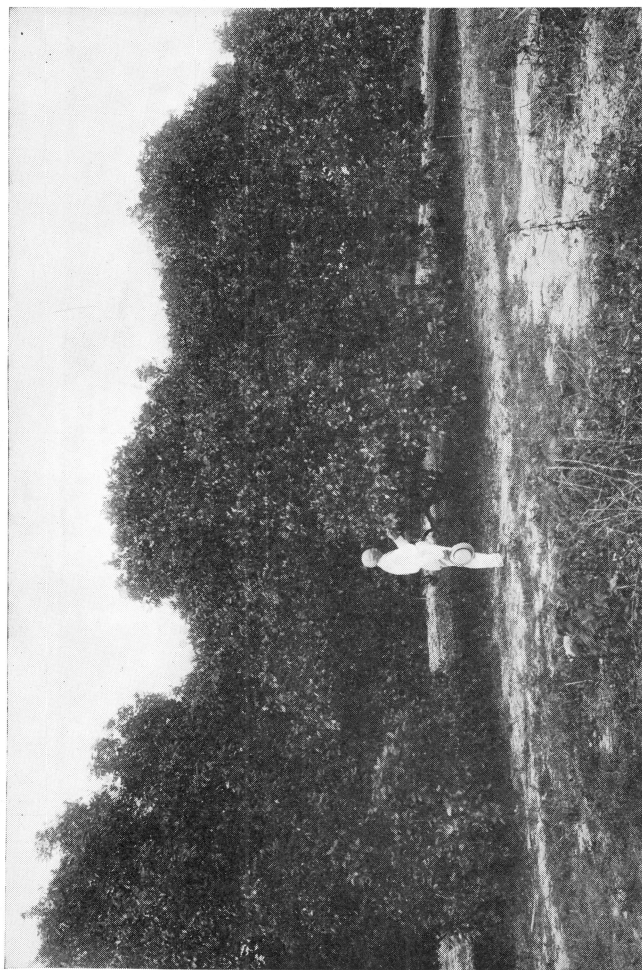


## CHAPTER IX

Opportunities, Wise and Otherwise—Real Estate Speculation—The Back Country—Sub-Tropical Agriculture and Citrus Fruit Cultivation.

There is one business which even the astute Miamian will admit does not pay in Miami. Moreover, he points with pride to the fact that it never has paid and the probability that it never will pay. They do say that no cemetery association in the city has ever paid a dividend. This would seem to indicate that most of the tourists manage at least to get away with their lives. The natives, imbued as they are with a high sense of civic duty, probably go away somewhere else to die, rather than dim the bright record of Miami as a city of eternal youth.

It has been said that the two principal crops of Florida are oranges and tourists—and that both are



GRAPEFRUIT GROVE NEAR MIAMI



NATURAL ROCK BRIDGE

## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

well picked. The first popular conception of the state was a land of swamps and alligators. This view was subsequently changed to a land of hotels and real estate agents. The state, however, has made great strides forward during the past decade and is rapidly passing from the joke stage. The increase in the use of automobiles in Florida during the past five years probably indicates more definitely the growth of the state than other comparative tables. From less than forty-eight thousand in 1918 to over one hundred and fifty thousand in 1923—more than four hundred per cent.—is a record perhaps unequalled by other states supposedly more progressive.

The first state to be discovered, Florida has been the last to be developed. The state is as large as New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined. Those three states have a population of fifteen million. Florida has only one million. With this vast expanse of territory and small population, it would be strange indeed if the state did not offer opportun-

## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

ities to the homeseeker and investor. But in a community where a big boom is on opportunity is often painted in garish colors. One of the best opportunities everywhere and always is the opportunity to drop the summer bank roll. Miami and surrounding country undoubtedly offers fine opportunities for the investor and homeseeker, but investigation should precede investment, there, as elsewhere.

The principal business in Miami is, of course, the real estate business. Real estate offices are everywhere, and real estate agents are so numerous that they have to wear identification tags to avoid soliciting each other. They range from the common or garden variety of curb-stone broker to great corporate concerns with imposing ground-floor office suites. The hotel business is probably a close second to the real estate business. Hotels and apartment houses dot the city and its suburbs. The city undoubtedly has more and better hotels than any city in Florida. They range from the palatial de luxe structures that

## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

cater exclusively to the creme de la creme class to the less pretentious hostelrys that welcome the patronage of the proletariat. Due to the recent extravagant building, accommodations may now be had to suit almost any purse or taste.

The town appears to be over-sold on stores and small shops of all kinds. There are too many beauty parlors, delicatessens and gasoline filling stations. As is usual in all boom towns, rents are somewhat inflated. The city is not yet large enough to be independent of the fickle tourist, but it is rapidly becoming so. The permanent population is increasing at a rapid pace. Many who come to see decide to stay. While many of the well-to-do class of residents feel the need to "come up for air" during the tropical summer and journey to Northern resorts for a change of scenery, the great bulk of the population are all-year-round residents.

