

CHAPTER VI

SUNWARDS

I

AT BREAKFAST time the next day we had reached Jacksonville, the gateway to Florida, situated on the St. John's River, which flowed into the Atlantic, twenty-two miles away. It is one of those rivers almost unobserved in U.S.A., navigable for two hundred miles, four hundred miles long, and eight hundred feet wide at Jacksonville. It has the distinction of having been the first main river discovered in America.

The unusual, to northern eyes, had already begun. As we crossed the river pelicans were perched on the piles, drab but impressive birds, absorbed in meditation. It looked already as if the jungle had come down to the river—a dense mass of grey-green foliage clothed the banks of the estuary. We were now entering a region of flat land covered with palmetto, dry scrub oaks, and a thick coarse vegetation. Here and there man had made a clearing, and erected a jumble of pink plaster and concrete. A wide motor highway bordered the railway. Already one had to draw a blind to lessen the glare of light on the breakfast table.

In the dining-car I found a friend, a giant of a fellow who was proceeding to his Florida home north of Palm Beach. It was Gene Tunney, once holder of the World's Heavy-

weight Boxing Championship. We had met previously, some years back, in the company of G. B. Shaw, at Brioni in the Adriatic. Gene was never the typical bruiser. He began his career and came out of it a gentleman, as much interested in modern literature as in fisticuffs. He became the world champion, gifted with a magnificent physique, by taking thought as well as lessons, and, having seriously adopted fighting as a profession, punched his way to Jack Dempsey's throne, to which he succeeded. As he had hoped, he speedily made a fortune, and, as he had intended, he wisely kept it. He was never popular with the scum of the sporting world, and he refused to harbour the parasites that breed in the vicinity of the ring and the racecourse. The university graduate maintained the classic ideal. In the Greek age of the athletic prizemen he would have been immortalised by a Pindaric ode. In the age of the Hearst Press he kept his head, and his manners, through the ballyhoo of success.

It was this genial giant, modest, intelligent, and still in the pride of physical beauty, who became my companion as our train ran down the Florida coast. It was characteristic that no reference was ever made to boxing. The death of the King, Italy's plunge into slaughter, and the economic morass were the subjects of our discussion.

Our first stop was St. Augustine, ablaze in the sun, with palm trees clustered about its pleasant suburbs, and the vivid blue lagoon lying between the mainland and the narrow lido that guarded the opening to the port. I had seen it in other years, and the veneration it arouses in American hearts is easily understood. It is the oldest city in the United States, and a few of its ancient buildings have a romantic history. Near here, on April 2nd, 1573, Ponce de Leon, the

Spanish conquistador, landed, in search of the mythical Fountain of Youth. He had discovered land a few days before, and the day being Easter Sunday, Florida, (Pascua Florida) thus derived its name, the Land of Flowers.

He was not the first to sight Florida. John and Sebastian Cabot, Henry VII of England's explorers, had already mapped the Atlantic Coast from Labrador to Mexico, in 1497. But Ponce de Leon is definitely associated with Florida. He was appointed "Governor of the Island of Florida" by Ferdinand V of Spain, which shows that Columbus's old sailing companion had not definitely mapped his discovery.

On his return in 1521 to colonise his possession he received his death-wound from the arrow of an Indian, and was taken to Cuba, where he died. Ponce de Leon was never quite certain what he had found. He had originally set out with three ships to search for the legendary 'Bimini', where flowered 'The Fountain of Youth' with its fabulous healing powers. He failed to find the fountain, but St. Augustine, not unnaturally, has discovered one since.

The town was settled long before the Pilgrim Fathers accomplished their much-advertised voyage, and the Spanish Governor's Palace, visible to-day, can boast of two hundred years under the Spanish flag, twenty under the English, and a century under the American. Perhaps the ghost of a Spanish hidalgo may still be surprised on a moonlit night on the Plaza, examining the automobiles parked there. Some of the streets once echoed with the boots of the Spanish gallants, and who knows at what corner Don Alfonso lurked in the hope of a glimpse of Andalusian eyes and Andalusian lips. The cathedral tower holds a bell that rang in 1682.

Earlier in its history St. Augustine's peace was rudely

shattered by Sir Francis Drake. In 1565, a Spanish adventurer of singular blood-thirstiness, one Pedro Menéndez de Aviles, had established the city with great pomp. He straightway proceeded to fortify it. He had settled there because he had been afraid to attack a stronghold of the French Huguenots, at Fort Caroline.

In 1564 a Frenchman, René de Laudoniere, had taken possession of Florida in the name of France. He founded his fort at the mouth of the River May, on a site near where Jacksonville now stands. He had not been there many months when the colony had a severe fright. Foreign ships were seen sailing up the river, and it was feared the dreaded Spaniards were come to destroy them. But they were English ships, commanded by Captain John Lovell, who had as his junior officer one, Francis Drake of Plymouth. Instead of cannon balls the scared Huguenots, on the verge of starvation, received provisions. Lovell, having traded one of his ships for some cannon, sailed away again. A second fleet of ships proved to be French reinforcements under Jean Ribault, but a third fleet was Spanish, headed by the *San Pelayo*. "I am Pedro Menéndez de Aviles. I have come to hang all heretics and Lutherans. I shall attack at daybreak, and every heretic shall die, but devout Catholics will be unharmed."

