

## CHAPTER XV

### ONE HUNDRED MILLION ORANGES

#### I

It had been arranged for me to be collected by my Orlando friends at the little beach village of Titusville, one hundred and fifty miles north of Palm Beach. In the late afternoon I alighted on a long desolate platform to find a motor-car from Orlando awaiting me. All around, above the plantations of pines and palms, the glow of sunset had begun to crimson the sky. I recalled the difference from my previous arrival at Titusville, six years ago.

Then I had descended from my sleeping compartment, having travelled overnight from Cuba and Key West. I alighted in a sleeping village. The crimson dawn was breaking over the horizon, the stars were still bright. I crossed the lawn of a house and stood by a vast expanse of water, the Indian River, which divided the mainland from a distant reef on which I could hear, in the quiet of dawn, the murmur of the sea. That soft dawn, broken by the beating of an early paddle boat, and the flight of herons, has never faded from my memory. The swift growth of light, the brilliant crimson and green of the clouds, the dark palms suddenly catching the fire of the sun, the opalescent water shining brighter as the stars faded, and then the rushing of the sun over the world's rim, made on me a lasting impression.

I thought of that early-morning arrival as we now motored across the flat marshland in the dying light. Orlando was fifty miles inland. I should reach the town of oranges in darkness. But that did not matter, for I knew the scene well, and felt as if I were going home.

## II

My host is a fortunate man. He lives in a lovely town, he owns hundreds of acres, he grows millions of oranges, he loves his business. But it is not for these things I account him fortunate. The Doctor, as everybody calls him, for he migrated from medicine to orange growing, has been blessed with a gift beyond even a wise man's control. He has two hard-working, intelligent sons who have only one ambition in life, to carry on, even more successfully, the orange-growing business they have inherited from him. There is a perversity of Fate that often makes the son abhor the life work of the father. The result is misery to both. If there is not an open break, the son feels dra-gooned by loyalty, the father is conscious that his legacy is scorned.

For Howard and Walter, the Doctor's sons, the orange is the alpha and omega of life. They watch the sky, the barometer, the pests, with a vigilance that never falters. They have grown up among oranges, they will die among oranges. And watching their daily lives among these lovely groves of golden fruit, their passion for the Florida soil, their pride in the healthy crop, I account them among the most fortunate of men. Who would not pass a life in sunshine, where daily routine takes one from grove to grove, through perfumed air, through a bright world of white blossom and green leaves, and golden mountains of gathered oranges?

Worries there are, for Nature is merciless to the negligent cultivator of her gifts, she is cruel and wayward, and with a frost will threaten ruin, or destroy a year's labour. But, all things considered, observing, the world over, the many ways in which men labour for livelihood, I account my friends fortunate in the lines of their fate.

Orange County, appropriately named, in which Orlando is situated, has a thousand lakes. On one of these lakes, which abound in the town itself, my host's house is situated. The lake is oval, rimmed with grass, and is surrounded by a red-brick boulevard, and by lovely villas standing back behind gardens filled with flowers and flanked with palm trees, live oaks, cypresses, and cedars. The house has an old Colonial façade, Ionic white pillars surmounted by a pediment, a covered terrace, a view over the lake, and a garden with symmetrical palms. But for a corner tower, the house, seen across the lake through the tropical foliage, might be mistaken for a Greek temple.

All round the house there are nearly a hundred varieties of my hostess's azaleas, for which she has a passion. When I emerged into the garden, the morning after my arrival, they were all in full bloom, in the month of February. Over the great tree that grew at the back of the house, the *bigonia venusta* fell in a sheet of orange flame.

Inside the house I became a member of the family and contributed my share to the hearty commotion in which we all lived. Up on the landing the Doctor would appear, shouting his opinions on everything under the sun. "So you are here again!—I'll have to go and visit that dreadful family, but my! won't I be glad when it's all over!—that's what I expect you've said to yourself!"

"You just listen to that man! Why, aren't you ashamed to



talk to your guest in that fashion!" cried my hostess at the foot of the stairs.

"And when are you going?" cried the Doctor, beaming. "Or are you here for the season?"

"Don't take any notice of pop," said Walter, coming in at the door.

"They're all mad in this house," said my hostess, rippling with laughter. "Do you wonder how I've survived?"

"Cecil just hasn't to take any notice of us," added Howard, warningly, squatting on an elephant's foot he brought from India.

"Listen, you boys—do you like crab-meat?" called the Doctor, over the banisters.

"You're not going to eat that crab-meat now! There's a perfectly good dinner prepared," said my hostess.

"Crab-meat!" said Walter.

"Crab-meat!" said Howard.

"Crab-meat!" said the Doctor. "And what crab-meat!"

"Crab-meat!" said I.

