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Tropic Talks--With the Editors

Across Tropic Florida

AN air of mystery still surrounds what has long been the least known of any part of the United States--

The Everglades of Florida.

Miami, on the east coast, and Fort Myers, on the west coast, are but a few miles from the center of the Everglades and from Lake Okeechobee, the source of the overflow waters which covered it, yet in both cities are many people who

have never penetrated this region, though for some time it has been possible to do so with safety and comparative comfort. At their very door lies one of Nature's greatest mysteries now being solved by man and soon to become one of Florida's greatest assets.

Having in mind an Everglade issue of the Tropic Magazine it became the writer's pleasant duty to make the trip from

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TROPIC TALKS—Continued.

Miami to Fort Myers, via the drainage canals and the Caloosahatchee river, though there seemed to be some doubt at Miami about connections for such a trip. However, having been assured that such a route across the state was actually open to travel we started one morning on the 5:30 train, our immediate destination being Fort Lauderdale, a hustling little city which enjoys the distinction of being the county seat of the new county of Broward. At this place we took the boat for the upper 'glades region.

The trip up New River was delightful and extremely interesting, every bend in this beautiful stream revealing new beauties of nature's handiwork that should satisfy the most exacting admirer of tropical scenery. The early morning light

mirrored the trees and vegetation along the banks in the deep placid waters of this natural outlet of the 'glades. Tall cabbage palmettos, ancient oaks and forests of cypress covered with the graceful Florida moss all lent their charm to the scene, and an occasional water fowl of rare plumage made complete an ideal picture of South Florida.

Passing banks lined with reeds and lily-pads and an occasional orange grove with golden fruit, we reached the entrance to the North New River canal and were viewing one of man's greatest efforts in reclamation work. The eastern end of the canal is cut through the rock rim which for ages has held back the waters of the 'glades. On either sides were

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Tropic Talks--Continued

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banks of the famed "Miami rock," a peculiar oolithic limestone containing many shells and some coral.

One's first impression given by these canals is of the magnitude of the work attempted, and this impression deepens as mile after mile is passed and still the vista ahead shows no end of the distance to be traversed. After passing the rock rim, the canal banks become lower and

only the control of its water supply to make it available for a nation's winter garden and to supply Florida itself with the farm products for which thousands of dollars are annually sent out of the state.

An occasional alligator and now and then a coot or a wild duck serve to break the monotony of the ride, and soon one begins to see signs of pioneer settlement work. A tent or a rude shack and a little patch of tilled soil prove the eager-



A Forbes' Line Boat on the Okeechobee Run

from the upper deck of the the boat real Everglades can be seen stretching away as far as the eye can see—an apparently interminable expanse of saw grass, broken in places by hammocks covered with small bushes and trees. The canal banks now show the reason for all the expense and agitation for Everglade drainage. Even the person most critical or prejudiced concerning the project cannot but enthuse at the vast possibilities in this immense tract of virgin black soil, which needs

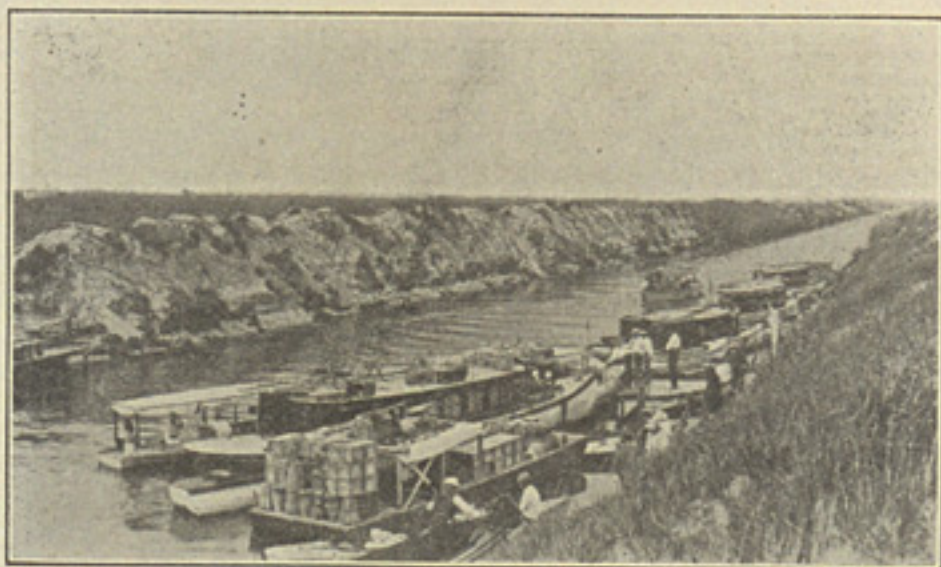
ness of some settler to begin drawing on Nature's storehouse, and the results obtained, even on this newly tilled soil demonstrate its richness. Farther up we pass one of the locks provided to preserve the water level in the upper glades; the homes of settlers become more numerous and substantial and the tilled fields become larger.