After this Christian greeting, the scared Ribault slipped away, leaving his countrymen in Fort Caroline to their fate. Happily they had time to prepare defences, which looked so strong that the Spaniard sailed away, to found St. Augustine.

The Huguenots in council, certain that the Spaniards would return, determined to make a sortie and attack Menéndez at his new base. Their fleet sailed for St. Augustine, but

was caught in a terrible hurricane and was wrecked in front of the Spanish stronghold. Menéndez at once saw divine support in the fate of the Huguenots, and assumed that Fort Caroline was now undermanned. He boldly determined to march upon the place overland, and with an army of five hundred men hacked his way through the hurricane-riven jungle swamps. After terrible hardships he reached Fort Caroline. The population was put to the sword, only a few women and children being spared. In a fury of blood the dead bodies were grossly mutilated, and fifteen captives were hanged with the words 'Not as Frenchmen, but as Lutherans' placarded on their breasts.

Some two hundred survivors of the shipwreck, having fallen into Menéndez's hands, were assured of safety, but when they had surrendered their arms he butchered the Frenchmen, only one escaping to record the dreadful news. Yet another party of shipwrecked Frenchmen under Ribault fell into the Spanish hands. They were promised safety if they surrendered, and were then stabbed to death. Exulting in his mission for God, Menéndez left a small garrison in possession of Fort Caroline, calling it San Mateo.

Three years later a Frenchman, De Gourges, arrived at San Mateo, sworn to avenge his countrymen. A wealthy aristocrat, he had once been a slave in a Spanish galley, and he had a personal as well as a national score to settle. Enlisting the Indians in his army of attack, he subdued the surrounding forts, put all occupants to the sword, and turned to the main fort, San Mateo. De Gourges swept like a scourge over the fort, and only saved a few prisoners in order to hang them on the very trees where Menéndez's victims had dangled. Over them he wrote his retort—'Not as Spaniards, nor as outcasts, but as traitors, thieves, and

murderers.' Justice failed in one detail. Menéndez did not share their fate. He died at the height of his fame and was buried, loaded with honours, in his native town of Aviles, Spain.

After this terrible history San Mateo crumbled away, and the jungle crept over it again. The Indians came back to their peaceful river creeks and Nature forgot the bloody scenes and horrors of the white man's occupation. Nearly three hundred years elapsed before the city of Jacksonville arose out of this same jungle.

II

There is one vivid memorial of Menéndez in St. Augustine to-day. The citizens of Aviles presented his tombstone to the town, and it is proudly displayed. There is no memorial to Sir Francis Drake, who gave the Spaniards a fright in 1586, when he sailed into the harbour, destroyed the fort, and looted the treasury.

Drake was then in the full flower of his fame. He had circumnavigated the world in *The Golden Hind*, had been knighted and made an Admiral by Queen Elizabeth. The crowning of his fame in the defeat of the Spanish Armada was yet two years advanced in the future. The King of Spain had thrown down the gauntlet to England, and the Queen soon saw that he could be heavily wounded by attacking his treasure ships returning from the West Indies. She therefore authorised a fleet to be built, and placed it under the command of Drake. Early in 1585 the preparations were well advanced.

At this stage there was a volunteer who could not easily be ignored. The gallant and influential Sir Philip Sidney, the Queen's favourite, and the most popular young English-

man alive, whom the Queen once called "the jewel of her times," wished to join the expedition to the West Indies. Moreover, he offered his financial backing as well as his own service. It was arranged between Drake and Sidney that they should be equal commanders, and that the latter should supply whatever was necessary. There was one condition. Sir Philip, aware that it would be next to impossible to obtain the Queen's consent for his departure on so dangerous and distant an adventure, stipulated that his name should be withheld from the joint expedition until the eve of sailing. Drake agreed, well aware of the influence wielded by Sidney, but he was not pleased at the idea of sharing his command. Did he plot against his partner in the enterprise? It is not unlikely.

The preparations went well forward. Drake at Plymouth, with a fleet of twenty-one ships fitted out and crews ready, awaited the arrival of Sir Philip before putting out to sea. The gallant young knight arrived, and Sir Francis gave him a grand dinner and entertainment. Lord Brooke, Sir Philip's friend, also engaged in this enterprise, noticed that Drake's pleasure at Sidney's arrival was assumed. He was not at all surprised, therefore, when, the Queen gaining knowledge of what was afoot, a sharp message arrived forbidding Sir Philip to sail with the fleet. Lord Brooke had no doubt that Sir Francis Drake had been in communication with Walsingham, the Queen's Minister, and at the appropriate moment had divulged Sir Philip's plan.

Bitterly disappointed, Sir Philip Sidney saw the fleet, with its two thousand seamen and sailors, set forth without him on what promised to be a glorious adventure. All the lads of England had flocked to Plymouth to join the thrilling

enterprise of fighting the Spaniards and looting their galleons, heavy with treasure from the fabled Indies.