"What a house! What a family! I'll never prepare another dinner again!" declared my hostess.

Through all this debate on crab-meat six canaries were shrilling at the top of their voices.

We all trooped in to crab-meat, among many delicacies. We dined at two in the afternoon, with blinds drawn against the sun, and the chandelier lit. The meal was eaten to a riotous debate. None of us agreed about anything. None of us had any resemblance to each other in tastes, opinions, or appearance. Walter is a hefty young man, the baby of the family. He is the hunter of the family. He delights in shooting and hunting. He wears heavy laced-up knee-boots, and riding breeches, with an enormous leather belt that

bristles with knives and revolvers. He drives a car with several guns in the door pockets, and will take a pot shot at a hawk or buzzard through the saloon window, as he rushes to inspect an orange grove. You think him a rough, tough guy, proud of his physical strength, until you see him handle a specimen orange, or hear him talk about grafting, or planting new groves. Then he reveals the delicate touch of the connoisseur and his voice has the tones of a lover.

Howard, the elder, tall, slim, dark-eyed, has not altered much since I first met him, in Freshman Dormitory, Harvard, fifteen years ago, a boy with a mop of black curly hair, a quick mind, and a gentle manner. He used to disappear to his room to practise the violin, and had a passion for things Chinese. To-day, after travelling round the world, he has the family passion for orange growing. He attends to the indoor administration, Walter to the outdoor. They are a perfect combination. The Doctor watches with a quick eye, treats them with absolute equality, and encourages them to run the show. Every morning there is a bathroom conference between father and sons. It is an astonishing medley of divergent opinions, stormy arguments, all-round affability, and general nudity. "I'm telling you boys!" declared the Doctor. "Oh, pop, you're all wrong!" retorts Walter. "I think——" interjects Howard.

"Now what is all that about!" exclaims my hostess, meeting me on the landing. "Did you ever hear such a noise! This certainly is a madhouse!"

"Aw-haw-haw-haw!" contributes the parrot.

"Tweet-tweet-tweet-tweet-tweet-tweet," sing the canaries.

A happy inmate of the madhouse, I was conscious all the time of sunshine inside and outside.

## III

"Come along down to the orange groves!" called Walter, in his car in the courtyard. "They're picking."

We start off. The morning is brilliantly sunny. I have to wear smoked glasses against the light. We motor through miles and miles of flat land covered with scrub and pine trees. The land is often burned black, and one sees acre on acre of blackened tree trunks and dead ground.

"Forest fires?" I asked.

"No—those crazy cattle farmers. They're destroying Florida. They burn up the land to produce a fresh growth for the cattle. They burnt it up for a second growth. After a third burning the land's no good for cattle or man. Thousands of acres are being laid waste."

"And are they allowed to burn up all these pine trees?"

"Yes—and to let their cows stray over the road. You can be killed on these roads by straying cattle, and you can't claim damages; but if you kill a cow, God help you. You'd think this was India, land of the sacred cow!"

"But can't you stop it? Don't the laws——"

"Laws!" ejaculated Walter, slowing slightly, and feeling for a gun in the door pocket. "Florida was settled by cattle farmers. All the laws were made for them, and a politician knows it's more than his life is worth to propose changing them. Just take the wheel a moment."

A hawk circled overhead. Walter took aim. The bird dropped.

"Public Enemy No. 1," said Walter, jerking out an empty cartridge, and taking over the wheel.

He switched on the radio. We were so happy running



through the radiant morning that a suggestion of music fitted in with our light spirits.

*Moon over Miami*  
*Shine on my love and me,*  
*That we—*

"Oh!" I said, turning the dial.

". . . and the new life will make you so happy. Your dirty sins will leave you in a bath of righteousness, and you will rise up, unspotted, all washed in the . . ."

"Goodness gracious!" I said, as an excited voice poured out a spate of words.

"Orlando's hot-gospel hour—that's a revivalist advertising his business," explained Walter.

Another turn of the dial took us to the Calumet Baking Power Company's symphony programme.

We swept down the long shining road to the music of Tschaikowsky's *Casse-Noisette*.

We were now surrounded by orange groves. They ran for mile on mile in green orderly rows, thick with white blossom and golden fruit. We turned in at a gate, ran over white, sandy loam, and halted in an avenue of trees. Pickers on ladders, and standing, were deftly snipping oranges off the laden branches. Oranges are never pulled off the tree, it injures them. The pickers worked in crews, thirty to forty in a crew. Strapped to them were long canvas bags, folded at the bottom, and with a spring rubber rim at the top to save damaging the fruit as the picker with one action of his clippers, jumped the oranges into the bag. One picker will average ten thousand oranges a day. He empties his bag into boxes bearing his ticket. A motor-lorry with six wheels,

designed to run over sand, collects the boxes and carries them to the packing house.