At Okeelanta, a new Everglade town, we stopped at a settler's farmhouse for the night, and had an excellent opportunity

to demonstrate our capacity for fresh eggs and vegetables, as well as luscious strawberries, urged by a gracious host and hostess who were enthusiastic young people, the class of Everglade pioneers upon whom the future of this country rests.

In the morning, after a hearty breakfast, we proceeded up the canal and soon reached Lake Okeechobee. This upper glade country has many substantial appearing farmhouses scattered along the canal and lake shore and shows some real results in trucking and farming opera-

and proceeded up the lake, appreciating its efforts to give us a good imitation of lake Erie in a storm. The wind soon moderated and we were gliding smoothly past Observation Island and in sight of the old tree that marks the entrance to the canal connecting Lake Okeechobee with Lake Hicpochee. At this point the new town of Moorehaven is located. This is a center of activity now and with its attractive hotel presents a striking appearance. It seems certain now that the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad will make this town a terminal for a branch line



An Everglade Canal—Drainage and Transportation.

tions. The soil is rich black muck and shows the good effects of cultivation on this class of land.

The wind had been blowing almost a gale all night and was still brisk, and we found the lake quite rough, so much so that one of our party became seasick. The captain put into Ritta Island, where the seasick young man was landed, much to his relief. At Ritta there is a substantial sized hotel and some fine gardens. They were packing potatoes at this point for shipment down the canal.

We said good-bye to our dolorous friend

now being built down toward the Okeechobee country and that Moore Haven is to become a city of considerable importance. We were due to connect with an automobile line at Lake Hicpochee, so we could not take the time needed to see all that is being done in the new-born town, but passed on through the canal to Lake Hicpochee. Here we saw thousands of wild ducks and coots feeding in the shallow bayous, so tame that they hardly noticed our boat passing. Having crossed the lake we found comfortable automobiles waiting on the shore. With regret

we left the launch and her hospitable captain who had done everything possible for our comfort and pleasure, regaling us with delicious lunches, with oranges and grapefruit in abundance.

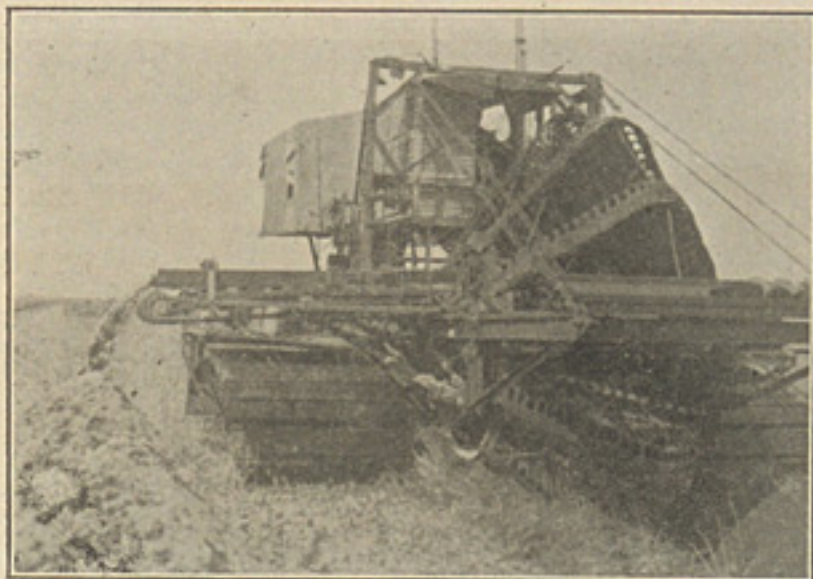
Now began a most unique and exceedingly interesting part of our trip, made necessary by the low water in the upper Caloosahatchee river and the canal connecting it with Lake Hicpochee. A large dredge now working its way across Lake Okeechobee will soon deepen the water-

comfortable hotel whose host gave us a most cordial welcome.

In our next issue we will tell of the trip down the Caloosahatchee and our impressions of Fort Myers, "The Gateway to the Tropics."

Real Farming in the Everglades

A joint committee from the Agriculture bureaus of the Miami Chamber of Commerce and the Fort Lauderdale Board of



Digging Lateral Canals in the Everglades

way and make the automobile's part in the trip unnecessary, as then the boats can run through from Fort Lauderdale to Fort Myers.

However we enjoyed the trip across the prairie through beautiful palmetto groves and pasture lands dotted with the pretty fleur-de-lis blossoms of the flags and with many other native flowers.

Upon our arrival at La Belle, on the banks of the Caloosahatchee we found a

Trade has just returned from an inspection trip of the Everglades. They report a most encouraging progress among Everglade farmers, who are now giving more attention to staple crops and live stock than formerly. Mr. E. V. Blackman, one of this committee, who was on a similar committee making a trip of inspection last September, says that then live stock was an exception, but that now

(Continued on Page 25)