

## Awakening of the Everglades

By Joy Kime Benton

I am the land of tomorrow . . . long have my  
lips been dumb,  
Long have I hoarded and waited, but now I  
welcome you—come!  
Come, all you strong ones and hopeful, wide  
am I swinging my doors;  
Listen! . . . I'm calling you, pleading; come  
win what you want . . . it is yours!

Alone in the smiling sunshine a million years  
and a day,  
I have gathered, gathered, gathered with  
never a debt to pay.  
My soil is teeming with treasures, richer than  
lands of the Nile,  
My skies are as hot as passion; as 'soft as a  
baby's smile.

To some I am outcast, pariah, a land of  
mirages and lies;  
A miasmatic marsh of mosquitoes, a fen of  
fever and flies;  
But these are the weaklings, the wastrels,  
with never a dream to their name,  
While I am asking for red blood and sinews  
to mould my fame.

Men who will tackle barehanded and drive  
from my borders each pest;  
Men who will cherish and love me, not  
idlers to merely invest;  
But builders who vision the future; vikings  
who venture and win,  
These will I take to my bosom . . . for these  
are my favored kin.

Expectant here in the sunshine I feel that  
my time is near;  
I want to give birth to fair cities, to gardens  
with never a peer;  
I want to hear singing and laughter . . .  
motherly voices and sweet,  
I want to see rollicking babies and feel their  
pattering feet.

I am the land of tomorrow . . . tomorrow will  
soon be today;  
My hands are stretched out to the hardy, I'm  
bidding you heed what I say.  
Come, all you strong ones and hopeful, enter  
my wide swinging doors;  
Listen! . . . I'm calling you, pleading, com  
win what you want . . . it is yours!