My friend leans out of the car, plucks an orange, and cuts it in half.

"Try this!" he says.

The juice runs down my chin, it is sun-warm, fragrant and delicious.

Walter repeats the invitation half a dozen times. We throw away scarcely tasted oranges.

We come to a golden mountain, a pyramid of oranges.

"Why aren't they in boxes?" I ask.

"Throw-outs—we only pack perfect oranges."

"Can't you can them?"

"We only can flawless oranges," he replies. "They'll go under the trees for manure."

"Why do you let weeds grow under your orange trees?" I asked, pointing to some tall weeds. Elsewhere the groves were perfectly dressed and furrowed.

I learned that my 'weed' was there for a purpose. It took nitrogen out of the air, and transferring it to its roots, enriched the soil.

I asked about pests. The birthmark on an orange is due to the aphid on the previous year's blossom. Walter picked me an orange and showed me a black spot on it. I had seen such spots many times on oranges.

"That isn't an insect?" I asked.

"No—but it's its house. Look!"

He took a knife, raised the black spot, and applied a magnifying glass. Three yellow insects squirmed there.

"That's red scale—they sit in their house waiting until the peel gets rottener and rottener, and then in they go, finding



life juicier and juicier. We get rid of them by spraying the trees with oil emulsion. They can't breathe through that, and it smothers them."

I picked another orange, and found a part of the peel discoloured, rather like a birthmark.

"That's rust mite," said Walter. "We cure it by dusting the trees with flowers of sulphur."

"That must be a big job," I said, looking down an endless vista of orange trees.

"We do it by aeroplane. The pilot flies with his wings just a foot above the tree-tops, and his fuselage hanging down in the avenue between. The sulphur's blown out at the back by a fan."

We walked down the groves until we came to a pine forest. A track through the trees brought us to the edge of a large lake shimmering in sunlight. All around us lay the untouched woods. The scene was the same as the Indian hunter must have known before even the foot of a white man trod the Florida soil.

Walter walked to a broken trunk and fixed a playing card edgeways on it. Then, withdrawing a hundred yards, he pulled out a revolver and took aim. I could not see the card. At the third shot he nicked it. Some startled birds flew out of the trees. Then there was nothing but silence and sunshine again.

We retraced our steps, got into the car, motored to another orange grove. There was a brief conference with the foreman picker. We called at a workman's chalet, beautifully set in a pine woodland, overlooking a lake. The small boy was ill. Walter entered. He knew the name of everyone in the house. They welcomed him with friendly faces.

"We look after our people as well as we look after our

oranges," he said, when we had left and were discussing labour conditions. Walter swelled out his great chest. "What more does a man want, good air, sunshine, a decent house, oranges!" "What more!" I echoed.

We motored another five miles and turned in at more orange groves. The men were picking deep amid the scented blossom. I noticed an iron ball with a fuse, and some pine logs scattered under the trees. They were for fires to ward off frost when the temperature fell. A 'freeze' is a ruinous matter and the thermometer is watched with anxiety. A frost, with a temperature of  $34^{\circ}$ - $36^{\circ}$  Fahr. is fatal to blossom, of  $25^{\circ}$ - $28^{\circ}$ , fatal to the tree, and of  $32^{\circ}$ , blackens the fruit. At a temperature of  $28^{\circ}$  the fires and oil pots are lit to safeguard the groves. The anxious period for trees is from December to February; for blossom and fruit, from February to April. After that the grower breathes freely.

## IV

"This morning we will go to Paradise Island," said Walter, as I got into the car.

"Aren't we there all the time?" I could not help replying.

"Ah, wait until you see it—we've just bought it."

"Are you going to buy all Florida?" I asked.

"This is my pet island—I'd like to live on it."

But I had already seen a dozen lake sites, with pine-wood, and orange groves, and gentle shelving shores. The previous day we had visited a friend whose house looked over a lake, from which the orange groves radiated symmetrically. We had been down to his landing pier and fed large blue catfish, and swung ourselves on a verandah deep in cyclamen and wistaria. Ever since I had first come to visit my friends they had tempted me with the question, "Wouldn't you like to

live on that lake? We could build you a house, in the pine-woods, and you could have your boat on your own lake and grow oranges, and write books."

"Do you imagine I should ever write anything?" I replied. "I should become a beach-comber. With fish at my front door and fruit at my back, with pine logs for fires, and the sun to heat my hot water, I should go completely native."

"Do you a world of good!" said Walter, slapping me across the back. "Oh, boy!"

He swelled out his chest and thumped it, and then suddenly reached for his gun.

"I can't think why you always want to kill something. Life's good for other creatures, too," I said.

Walter gave me a puzzled look.