The expedition sailed in September 1585. Drake felt a load off his mind. Some of the Queen's ministers had gravely warned her of the risk she took in challenging Philip of Spain. The Spanish party at Court was powerful. But Drake was away at last with the largest privateering fleet, two battleships, eighteen cruisers, pinnaces, and store ships, that had ever sailed out of an English harbour. There was another weight off Drake's mind. His life had been darkened by the tragedy of Doughty, the friend and courtier-soldier who had plotted against him at sea, and whom, with sad resolution, he had tried and hanged. He had no liking for courtier-soldiers on his ship. Sir Philip Sidney was well left ashore. Drake did not want such another conflict between friendship and duty.

His first move was characteristic. He ran straight into the Spaniards' lair, collecting food and water from the paralysed town of Bayona. He made no secret of the fact that he was bound for their treasure house, the Indies.

The High Admiral of Spain was in a panic. Drake struck at Santiago, and sacked the city and burned it. But Santiago was avenged—a deadly sickness among his men had been contracted there. Indomitable, Drake pushed on. Santo Domingo felt his arm. It was the prize city of Spain's colonial empire, the oldest city in the Indies. It capitulated, but proved to be empty of treasure. He stripped it and passed on to Cartagena, Colombia. It boasted of being impregnable. It fell, the capital of the Spanish Main, yielded much loot, and a ransom of a hundred and ten thousand ducats.

Then, in March 1586, he put about for home. But bad

weather and want of water delayed him for two months off the coast of Florida. St. Augustine looming into view, Drake found energy to attack it, with six months of hard fights and sternly won triumphs behind him. They had previously been driven back to Cuba for water, after which they had voyaged northwards, keeping the low Florida coast in sight.

On May 28th they saw a scaffold raised on four masts as a look-out station to sea. It represented human activity on that dense, lonely shore. Drake proceeded to investigate, manned the pinnaces and landed. Proceeding up the channel towards St. Augustine, they came to a fort being newly erected by the Spaniards. At the approach of the English boats the engineers fled into St. Augustine, which contained a garrison of one hundred and fifty men. The next day the English landed to storm the fort, but found it empty. There were fourteen great pieces of brass ordnance placed on a platform constructed of large pine trees laid across one another, with earth between. A French piper, a prisoner in the fort, who had been left behind, told Drake the garrison consisted of one hundred and fifty men, who had retired in such haste that they had forgotten the treasure chest, containing about two thousand pounds.

How like the hair-raising story books of one's youth, when buccaneers sailed forth to capture Spanish treasure, and galleys were boarded, forts stormed, and hoards of doubloons discovered, when the cutlasses had rattled and the proud Spanish commander had surrendered his sword! As my train glided out of St. Augustine, in the brilliant sunshine of the January morning, I looked down the palm-girt avenues, over the projecting roofs of hotels and office buildings, and tried to reconstruct that May morning, in 1586,

when Drake and his men had struck terror into the hearts of the Spaniards.

Somewhere in that soil lay the dust of young Sergeant-Major Powell, buried far away from his Devon home town. He had leapt upon a horse and recklessly pursued the fleeing Spaniards. Rashly advancing beyond his company, a Spaniard lay in wait for him in the long grass, and shot him through the head. Before his company could come up he had been wounded several times, and they recovered the body and gave it burial.

The Governor and his garrison had fled to San Mateo. The city lay deserted. "It was considered as wearing the appearance of being a prosperous settlement, having its council house, church, and other edifices, and gardens all about. All the public buildings were burnt, and the gardens laid waste by the invaders, in revenge for the death of Captain Powell." Thus wrote a chronicler, and he adds that an intention to attack St. Helena, farther on, was abandoned owing to dangerous shoals.

Drake's fleet proceeded northwards in sight of the shore until it reached Sir Walter Raleigh's colony planted in Virginia, which Queen Elizabeth had instructed Drake to inspect. A long succession of hardships determined the colonists to return home, and, accordingly, Drake embarked a company of one hundred and five, together with the Governor, Mr. Ralph Lane, from his fort at Roanoak. It was this Mr. Lane, and not Sir Walter Raleigh, who introduced tobacco into England, for Lane and Drake, on their return, brought it to the notice of Sir Walter, whose illustrious example was followed by the Elizabethan courtiers, especially after he "tooke a pipe of tobacco a little before he went to the scaffold."

The embarkation of the Virginia colonists was the closing act of Drake's expedition. They sailed into Portsmouth Harbour on July 28th, 1586. The booty amounted, all told, to sixty thousand pounds, far below the expectations aroused in the beginning. Twenty thousand of this was divided among the men, each receiving about fifteen pounds. Seven hundred and fifty men had died, mostly of fever. The expedition had been mismanaged, for the delay at Santiago had infected the troops with fever, and the approach of the expedition to the West Indies was so slow that the Spaniards had time to protect their treasure. Writing from Plymouth to Lord Burleigh, reporting his return, Drake apologised for having missed the Spanish treasure fleet by only twelve hours' sail—"the reason best known to God," he added philosophically. But the sack of St. Augustine had raised their spirits and the total of their booty.

