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Tropic Talks--With the Editors

Down the Caloosahatchee

IN our last issue we promised to tell our readers this month about the trip down the Caloosahatchee from LaBelle but it would be impossible to give any description that would do justice to this beautiful part of tropic Florida and the scenic effects of the winding Caloosahatchee River between LaBelle and Fort Myers.

LaBelle itself is a charming town with its oaks and orange trees, and we reluct-

antly left its hospitable hotel to continue our trip. It is the center of a great cattle country and is in the artesian well region having wells that flow many thousands of gallons of water a day. Its people are progressive, especially along educational lines as is demonstrated by a modern school recently built at a cost of \$25,000.00, set in a "campus" of two acres or more.

At the time of our visit the water was

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too low in the river here for the boat to reach LaBelle and it was necessary to take an automobile for a few miles further where the boat was waiting. For a short distance we drove through a veritable forest of cabbage palms and this part of the trip was a most interesting one.

The boat we found waiting was a sizable one that looked to be almost too long to negotiate the short turns of the Caloosahatchee or "Crooked River" running in a narrow stream between its high banks. The boat was found to be well adapted to its purpose, however, and we eagerly watched the unfolding panorama of palms and orange groves and enjoyed the occasional stops at small town wharves to take on passengers or small freights. The river soon broadened and larger vistas were exposed to view disclosing

groves of great extent loaded with golden fruit and packing houses with barges and steamboats beside them being loaded for the trip down the river.

No trip in tropical Florida is complete without a glimpse of the Florida of our school book days nor were we disappointed here for occasionally an obliging alligator lay basking in the sunshine on some shallow point or lazily slid off a favorite log, and strange-looking birds with wonderful plumage watched our progress past their reeded homes.

We had started at 7 o'clock from LaBelle and it was noon before we reached Fort Myers, but so attractive and alluring was the constantly changing scene that we never left the "observation deck" of the boat until the city came in view and we drew up at the dock at beautiful

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Tropic Talks

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palm-bowered Fort Myers. We had read much about the beauty of this city in its setting of tropic verdure. Mr. Simpson, in his article "By Water Trails Across South Florida" which appeared in the November, 1915, issue of the Tropic Magazine, gave a most glowing description of the tropical magnificence seen here which we found fully justified. We have left it to Mrs. McAdow to describe some of the wonderful palms that are growing here in this issue in her "Greeting From the West Coast," but delay in getting some promised articles of interest makes it necessary to leave until another issue, a more extended description of Fort Myers, "The Gate City of the Tropics."

"Getting Together"

At no time in the history of the State have the East and West Coasts of South Florida been as near together as at the present time. This may seem a statement that would require some convulsion of nature to have made true, and in a way, this is what has occurred. While a considerable change has been made in the last year or two in the natural barrier of the glades that has for centuries made intercourse between the East and West Coasts almost impossible, and with the partial drainage of the vast swamp a highway is now being constructed for automobile connections which will be followed soon, no doubt by a railroad, and an inland waterway is already being used in cross-state travel, yet, it is mainly a change of sentiment, a getting away from the old feudal ideas of communities looking upon each others progress with jealous eyes, and a realization of the fact that by helping each other we are helping ourselves to attain our own growth, that is chiefly responsible for the

growing harmony in our tropic South Florida.

We find still some people on either coast under the spell of the green-eyed monster. It is indeed amusing to have a story told us on the East Coast about having been approached in Jacksonville by some West Coast "booster" who maligned our beautiful East Coast, and then when visiting the West Coast to be told the same story except that it was the West Coast that was being slandered and an East Coast man was doing it. These cases are becoming scarce, however, and the people who are worth while realize more every day that the interests of both East and West Coasts are one, and a get-together spirit is absolutely necessary for the best development of the fertile inland region between them, needed to assure permanent commercial stability to our coast towns.

Anything that makes for better understanding and co-operation between the towns or communities of our tropic Florida ought to receive encouragement and the convention of the South Florida Chamber of Commerce to be held in Lakeland May 10th should be liberally attended. Lakeland is noted as being one of the liveliest towns in the liveliest end of the liveliest State and any one living in South Florida that attends the meeting cannot fail of receiving benefit from getting acquainted with such people.

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