"Well—I don't know why I don't like reading and music and art, and all that sort of stuff—it just puzzles me to death. But I do like to shoot things, and fish. I'm kind of built that way, eh?"

He gave me a funny little smile, and potted his bird.

"And you grow magnificent oranges," I said, "and subdue wild land, and create labour, which is better than writing books. You're the raw stuff of life."

"Raw?" queried Walter, again suspicious of this odd literary fellow.

"Basic then!"

"Gee, you're a lad!" exclaimed Walter, thumping me on the back. "Come and live here!"

v

My host, with five thousand acres of groves, is the largest individual grower of oranges, grapefruit, and tangerines in the world. The annual output is around a hundred million



oranges a year. In the six years between my visits I have seen him clear a piece of forest land, plant it, build workmen's houses, a packing house, and a railway with its own station and post office. All this has been built up on oranges, grapefruit, and tangerines, which, I was astonished to learn, can be grown on the same tree if desired, since it is all a matter of grafting.

I took a lesson in grafting. It is a neat bit of tree surgery. When grapefruit trees get too large or too old, they can be cut down, and made to grow oranges. First the trunk is cut off at a height of two or three feet. An orange slip is taken, with an eye, and slipped into the slit bark of the old trunk. The sap feeds the bud and in three years the old grapefruit tree will produce oranges.

How is an orange grove planted? First of all the land must be well chosen. There are sad stories of enterprising settlers sinking their small capital, and ceaseless labour, into hopeless soil. The most promising land is that which bears heavy pine and thick oak trees, or grows magnolias. The acres of palmetto which are offered so cheap to the newcomer are useless. The best soil is a Norfolk sand loam. A spring or artesian water source is essential for pipe irrigation.

An orange tree is a thing of nine years' total growth before it bears fruit. The root stocks must be two years old. Some of these are the rough lemon, which are budded with tangerines, oranges, or grapefruit after two years' growth. The lemon root stocks are somewhat liable to disease. The sour orange is more hardy, it is slower in growth, needs good soil, but produces fine fruit. On the root stock the bud must have two years' growth. The tree is now ready for transplanting in the grove.

The ground having been cleared and well ploughed, the plan of the grove is carefully fixed, with a proper distance between each tree, and a wide avenue between each line, a pattern of twenty-five feet by thirty feet being favoured. From the top of a water tower I have seen orange groves stretching to the horizon all round which looked like a giant's solitaire board, a triumph of geometric exactitude.

The budded root stock is now planted according to plan, in a hole eighteen inches deep and three feet square. It is planted deep, up to the crown root, with the soil banked up to within eight inches of the top. It must be fertilised every four months, irrigated, sprayed and dusted. In its fifth year the tree will come into commercial bearing. A tree of six years' bearing growth will produce a thousand oranges, and of full growth, up to seven thousand oranges, if it escapes frost or disease. Even in Florida frost is a menace. In 1895 it was so severe that it wiped out the entire citrus production for some years.

The life of an orange tree is about forty years, but I have seen a grove of sixty years still bearing. It had been planted by some early settlers in the district and was a most lovely sight with its dark tangled boughs, deep shadows, and metallic green leaves. Nearby was a small cemetery, a pathetic memorial of forgotten pioneers, now deep in the shadow of the surviving grove. When I commented on the peacefulness of the place, miles away from human habitation, my friend remarked, "Yes, but there was a deadly feud between them, and five of them were shot up."

It is astonishing the weight of fruit that a tree will carry. A sixteen-foot grapefruit tree will take a load of one thousand pounds, and a forty-foot tree, which was abnormally old—it was over a hundred years—was shown to me carrying



over seven thousand pounds of fruit. Unlike grapefruit and orange, tangerine trees are brittle. Some of them are wired to support their branches when they get old. Rings are screwed into the branches and wires from these are drawn up through a central ring on the trunk, roundabout fashion.

One of the problems of orange growing is that of keeping the fruit from growing too large. Strange as it seems, the public will not buy large oranges or grapefruit; moreover they will not buy oranges with pale skins, so they have to be coloured.

When the pickers' boxes are filled they are taken to the packing factory, where they are graded for quality by hand, and for size by machinery. In the enormous packing factory I watched thousands of oranges moving along an endless track, climbing up escalators, passing through washing machines, drying machines, running down chutes, jostled over rollers, and picked out by human hands, whence they went into boxes of various sizes. These were automatically nailed down, and then wheeled out to the refrigerator car on the railway siding. Some of the oranges had been shut up in a dark fumigator in order to absorb complexions higher than that given by the sun; for, like men, oranges are considered handsome when slightly bronzed, and an orange with an anæmic skin gets left on the shelf.