III

Florida history is that of a tangle of nations trampling the ground, killing, being killed, returning to kill. It has passed under ten flags—Spain, France, England, Mexico, Confederate States, United States, Venezuela, the Argentine, and two local Republics. But Spain has left the deepest marks, with place-names and buildings. Modern architecture, as much influenced by a sense of tradition, as by a sense of fitness to the climate, has preserved the Spanish style in club, hotel, and private house.

As my train sped southwards I became aware of a pathetic procession of pseudo-Spanish houses, bold experiments in stucco, with grilled windows and vivid pantiles, that brought to this Atlantic seaboard memories of the Mediterranean shore. The Spaniard travelling in Florida sees memories

of his race everywhere, but then so does the Frenchman and the Englishman. Florida is a palimpsest on which one desperate adventurer after another endeavoured to wipe out the record of his predecessor. The worst used of all, the native Indians, betrayed, butchered, and cajoled, had been completely dispossessed of their native soil, except for a reservation in which their dying race is preserved. They still cling to the figment that they are unconquered.

The coast down which my train was running seemed to give little promise of the glories of which Florida is so proud. The land was flat, often only a few feet above the sea it skirted. Vast shallow lagoons stretched to low reefs, and everywhere the sandy soil was covered with a mat of palmettos, scrub oaks, straggling pines, and a dense, coarse undergrowth. Occasionally, out of this wilderness, appeared a paradisaical patch, of cultivated soil, and orange groves lit with the golden fruit that weighted down their branches. These intermittent oases, now flashing upon me with greater frequency as I sat talking to Gene Tunney, began to make more credible the successive land-booms which had caught and ruined some of the shrewdest men. These miles and miles of jungled wastes, of inland lakes, and pelican-haunted estuaries broiling under the sun, by the discipline of man are turned into places of incredible beauty, and under scientific cultivation, of inexhaustible wealth. I was soon to see the magnificent playgrounds that men, dreaming in millions and billions, had created out of the swamp and jungle, but it was not until later that I was to learn of the fertility of a soil that can often produce the fruits and vegetables of the earth with equal quality in half the normal time.

Something in the soil or air seems to affect men also. Florida has not ceased to create a history of prodigious activ-

ity. The battle still rages, but this time it is not a struggle of nations and races, but of individuals, as adventurous in spirit as any of the ancient Spanish conquistadors or English and French merchant-adventurers. Within recent years men have thrown vast fortunes into these jungle wastes, swamps, lagoons, and beaches. They have lost fortunes, come back and retrieved them, and lost them again.

The very railway on which I was now travelling, the Florida East Coast Railway, was the conception of a Titan. He dreamed of a Florida with a fortune in her sunshine which could be tapped by a railway that ran four hundred miles from Jacksonville to the end of the Florida mainland, and after that across one hundred and twenty miles of sea, over the scattered islands, to Key West, thereby creating the longest ocean railroad in the world. The dream was fulfilled, the man who conceived and carried through this stupendous task was Henry M. Flagler. He put Florida on the railroad.

Who was he, this man who had built the first great hotel, the *Ponce de Leon*, at St. Augustine, in 1866, and who never rested until, forty-six years later, the first train steamed into Key West? He died a year after he had ridden in his own private train from St. Augustine to Key West, a man triumphant, in his eighty-second year, over the ignorance and pessimism of others, over the obstructionary tactics of governments, and the whole array of Nature's tremendous forces, disease, fire, flood, and hurricane. The palatial hotels, the yacht basins, the beach resorts, the great estates, the playground of the millionaires of a vast continent, are all the outcome of Flagler's dream.

His start was true to the pattern of the American self-made man. He was born, neither with a spoon in his mouth

nor a father in a comfortable vicarage, which formed the jumping-off ground of so many of England's eminent men, who, lacking the spur of necessity, owed much to a thirst for fame rather than a flair for finance. Henry Flagler was the son of a poor Presbyterian minister near New York. At the age of fourteen he went west, as far as Ohio, where he settled in an unlovely village with the preposterous name of Republic. He worked there in a grocery store for five dollars a month. Learning early that no man ever gets rich by exploiting only himself, he moved from Republic to Bellona, started a grain commission business, but, not trusting to commission, put faith in whisky and invested his savings in a distillery.

Few men have failed with a beginning so alcoholic. In a sense he married the distillery. It belonged to Stephen Harkness, and Harkness had a daughter, Mary, whom Henry conveniently loved. Plainly he was taking no chances with Fate. At this point of his career luck entered, that young god who rarely meets with gratitude at the hands of men, for those he favours most are seldom willing to make acknowledgment, and grow positively scornful of the little fellow.

Henry's stroke of luck was meeting a commission agent employed by the Harkness distillery. His name was John D. Rockefeller. In 1865 John D. gave up selling whisky and turned to selling oil for lamps of Ohio farmers; he had smelt something stronger. He succeeded, and some years later, needing seventy thousand dollars for expansion, he went to his former associate, Flagler, and asked him to approach wealthy Stephen Harkness for the loan of that sum.

Harkness was shrewd. He knew his men, but believed in watching them. He loaned the money, but stipulated that

his son-in-law, Henry, should go into Rockefeller's office to handle the loan. It was thus that Flagler, early exhibiting a flair for finance, became Rockefeller's partner, and took financial charge of the rapidly growing business. He drew up its contracts, guarded its investments, and, by 1870, had outlined the powerful organisation which developed into the Standard Oil Company. Within fifteen years all the partners were millionaires.

