopped, his keen eyes searching the bank.

"Paul, old buddy!" sang out Jimmy softly, "where are you going?"

The lad turned excitedly. "To your boat Mr. Warden! Our men are going to shoot in the lagoon today. They left me to watch since daylight, and—"

"You saw the Pelican come in from the lake but didn't tell 'em."

"No," admitted Paul, "but they'll raid the egrets before ever you could get in up here—I thought!"

"You did? Say, Bill West beat you to it by an hour. Got his picture set-up all fixed for the birds."

Paul looked frightened. "Mariano, the bad man, and Felix are just going in there! There'll be trouble!"

Jimmy watched him narrowly. "Say, is there a way to beat them to it? If Bill could be reached in his grass blind!"

"Come," whispered the lad, "across the prairie—if you're any good as a swamper! Drag your pirogue over this grass. I know a run that leads to the lagoon."

Swiftly Jimmy stumbled along through the cane which was high over their heads. Once in open water again they spoke not a word until Paul paddled and poled his craft into a mud flat that lay just behind the spot where Bill and Jimmy had laboriously built their camera blind not two hours before. Then Jimmy took the lead and swung his little canoe fairly under the rear of the grass covering.

Instantly came Bill's protest: "Keep quiet you, Jimmy. I was just thinking those birds would come back—it's all so peaceful now!"

"Peaceful! Mariano and Felix are just sneaking around by the bayou to get in here. Going to make a final clean-up of the egrets, Paul says."

"Paul?" Bill stopped monkeying with the crank of his motion picture machine and stared back at the two who shot their canoes in under the heavy overhanging cane. It was a deep shade in the blind but Paul's freckled, perspiring face was visible to the astonished Bill West. "The swamp kid, again? Say, Buddy, paddle out there and I'll take your picture—a real swamp Cajun robbin, the heron roosts—"

And then Jimmy May whirled about on the operator as if hit by an electric current. "Picture? Bill! What d'you think of this? The plume hunters' be slipping into this slough in a minute, and if a bird flies they'll pot him! Say—Felix and old Mariano, the famous old egret hunter! Bill evidence—and you can pump it to 'em so they never can wiggle out, with that movie machine!"

Bill gasped incredulously. So did Paul—with something like dismay. "Lie low, Paul—and I will, too. Bill, you do the rest. Mariano, the big chief of 'em all—will be right in the movies with his work!"

Hardly had he spoken when a gun cracked, and far across the slough a white bird crumpled to the water. The motion picture man stared out past his concealed camera. Then he looked at Jimmy.

"They'll sure cross the pond to get that bird. Just wait!"

The rubber floored shelter was sinking on its flimsy branch supports with Jimmy's added weight. But he knelt, peering out of the aperture where the black picture box swung. Bill West was trying to keep it steady and level as he might.

"Be still," whispered Bill; there's the first one! There's old Mariano behind him—watching for another shot! Egrets, now—two of 'em sailing in! They're all anxious to get back to their young ones!"

Crouching by his camera Jimmy looked steadily out. Paul's head was over his shoulder. Breathlessly they watched the two dugouts come from the shadows of the distant cane and into the sunlight of quiet pond. Felix went slowly to retrieve the dying heron. But Mariano, when he had come half across, spoke in a low voice. Then crouching a moment he suddenly whirled and lifted his shotgun almost above his head.

Paul punched Mr. West in the back. Then he heard the soft, low purr of the reel, which was especially designed for wild life photography. The next instant came two explosions as the plume hunter fired. A skurry of frightened birds still remaining in the thicket roost arose. The younger man fired quickly. And plo! One of the white mother egrets fell heavily not forty feet away. There was a satisfied shout out in the pond. Mariano was paddling hastily to get the victim. All the time Bill West's arm was mov-

ing stealthily under the blind. He swung the camera on its pivot as the other plume hunter came in the radius. Old Mariano stood up holding the two dead birds.

"You—Felix!" he shouted, "get the other! Four, eh—that is a good shoot—three of them with breast plumes, too!"

"Bien! But we are close to the bayou, man! Shooting is easily heard if a boat passes. Three plumes! We had better get to the woods and lay quiet a bit. Then, at sunset, the birds will come in again."