After an hour's drive we came to Paradise Island. But first we had to cross in a launch. The island was one hundred and twenty acres in the middle of a lake sixteen miles long. In the midst of a glorious wood, a house had been built, where an Englishman's family had dwelt for many years. The groves were behind the house. The island possessed its own flowing spring water. Set there in its frame of trees, amid the blue water, it was well named.



## VI

Walking down Rosalind Avenue one morning in the first week of March, having paused to admire a great screen of sweet peas that blazed in a garden by Lake Eola, I passed the postman on his round, and decorously raised my hat.

"Whatever did you do that for?" asked my astonished friend. "Do you raise your hat to postmen in England?"

"No—never. But I always do in Florida," I replied.

"Why?"

"They might be royal," I said.

"Royal!"

I saw that I had to explain my eccentric conduct.

A little time ago a friend of mine bought a country house in the Chiltern Hills where I live. It is called "Polidori's," a name so odd that I began to investigate its history. It transpired that between 1836-39 an Italian named Gaetano Polidori came to live there with his family. He was a remarkable old man with two very remarkable grandchildren who used to come down from London to visit him, and play in his garden. The names were Dante Gabriele Rossetti, and his sister, Christina.

The Polidoris and the Rossettis had a number of Italian friends, refugees, like Christina's father who had held an official position under Ferdinand Ist of the Two Sicilies. When Ferdinand retired to Sicily and Joseph Bonaparte reigned, Rossetti stayed on, and when, later, Napoleon's great cavalry leader, Joachim Murat, was created King of Naples, he still held office. But when Ferdinand was restored, after Napoleon's downfall, Rossetti fled, and went, eventually, to London.

Joachim Murat, or King Joachim Napoleon, as he was called, had married Napoleon's sister, Caroline, by whom he had several children. Napoleon put him on the throne of Naples, but when his brother-in-law's star began to wane, Murat began intriguing with the Allies, and was ready to make a deal to save his throne. He was an extraordinary mixture of a popinjay, a dandy, a man of heroic courage, and a fool. He deserted Napoleon, and then rallied to him, after the escape from Elba. But Napoleon refused to accept the services of a deserter from his cause. To his great regret later, for he expressed the opinion that Murat's genius and influence as a cavalry leader would have reversed the verdict at Waterloo.

This battle ended Napoleon's adventure, and Murat had fallen between two stools. His wife, Caroline, with her children, took refuge at Trieste, under the protection of the Emperor of Austria, who now offered the ex-King of Naples an asylum if he renounced his title. But Murat was planning a desperate attempt to regain his kingdom. His enterprise was doomed from the start. He was miserably caught on the shores of Calabria and tried by a summary court-martial for inciting a civil war and taking arms against the restored King of the Two Sicilies. He was sentenced to death, and was shot an hour later, meeting his end with smiling courage. Just before he received the bullets in his heart he wrote a farewell letter to his wife.

"My dear Caroline,

"My last hour is come. In a few minutes I shall have ceased to live; in a few minutes you will no longer have a husband. Never forget me, my life has not been stained by any injustice. Adieu, my Achille, adieu, my Letitia, adieu, my Lucien, adieu my Louise . . ."

To return to the Polidoris and Rossettis. Among the refugees from Italy who were their friends there was one extraordinary man called Benedetto Sangiovanni, a great favourite of the Rossetti children. When young Dante Gabriel, quoting Shakespeare, picked up a chisel and, in an excess of zeal, stabbed himself, it was Sangiovanni, at grandfather Polidori's, who probed the wound and healed it.

He had had an extraordinary life. He had been at the Neapolitan Court, as captain of a band for suppressing brigandage, and was known to the Bonapartes. He now earned a desperate living in London as a modeller in plaster and clay, but earlier, in 1833, he had been to America, to look after an estate and its slaves.

When King Joachim wrote his last letter to his family, he addressed his eldest son, "Adieu, my Achille." This boy, created Duke of Cleves when Napoleon made his father Duke of Berg, before promoting him to the throne of Naples, was now known as Prince Achille Murat and lived with his mother, ex-Queen Caroline, at Trieste.

At the age of twenty-two he emigrated to America, in 1823, being exiled from France and Italy. He was advised to settle in Florida, and he went to Tallahassee and bought a plantation which he called 'Lipona' from the title assumed by his mother, an anagram of 'Napoli,' her lost kingdom. At Tallahassee he met and fell in love with a very beautiful young widow, Kate Willis Gray, a great-niece of Washington. As he was untidy in his appearance, and eccentric, she at first refused him, but his affectionate nature and remarkable gifts triumphed over her doubts. They were greatly attached to each other, and were married in 1826. In this year he was appointed the postmaster of Tallahassee.