Well-bought real estate—if it is well bought—is still touted as the best investment opportunity in

## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

Miami. It is pointed out that real estate in any growing city is usually a sound investment—and Miami is growing, and growing rapidly. The city will probably grow to be a city of the first class, and it will always be a great tourist center—the climate alone will attend to that. Speculation in real estate is prodigious, and the great assortment offered is so bewildering that even the shrewd investor is sometimes puzzled in making a choice. But the said investor—shrewd or otherwise—usually does make a choice. The turn-over in Miami realty in one season is enormous. A million dollars does not seem like much money in Miami when you are talking high finance with a real estate agent. He juggles big figures as though he were talking of German marks.

Probably one of the best opportunities for the homeseeker lies in what is called the back country. Radiating from Miami are many small towns and villages that have been quickened into new life

## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

through the great development of Miami, and there is a wide expanse of country ready for settlement. Real estate values here are below those adjacent to Miami and good properties may be obtained at more moderate figures. Dade County has an area of 770,000 acres, of which 32,000 acres only are in cultivation. Much of this remaining acreage is in the Everglades, but it is claimed that 100,000 acres of cleared land now awaits the homeseeker.

Winter vegetable growing appears to be profitably engaged in by many settlers of the back country. There are a number of large and successful growers of tomatoes, which is one of the major crops. This crop is planted in the early fall and marketed in January. The greatest danger to success is the possibility of a wet season from the October rains. This vegetable is very sensitive to wet weather, and the marl prairies in the southern end of the county best adapted to this crop, flood easily. If the weather is dry they bear scantily, and if there should be a



## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

slight nip of frost, as there occasionally is, the yield is materially reduced. Fertilization will cost from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars an acre, for everything that grows in Florida—even the tourist crop—must be artificially stimulated. The commercial fertilizer business is one of the most profitable industries in the state.

The soils in different parts of the county vary greatly. The drained portions of the Everglades is a black muck, the muck varying in depth from two to ten feet. This land needs to be aerated and worked over to get the full benefits. The marl and prairie lands are best adapted to vegetable growing. These sections supply the winter vegetables, crops of tomatoes, peppers, beans and cabbage for the Northern markets. The redlands and the pinelands are best adapted to citrus fruit cultivation. It is claimed that thirty-five per cent. of all Florida grapefruit comes from Dade County. Every fruit stand in Miami presents an array of produce bewildering to the visit-

## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

or from the North, accustomed to a less luxuriant market, and even a bit puzzling to the laymen native, so great is the variety and so many the modifications within a given species. The species of citrus and closely related genera grown for commercial and home use include sweet oranges, grapefruit, shaddock, limes, lemons, rough lemons, King oranges, mandarin oranges, tangerines, Satsuma oranges, tangelos, citrons, sour or Seville oranges, bitter-sweet oranges, trifoliate oranges, calamodin oranges, kumquats, citranges and limequats.

Because the state of Florida is a hot house of growth during the mild winter months many people get the impression that nothing really worth while grows in the summer time. This is a mistake. Many rare tropical fruits mature during the summer months. Among these are the mango, avocado, guava, loquat plums, Syrian cherry and banana melon. There are also many tropical flowers and trees that bloom during the summer months, the most beautiful of these

## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

being the Royal Poinciana, which blossoms in May.

Dade County is claimed to be one of the few places in America where the avocado, or alligator pear, may be successfully grown commercially. These thrive particularly in the redlands. The aristocratic mango, the most ancient of fruits, is another product of which the locality claims to have a near-monopoly. Both the avocado and the mango bring fancy prices, the former bringing as high as thirty-six dollars for a crate of forty, while choice mangoes sell readily in the Northern markets for one dollar to one dollar and a half each. The wonderful commercial possibilities offered in the cultivation of the avocado and the mango, the great field for its study and scientific development, provides a new opportunity for the intelligent horticulturist. An orange or grapefruit grove, once matured, is also a very profitable investment, but to one uninitiated into the subtleties of tropical cultivation the care of a grove presents both difficult and expensive problems. The

## THE TOWN THAT CLIMATE BUILT

greater portion of the lands best adapted to citrus fruit cultivation is underlaid with an oolitic limestone, and it is usually necessary to blast holes for the planting of the trees.

South Florida is a little kingdom within itself. It is a semi-tropical country, where the habits and customs of the people, as well as the conditions that pertain to plant life, differ somewhat from those of Northern climes. Houses should be built with plenty of windows and porches, as ventilation is important.

To those experienced in agriculture and horticulture, who may seek a congenial clime and a home in tropical surroundings, with the added zest of a new environment, the South Florida country has a certain appeal.