Mariano grunted assent to the grinning Felix. They shook the water from the dead egrets, tossed them to the pirogues, and lit their pipes.

"Mariano," suddenly muttered Felix, in the swamp patois which was easily understood, "that makes six big plumes to sell Peterson—next week out front! And the wardens think we are down around the big roosts where they keep such close watch!"

The old hunter grinned. He was looking warily around the pond, and Bill thought he seemed suspicious of some movement or sound in the canebrake jungle. Dipping his paddle the fellow swept his canoe close to the hidden camera; but his gaze was turned now to the sky, watching the distant, frightened egrets.

"Come," he muttered; "they will not return while we wait here."

And leading the way, the old Manilaman disappeared in the canebrake slough. The watchers in the bird blind waited until they were sure the poachers were fair on their way to the woods, and then Jimmy slapped his comrade on the back.

"Say, we got to get out front with this and tell the office. Then I'll bring you back for a week with your old machine! Sure you got 'em dead to rights?"

"Don't think I missed a detail! They couldn't have posed any better. Boy the mosquitoes are under my net, and it's too dark to work anyhow!"

Jimmy turned to watch young Paul who had been breathlessly watching the moving picture machine as if really incredulous of what was going on.

"Ever see a movie, Paul?" said Jimmy.

"No."

"Never did!" yelled Bill West. "Well, what you think of that! He must be the only kid in America who never saw a movie!"

"I never been out of these swamps in six years—since I was about eight, I guess," said Paul, soberly, his eyes always on the magic box. "Our people ain't much on going to town, except Felix and the old one when they think it's safe."

"Felix was boasting around Plaquemine last week, after his release from jail, that he was coming back next week to buy some camp stuff. Said the State had nothing on him now. Wouldn't it be great, Jimmy, if we could entice 'em into a picture show—and turn this film on 'em?"

Jimmy May sprang up so suddenly that he bumped his head through the grass roof. "Great? I should say so! And Paul—if you want to see a movie, you come back with us and we'll spring something that will surprise even you!"

"Well," said Paul, "I sure would like to. But I—never would dare go home again."

"Home? That place is no home for you. I reckon the State Commission will be so glad for the way you've helped us that it'll find a job for you—and a chance to go to school also. Come on, son!"

The swamp lad looked on with yearning eyes when Jimmy and Bill were packing up on the launch to go out front. And at the last moment, staring at the distant recesses of the flooded forest, he shook his fist at it and jumped aboard.

"All right, Mr. Wardens! I'm done with 'em. I want to see a moving picture the worst way—and you been right kind to me too!"

Jimmy felt his heart tug as he looked at the lonely lad who had all the time been trying to square his struggle for decency with his old feeling of clan loyalty to the people who had reared him. Bill West, also, was touched, and they both hid it beneath boisterous gaiety. They would let the egrets go again and set out for town with this undefeatable evidence against the plume hunters.

And the next week it all fell out as Bill predicted. Four of the Abadie clan came out to the little river town and swaggered insolently about for two days, given confidence by the fact of Felix's acquittal in court so recently. And the game agents said nothing and did nothing, meantime keeping Paul out of sight. Then, one night, when all was ready, they contrived to have some friendly swamper invite Felix and Mariano to the little local moving picture theatre. They got them well down front, too, while half a dozen watchful wardens lingered in the rear.

At the first glimpse that the outlaws got of the swamp picture, after an innocent little comedy had been run, Felix jumped to his feet with a terrified yell. There was himself paddling to pick up a dying egret, and then, on the screen flashed old Mariano in the act of firing at another bird! Mariano turned and made a dash for the exit—and walked straight on four armed deputy game agents. He stopped dead still as Jimmy May and Bill West hailed him cheerfully.

"Hello, boys—you and Felix! What you think of our show, eh?"

Then Jimmy turned to the theatre man. "Switch on your lights, there. I want to read four federal warrants for the arrest of these fellows. Got the goods on 'em sure this time!"

And back in the dark, Paul, the swamp waif, breathed with relief; he knew he was done with the gang for good, once they were behind the bars, and he was free to take up a new life of usefulness under Jimmy May's guidance.—The American Boy.

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