It was here that Flagler demonstrated he was an American. A man of any other race would probably have bought a yacht and wintered at Cannes. To-day he would go for a world cruise, having placed his money in gilt-edge investments. Not so Henry Flagler, with millions stacked in the bank. He looked for a new world to conquer, found Florida, and decided to civilise it. Fate took him to St. Augustine, in 1883 a tiny settlement much in favour with consumptives. It was the southernmost point of the march of civilisation.

Flagler decided to develop it. He bought three small railways, amalgamated them, and founded the Florida East Coast Railway, along which Gene Tunney and myself, comfortably 'air conditioned' were now smoothly riding out of St. Augustine. The immense *Ponce de Leon Hotel* arose, at a cost of two million dollars. It drew people to St. Augustine to look at it.

Within seven years Flagler had established the fame of St. Augustine. In 1890 he marched on, he carried the railway down the coast, through the mangrove swamps, past impoverished trading posts and Indian camps, to Ormond. Then onwards he pushed again, and coming to Lake Worth, some two hundred miles farther down, which is not a lake at all but a waterway with two outlets to the sea, he found

a long sandy reef, about a mile off the mainland, which seemed ideal for a smart resort. In reality all it had was a long strip of sand, a beach facing the blue Gulf Stream, a few palms, and acres of brackish swamps.

He bought the sandy bar, cleared it, filled up the swamps, connected it with a bridge across Lake Worth to the mainland, and spent another two million dollars in building an hotel, *The Royal Poinciana*, the wonder of its day. Then he invited millionaires to bring their yachts and anchor in Lake Worth.

They came. They built villas on the sandy reef. Palm Beach was now the winter headquarters of the smart set, and its sovereignty remains unimpaired since the days when to write on the notepaper of *The Royal Poinciana* was to impress folks in the home town. Henry Flagler had marched triumphantly on from Republic, through Bellona and St. Augustine, to Palm Beach.

But he was only beginning, and what looked like a check became a spur. *The Ponce de Leon* was losing money. 1895 was a black year. There had been a great 'freeze' and the transport of oranges on his railway withered away. It was then that Mrs. Julie Sturtevant Tuttle, of Miami, showed spirit. She believed in Florida, and she believed passionately in Miami. Were oranges frozen black in the north? Then why didn't he come south to Miami, where it could not freeze? A friend of Flagler's, she begged him to extend his railway to Miami. She owned six hundred and forty acres at the mouth of the river there.

She was right about the climate. The orange country to the north had suffered severely. She lived meteorologically within the tropics. What she did not know then was that she lived in the hurricane belt also. Mrs. Tuttle's oranges

had not suffered from frost. Here was rich land to be tapped.

Mrs. Tuttle sent back Flagler's investigator with a bouquet of orange blossom, and she made an offer. She offered one hundred acres of her land if he would bring the railway to Miami. He accepted and the railway was there in a year, yet the place had not five hundred occupants. Flagler built another large hotel, and Miami became another Florida resort in which to escape the winter.

The tourists were flowing south. *The Royal Poinciana* at Palm Beach flourished at once. It was the mode, with its thirteen hundred rooms, its thirteen miles of corridors. It was built of wood and faced the inland water. A year later another great hotel, *The Breakers*, was built to accommodate the flood of moneyed guests. Palm Beach was made. It was the venue of fashion where the millionaires and their wives dined and, occasionally, bathed. On Palm Beach itself no horses were permitted. One rode in a cane chair propelled by a negro. One can do so to-day.

Still southwards went Flagler, down the tongue of land towards the toe of Florida. He startled the world by announcing that he would carry the railway one hundred and twenty miles over the sea, across the Keys, a scattered chain of islands like a dinosaur's vertebrate, to Key West itself, fronting the ninety-mile channel that divided the United States from Cuba. He would die happy, he announced in 1910, if he could live to ride on his own line into Key West. Two years later, in 1912, he had fulfilled his stupendous dream, and one year later he died, old, weary, very rich, and well content.

The railway never paid—it was a rich man's whim—but it helped to build Florida. In a sense it could never have

existed without the help of the Standard Oil Company. He spent forty-one million dollars on his railway, and yet he died with a fortune of seventy-five millions.

IV

As the train ran southwards I read in a newspaper bought in Jacksonville that the railway on which I now travelled no longer went to Key West. A terrific hurricane had swept over southern Florida last September, and carried away part of the railway over the Keys. Two hundred workmen, in a Government labour camp on the Keys, had been drowned, and a trail of death and ruin lay across those scattered islands. It had been decided that the cost of reconstruction was too great, and Flagler's railway could no more run to Key West. Reading this, I was glad that on one previous visit to Florida, coming from Cuba, I had ridden across that astonishing sea-causeway, surely one of the wonders of the world.

It was growing hotter. We had passed Ormond and, bordering another ocean reef, we came to Daytona Beach, where Henry Seagrave had created a world speed record by driving his car down that shining beach, thirty miles long, at a speed of over two hundred miles an hour.