Prince Achille settled down to a pleasant life among his



neighbours, but he had many troubles and depended upon a remittance from his mother. He indulged in his literary tastes and published a number of books on the constitution and politics of the United States. He also established his reputation for eccentricity. His wife returned home one day to find him boiling all her clothes in a vat, to test the merits of a vegetable dye he had discovered. Radiant with success, he greeted her, exclaiming, "Oh, Kate, I've made all your clothes a beautiful pink! You'll look so lovely in them!" He also experimented on the stomachs of his guests. He believed every animal was edible, and on one occasion served them with alligator tail soup, roast turkey buzzard, stuffed owl, rattlesnake pie, and fried frogstools. After the dinner he observed, "Alligator tail soup will do, but the turkey buzzard isn't good."

Prince Achille spoke seven languages, chewed tobacco, and was unclean in his person. His love of cards often placed him in an embarrassing condition until the next remittance arrived from his mother. He was friendly with all his neighbours, who called him Colonel Murat, a title he preferred. He later saw service in the Florida Indian war.

A year after his marriage he went to Europe with his bride, paying a visit en route to ex-King Joseph Bonapart, who had settled in royal state near Bordentown, New Jersey. On the way north by boat from St. Augustine to Charlestown, he met Emerson, who was delighted with him. They discussed philosophical subjects, and later they corresponded. The ex-King Joseph was enchanted by Prince Achille's wife.

The young folks eventually arrived in Belgium, where the Prince took a commission in a Belgium regiment, but fears of Napoleonic plots caused him to be moved on. He and his wife then went to England, staying with the Duke and

Duchess of St. Albans, and, later, made London their home, where they met the French imperial family in exile. Louis Napoleon was their constant guest. "When I am Emperor, Cousin Kate," he said to Achille's lovely wife, "you shall have a chateau and everything you want in return for your kindness to me now."

But Florida attracted the pair, and after two years' absence they returned, living first in St. Augustine, where Louis Napoleon was on his way to visit them when called back by the death of his mother.

Prince Achille now decided to study law, and after his admission to the Bar he moved to New Orleans, entering into a partnership. He also acquired a sugar plantation near the Mississippi River. Alas! the poor Prince was no business man. He failed in the law, he failed as a sugar planter, and was deep in financial trouble when he heard of the death of his mother in her palace at Florence.

The Prince hurried off to Florence. It is strange to think that, had the Bonaparte properties not been confiscated, he would now have inherited the Elysée, the home of the Presidents of the French Republic, from his mother, to whom it had been given by Napoleon. Instead, he obtained only a portion of her fortune, the *part disponible* being left, to his chagrin, to his brother Prince Lucien's son, since Achille had no heirs.

As soon as the ex-Queen had breathed her last, something like an organised looting by the household servants took place. Their friends, in anticipation of the event, waited in the piazza below, ready to receive dresses, furs, laces, jewels, and goods that poured out of the windows before the pillage could be stopped. However, something was saved, and when Prince Achille received his share of the household goods, it

included magnificent damask drawing-room curtains, thread cambric sheets trimmed with valuable lace, and over a hundred cooks' aprons.

On Prince Achille's return to Florida, he settled again outside Tallahassee on an estate called Econchattie, where he entertained widely. The Princess, highly practical, hung up the magnificent curtains on the walls of her plain Florida house, converted the cambric sheets into pretty dresses, and the cooks' aprons, all with the royal emblem, into dusters.

The years slipped by, and the royal postmaster occupied himself with inventing, farming, cattle-breeding, and fishing. He was as popular with his slaves as with his neighbours.

He had hoped to witness the restoration of the Napoleonic dynasty, but he died, in 1847, at the early age of forty-six, before that event took place. Napoleon III kept his word. He pensioned the widowed Princess, and invited her to Court, sending her a present of forty thousand dollars for the journey. She went, was accorded every honour, became a great favourite with Napoleon and his Empress Eugénie, but after a prolonged stay she began to yearn for her Florida home, to which she returned. She survived her husband twenty years, and was buried next to him, in the cemetery at Tallahassee.

"That's the end of my story," I said to my friend. "Now you know why I raised my hat to your postman just now. There's a precedent for my conduct."

"How extraordinary—but however did you find all this out?" asked my friend.

"I got the clue when investigating the history of my friend's house. The Polidoris led to the Rossettis, the Ros-



settis to Sangiovanni, who went out to Florida to manage Prince Achille's estate. Would you like two footnotes to the story?" I asked.

"As much as you've got. I go through Tallahassee often, and I knew nothing of all this."

"Very well. Concerning Sangiovanni. He married a young woman over here and took her back to England, where she gave him a son. He kept her almost a prisoner in a dingy basement where he did his modelling. Some years later she learned that he had a former wife still living in Italy, whom Sangiovanni had believed to be dead. At the same time Mrs. Sangiovanni came to learn about the Mormons, and one day she vanished with her son to Salt Lake City, and completely disappeared.