I knew that beach from a former visit, and had bathed there on a New Year's Day, but it recalled to my mind only a ludicrous memory. "Eskimo Pie 5 Cents" ran a notice outside a shop. In a land of "hot dogs" and "barbecue" I wondered what variety of food this could mean, and my hosts immediately satisfied my curiosity by going in and buying me an "Eskimo Pie." It proved to be a ball of ice cream, covered with chocolate. Daytona Beach, for all its fame in the world of speed, will always denote for me the home of

"Eskimo pie." I must confess to motoring along the Florida highway licking that lump of ice-cream on a stick. In England I would have been hot with shame had I been detected in such an indignity.

But Daytona Beach's real title to fame, despite speed records and Eskimo Pie, must be the pelicans. They may be seen in many parts of Florida, sedate and rather dirty-looking fellows at times, but here they have a breeding-ground and gather in great flocks. All pelicans are supposed to be wise, probably an attribute accorded them from their philosophical air and their St. Simeon Stylites habit of contemplating on the top of a pillar or pile. The penguin and the pelican have a human air that makes us nervous concerning our superiority on the earth. They have practised Socialism for thousands of years, for they live in communities and fish on a co-operative basis.

Soon after leaving Daytona, looking across the sea estuary, I saw something that gave me my first thrill. It was a flock of flamingoes, with pink-tipped wings, long legs, and hooked beaks, feeding on the flat sands. More than anything I had yet seen they stood for the new world through which I now travelled; a shimmering of silver water, a flash of pink-and-white wings against a radiant blue sky, they epitomised Florida for me. A fortnight ago I had watched a dismal blackbird perched on my barren, dripping apple tree, a figure of black woe, and here were splendid birds spreading their pink-hued wings across an azure sky. I had escaped from winter beyond all doubt.

At New Smyrna the train stopped in a rather poor little station where a few palm trees tried to be festive in a waste of dust. There may have been beauty hidden away somewhere, but I could not see it. I despatched a telegram warn-

ing my host of my coming arrival in Miami, and wondered what homesick Greek had called this place New Smyrna, which had only the sun and the sea in common with its famous namesake. I did not know then, as I learned later, that it was no Greek but an Englishman who had founded and named this place.

Back in 1760, England, after a war with Spain in which the British had captured Havana, exchanged Cuba for Florida, and at the same time kept two treasure ships she had taken in Cuba with booty worth twenty-seven million dollars. Florida under British rule prospered rapidly during twenty-six years, and a number of colonies sprang up. Now, generally, wherever there's a British colony, there's a Scot. It is not for nothing the thistle is the national emblem. Like the dandelion, the thistle seeds blow whither they listeth, and the Scot floats over the earth, settling in the far corners. Naturally he settled in Florida. One, a McIntosh, actually made himself President of the short-lived Republic of Florida. Dr. Andrew Turnbull, another Scot, received a grant of land in 1767, and in honour of his wife, a wealthy Greek from Smyrna, he named his settlement New Smyrna.

Dr. Turnbull, to augment his colony, brought over Minorcans and Greeks. Quarrels broke out among the mixed settlers. Of those whom duels, mutinies, and murders spared, malaria took its toll. Political troubles were added to the domestic strife. England went to war with her North American colonies, and the Turnbull settlement was split by loyalists and revolutionists. The privateers of the latter attacked and seized the ships taking stores to the colonists, trade was dead, and starvation threatened the beleaguered settlement.

Dr. Turnbull, a man of tremendous energy, and driven

to ruthlessness in his desperation, applied measures that increased the misery of the colony. He could expect no help from England, who had her hands full. She was at war with France, Spain, and Holland, as well as with the American revolutionaries. Florida was a centre of loyalism, and in St. Augustine, on the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a mass meeting was held under the presidency of the British Governor, and two of the eminent leaders among the "rebels," John Quincy Adams, and John Hancock, were burned in effigy in the central square of the town.

New Smyrna was hard hit. It shrank from two thousand to eight hundred inhabitants, and then dwindled away. Turnbull, his wife, and friends lost everything they had invested. It revived slightly when Florida, later, experienced its first boom from the influx from Georgia, Carolina, and other States of the defeated colonists faithful to the British crown. But even they could not make a success of the Turnbull experiment, and the final blow was the complete disregard of the faithful colonists' rights when England, at the conclusion of her war with Spain in 1783, made an unwise exchange with Spain of the Bahamas for Florida.

Under the Spanish rule the country rapidly deteriorated, and such colonists as had remained were driven by high taxation and unjust laws to migrate to the Bahamas, which were free from Spanish incompetence, raids of the Indian tribes, and where slaves could not run away, as was ever the case in Florida, with the surrounding jungles offering a refuge.

But names are tenacious things, and here I was, on the platform of New Smyrna, sending off a telegram to my host in Miami. One more change of flag came to the town after the rule of Spain. In 1821 Spain was bought out by the

United States. The former was unfortunate to the end. A vessel carrying five million dollars in gold, paid by the United States to Spain, was wrecked, and never recovered, near the mouth of the Suwanee River.