"Regarding Prince Achille. In 1825 there arrived at Savannah by steamer the Marquis of Lafayette, accompanied by his son, George Washington Lafayette, on a triumphal tour through the United States. Congress had just voted him two hundred thousand dollars and twenty-three thousand acres of land outside Tallahassee. Among those who had gathered at Savannah to pay their respects to the fêted Marquis was young Achille Murat. He was deeply touched by some words of the younger Lafayette—"Monsieur George," said Achille, 'gave me great happiness. He spoke well of my father.'

"The younger Lafayette had every reason. Twenty years earlier Joachim Murat, after the battle of Ulm, approached Napoleon and strongly recommended George Washington Lafayette for a captain's commission. Napoleon turned his back on him, and this hatred of Lafayette, extended to his son, became the talk of the whole army. George Lafayette, encountering Prince Achille at Savannah, had not forgotten the service his father had sought to render him at Ulm."

## VII

This is an age in which we eat tinned foods and fruits. Some of us do it with reluctance. The fresh article must be better, we think. It may be an illusion. The tinned article is often better. It has been protected from decomposition, dirt, and staleness. It may be of a quality, given reliable manufacture or picking, that surpasses the loose article.

After an hour spent in my host's canning factory I felt no further hesitation in eating his tinned grapefruit or drinking his tinned orange juice. I learned, indeed, that I cannot hope to find such grapefruit or oranges on a fruiterer's stall, for the fruiterer must sell his moderately good stock as well as the better and best. The canner uses only the best.

We have seen that fruit which failed to achieve the quality standard went to the manure heap. Only the finest fruit goes to the canning factory. Let us go into the factory and look at the process.

My friend Howard's car whirled me down Orlando's tree-shaded streets until we came to a boulevard surrounding a lake. Facing this pleasant scene stood the canning factory. We followed in after a truck load of oranges, and met them again inside, taking a bath, and being well scrubbed by automatic brushes. After this their skins shone. Perhaps they imagined they were going to the table for eating; they found they were going upstairs, on an escalator, for squeezing.

Here, awaiting them, were eight immaculate young men and eight pretty girls. They were dressed in white caps, vests or blouses, and wore rubber aprons and gloves. As the oranges came up on their raised platform, a machine sliced

them in halves, and they were seized by the gloved hands and pressed firmly down on revolving squeezers, the juice running along in a channel.

"But I am surprised," I said, watching the fresh-faced young men chatting gaily with their cool, pretty companions *vis-à-vis*. "Don't you find that they waste a lot of time in flirtatious gossip?"

"We've worked all that out," said Howard, with a smile. "What we lose in gossip we gain in lessened tedium and nerve strain. They remain much more buoyant through the day with pleasant company."

"Sex appeal in relation to labour and orange juice?" I commented.

"Well, yes—if you like to put it that way," laughed Howard. "But the result's good. Do they look bored?"

"I never saw more cheerful workers," I agreed.

We passed on, and saw the juice emerge from heating drums. In this way it was sterilised, and fermentation was got rid of. Before us a bright company of empty cans mounted a spiral staircase, passed out under a valve and received their correct quota of orange juice. In a flash they were sealed up by the adjacent machine, and reversed to ensure even temperature through the contents.

"You'll notice the tins are sealed while the juice is hot," said Howard, as we watched the reversed cans twirled away down another spiral. "They will now be cooled, and the juice, contracting, will create the vacuum essential to preservation. You'll see also that if any juice is spilled in our process it is run off—we never use it again. We take no risks with cleanliness. All the machinery is stopped three times a day and flushed down. Everywhere you see monel metal. If any of those boys or girls go to the toilet, they have to



surrender their gloves to an attendant and get back a fresh pair when they leave."

I observed a chart on a board overhead.

"Is that for the temperature of the factory?" I asked.

"No—it's to mark the temperature of the heated juice. It varies in sugar content, which one equalises by applying pure sugar—that's the business of the chemists."

"Chemists?" I queried.

"Come along into the laboratory and meet our chemists."

I followed, a little amazed to find the simple matter of canning grapefruit and orange juice involved a chemical laboratory. I found myself in a room with balances, retorts, test-tubes, bottles of coloured liquids and charts. I was introduced to the chemists. They made tests for sugar content, studied fertilisers, analysed soils and spraying materials, investigated by-products from orange skins, such as flavouring extracts, scent, soap, etc., and kept tins of juice in the incubator for storage tests under various temperatures. From them I learned what an orange was composed of, and why it tastes as it does. Eighty-eight per cent. is water, and the remainder consists of ten per cent. sugar, one per cent. citric acid, and one per cent. pulp ash and minerals.