The Suwanee River? Yes, this is our old friend of the Victorian musical evening. Miss Amelia, who rendered the solo "Way down upon the Suwanee River" with such feeling, had no idea where the river rose, where it went, nor where it had gone 'way down' when her heart was weary. Vaguely she knew it was an American river, and the voting among the more intelligent would have placed it in Georgia, which would have been correct. But Florida can claim that the world-famous song really belongs to her, for way down upon the Suwanee River brings us well out of Georgia into Florida, where, for over a hundred miles, it finds its way into the Mexican Gulf. It is not too fanciful to suggest that we English may have a little of that famous drawing-room river washing our shores, brought across by the Gulf Stream. A far-fetched conceit, if you please, but Florida breeds and justifies the wildest fancies, as we shall see. In this extraordinary land the lie you invent in the morning becomes true by evening.

I lost the genial Gene at Hope Sound. His car disappeared down one of Florida's uncountable avenues of palm trees.

It is not sufficient in Florida to say 'palm trees.' It has over thirty varieties. There are, first and foremost, the coconut palms, once inadvertently imported, the royal palms, also imported, which can grow to a height of one hundred and twenty feet, the Washingtonian palms, also very tall, the date palms that spread themselves, the sago palms, the silver palms, and, covering Florida wherever the soil is poor

and coarse, the low palmetto which runs for miles and miles and gives a wild and antagonistic air to the landscape.

When you buy a Florida house you do not, like the Englishman gone rustic, buy apple trees and cherry trees, or plant a box hedge up your garden path. You buy palms and make your retreat as leafy as possible, or, if you have money to spend, make your approach as royal as possible. The planting of palms is not easy. First you must dynamite a hole in the limestone rock that probably lies close under the scrub you have cleared away. Then the palm arrives on a lorry, an enormous object with its roots bound up in sacking. When it is up, it must be held up, and when ultimately it is capable of supporting itself a hurricane may come along and blow it down. Everywhere one sees palm trees held up by wires spread around like the ribs of an umbrella.

Then, also, palms do not necessarily lead an upright life: many of them develop a deep curve, and since they taper upwards from the bottom, their smooth grey bodies remind one of the elephant's trunk. It is possible for a private palm avenue to cost as much as the house to which it leads. When the palm tree has conveniently propagated itself, the architect adapts the house to the palms that surround it.

Everywhere in Florida one is palm conscious. After all, it is the symbol of the sun by which all Florida flourishes. My host, towards whom I was now journeying, lived in Coconut Grove, a superior suburb of Miami with numerous natural palm trees. The Florida coast, it is said, was palminated as a result of a wreck. Around 1879 a Spanish ship with a cargo of coconuts had come to grief on the coast. The fertile soil and the hot sun did the rest.

The coconut palm produces eighty to one hundred coconuts annually, with the result that in the coconut grove dis-

tracts they lie about on the ground and owners are grateful if you will take one away. In a mood of excitement at seeing my first coconut lying under a tree, I took one, and found that I had set myself an hour's work to open it. The nut itself is encased in a light-green shell, the size and shape of a Rugby football, and the dark-brown shell with which we are familiar lies at the heart of a mass of coarse yellow fibre which has to be chopped away. It follows that the nut is scarcely worth the game, and Florida housewives, with hundreds of coconuts lying around, prefer to send to the grocery store for five cents' worth of chopped coconut. The leaves of the trees are very popular for thatching summer-houses, and making baskets.

Palm trees, palm trees, palm trees. The train slipped by them. From a wilderness of palmettos, from neat strips of vegetable gardens, from orderly groves where the golden oranges shone amid their green foliage, man's edifices arose in a thousand varieties. Now Spain, now Old England, now Mexico, Italy, France, Bavaria, Morocco, Palestine, and even Dahomey, appeared in limestone, wood, concrete, and plaster.

It was all very wrong, very bastard, but in this brilliant sunshine it was forgivable and even exhilarating. Just as drab tourists from a grey northern clime blossom forth into riotous garments and become strange objects in a foreign landscape, encouraged by the holiday spirit and the brilliant sun, so here, one felt, people on holiday from all over the earth had let themselves go, and played at building houses.

But as yet I had no conception of Florida's amazing architectural jazz spirit. Revelations awaited me which defeated adequate description, so incredible was the scene. For the

present I was being transported through noonday sunshine at a speed that permitted no close investigation of the surprises and wonders in store. Already I was losing touch with reality. Somewhere near Vero Beach a giant placard had invited me, or perhaps one should say incited me, to visit the Jungle Gardens—

Eighty acres of the exotic scenery you always expected of Florida.

Your morning coffee.

Air plants of the pineapple family living in the air, on air.
Vanilla for your cakes.

Trees with leaves big enough for umbrellas.

Henna and Incense plants.

A plant so sensitive it actually shrinks from human beings.
Trees from which your rubber tyres are made.

The Crown of Thorns plant which makes the Crucifixion of Christ too real.

Beautiful water lilies, the Leading Ladies of the Jungle.

Egyptian Bulrushes bringing the story of Moses to us more vividly.

Had I wished, I had no opportunity of viewing this jumble of Moses, the Crucifixion, and Leading Ladies of the Jungle. Every mile brought a fresh surprise, and then, skirting Lake Worth, the sea inlet which is not a lake, with a serrated sky-line of vast hotels embossed in forests of palms, the train arrived at West Palm Beach. Across that mile strip of blue water, on its long, low island, lay Palm Beach, where for a few months of the year there are concentrated more millionaires to the acre than anywhere else on earth, the playground *par excellence* of Society from the New and Old Worlds. Sir Francis Drake looted ten thousand dollars

from the sack of St. Augustine. A modern Drake could loot as much from one of the gardens of these villas.

A touch of the ridiculous met the passengers who descended at West Palm Beach. Nigger minstrels were there, with banjo, cornet, bassoon, and ukelele. They were the real thing, but, to mark their distinction from the sham niggers of our own palmless beaches, no immaculate white linen suits emphasised the colour of their black faces. They had chosen, instead, to wear black Eton suits that, except for large white buttons, no Etonian would have quarrelled with. In one respect they erred—they wore straw hats instead of top-hats. For the rest they were a delight to the eye and the ear. They enhanced the tropical note and fitted perfectly into a background of hibiscus in scarlet bloom.

One of them, instantly aware that I was newly come from the realm of the pale-faced, beckoned his troupe to follow. In front of my window, after smilingly raising his straw hat in my honour and giving me a ten-toothed golden smile, he put down a little mat. In his right hand he dangled delicately a thin short wand. I watched, absorbed, while the five musicians made a semicircle behind him. Was he going to perform some voodoo rite? Was I going to have under my nose another revelation of the jungle, companion to the Crown of Thorns, the Leading Ladies, and the bulrushes of Moses? No, he proceeded to perform an eccentric dance on the little mat as the band played a lively jazz tune. This finished, my contribution was collected in the straw hat. As the train drew out the negro jazz band—not minstrel at all unless a humming of tunes constitutes minstrels—played *Moon over Miami*.

I had now entered the last stage of my journey, but West Palm Beach had not faded behind me when a large way-

side advertisement, wedged in between a Spanish villa and an Old Colonial style house with colonnaded portico, informed me that Mr. Mather sold 'Good and Bad Furniture.' For the rest of my stay I never escaped from this wayside declaration of astonishing honesty in business, and I confess that Mr. Mather almost achieved his intention, for I began to pine for a sight of some of his bad furniture.

At half-past three in the hot January afternoon my long journey was drawing to a close. The negro Pullman-car attendant, in shiny blue trousers and white linen jacket, took my hat and brushed it, after which he invited me to the end of the car in order to brush me down. It was all quite unnecessary in an air-conditioned train, but habit dies hard, and the brushing ceremony is a signal for passengers to get ready their tips.

The train began to slow down. Could this be Miami, and if so, how dreadful! Gaunt yellow buildings towered to the sky, we ran through a wretched back suburb of tumble-down wooden shanties, with rotten wood porches fronting roads little better than dust tracks. The houses and the porches were filled with negroes, most of them dozing in the afternoon sun. This was negro town, one of those depressed coloured suburbs of so many cities of the southern States.

The train stopped with a jerk, the iron platform of our car went down with a bang, the attendant descended with the ceremonial foot-stool, placed between the car and the earth, and we filed out, depositing our tips in the black palm.

But was this really Miami, enchanted city of our journey's end? Where were the palms, the exotic flowers, the luscious fruits? Even the station had not broken into the Arab-

cum-Spanish stucco architecture so dear to the builders of Florida. The long train had deposited me far up a loose gravel track. Ahead stretched a car park crammed with motor-cars. There was no shade, no feathery palms, no soft music, not even of a coloured jazz band.

My heart sank as I looked up at the garish skyscrapers and heard the hum of traffic all around. Then I forgot my disappointment on the sudden appearance of my host, whose kind and familiar face wore a smile as warm as the sun beating down upon us. A scrimmage of coloured porters with bags, a slamming of automobile doors, a starting-up of engines, and then a plunge into the typical American Main Street, packed with cars and dense with a coatless crowd on the pavements. Traffic lights blinked, motor police tore by on roaring motor-cycles, and we joined a stream of cars floating down a sunless chasm deep between two cliffs of masonry. Not a palm, not a pelican, not a pineapple anywhere. My genial host plied me with questions. The perspiration began to trickle down my face.

Suddenly we came to an open park and a bridge. In one revelation I saw palm trees, blue water, bright sails, and, over all, the highest, widest, sunniest sky, with great snowy clouds massed under a radiant canopy of unfathomable blue. Away in the distance, across the turquoise water, high towers and buildings seemed to float between earth and sky.

"That," said my host, "is Miami Beach. But we are going now to Coconut Grove."

I half closed my eyes against the blinding light, and rested them on the dark neck of our coloured chauffeur. We passed a house with a scarlet hibiscus hedge; an avenue of royal poinciana trees opened before us. There was a blaze of azaleas, and vistas of bougainvillæa. Giant magnolias

lifted their creamy cups to the sky, a bank of poinsettias shone in the shadow of a giant eucalyptus tree. And everywhere the houses vied with the flowers, houses that seemed to have come from the French Riviera, the Italian lakes, the Adriatic shore, and the thyme-scented valleys of Greece.