I was very much surprised. I had so often bought oranges that were fifty per cent. skin.

#### VIII

In all the pleasures and excitements of my sojourn in Orlando I had not been unmindful of the mission entrusted to me by Miss Whissitt. A morning came when Howard invited me to accompany him to a citrus growers' conference at Lakeland, a picturesque town situated on a hillside overlooking a round pool which had been appropriately called

Mirror Lake. Alcantara Heights was not far distant from Lakeland, I had heard, and while my friend was in the conference I took the opportunity to visit Miss Whissitt's plot of Florida land.

It took considerable finding. No one seemed to know of Alcantara Heights, but at last I found a woodcutter who told me it used to exist about four miles down the road on which I was. With this ominous information I proceeded on my way, and presently came to what appeared to be a derelict village. Round a small plaza were a number of windowless shops. Some of the houses had lost their stucco fronts. A very large building, however, seemed to be inhabited. It was sun blistered, with cracked concrete walls and a bedraggled, Moorish battlemented façade. The weeds had grown up all over the terrace in front, on which washing hung out to dry. A number of ill-clad children played there. I learned the whole place had been acquired as the headquarters of yet another religious sect with its own formula of salvation. This explained the succession of placards along the highway, all bearing intimidating texts offering the passing motorist a choice between eternal joy and everlasting hell fire.

I left Paradisal City, as it was hopefully called, informed that Alcantara Heights lay a mile up a branch road. Heights? As far as the eye could see there was nothing but a dreary plain, covered with scrub oaks and dwarf pines. In some fifteen minutes I knew I had found Alcantara Heights. A triumphal arch which had collapsed, beaten down by the wind, lay all splintered and dusty, under the fierce sun. Along one piece of plaster I could decipher the faded letters—*A.canta.a.*

I got out of the car and picked my way through the rub-

bish to an unpaved road which had been laid for several hundred yards across the barren land. There were vestiges of concrete which had marked the corners of branching avenues. And that was all. Nothing but the coarse, sun-dried grass, and a few scrubby bushes met the eye. Miss Whissitt had given me particulars of her holding, Lot 47, Alcatraz Avenue, but where Alcatraz Avenue had been, if ever it existed, was beyond conjecture.

For a few moments I stood in the midst of this desolation. Of roads, railway, light, water, electricity, or any of the simplest needs of civilisation, there was not a trace. There never could have been any of those things. The one remarkable thing was that Alcantara Heights had ever existed even to this extent, that anyone could ever have been crazy enough to attempt a settlement out here in the wilds, apart from any hope of finding people silly enough to invest money in it.

I returned, feeling sad for Miss Whissitt, and angry with myself, for had I not stood entranced before that Bond Street shop window, with its baskets of delicious fruits bearing the legend, "Grow these in your garden at Alcantara Heights?" I, too, had almost been tempted to buy a piece of this Florida land. I recalled now, as I looked around the desolate plain, that the model villa, girt with palm trees, had for a background a blue sea with a yacht on it.

At that moment I broke into laughter. Not only were there never any Heights in this place, but the blue sea was a good fifty miles distant! "*Quelle bêtise!*" I exclaimed to myself, using Miss Whissitt's words.

I arrived back in Lakeland some time before my friend came out of his conference, and wandered about in this



delightfully situated and planned town. Following the main street to the top of the hill, I came to a public square, in the middle of which there was a bandstand. All around were tables and chairs at which the happy Lakelanders, mostly in their shirt sleeves, were playing cards and dominoes. The players seemed quite indifferent to the commotion around the bandstand. Here a crowd had collected to listen to a man auctioneering property and land. Loud-speakers on the bandstand pillars broadcast his strenuous appeals to the crowd.

I sat down in a vacant chair and watched. It was very pleasant to sit in the warm sunshine and see the life of the town around me. A man in a white shirt sat down, nodded, and said, "Mornin', brother!" I replied to this greeting. He was a stout pleasant man of about sixty, with a big perspiring face, which he mopped.

"English?" he queried, hearing my voice.

"Yes."

"I was once in England. My folks came from Dublin, and when I went over to see them, thirty years ago, I went to London. Staying here?"

"No—just here for the day," I answered, and offered him a cigarette.

He declined and drew a cigar out of a small paper bag, which he bit and lighted. I asked him what the open-air auction was for. He passed me a large sheet he held in his hand. It gave particulars of the lots to be sold.

"Everybody went bust here—ain't much better now. They don't know what to do with the stuff."

We chatted happily in the sunshine, our voices drowned at intervals by the auctioneer who bellowed at his unrespon-

sive audience. I was astonished to hear that he could get no bid higher than ninety dollars for Lot 10.

"Ten acres of unimproved citrus land, unencumbered. Make it a hundred, brother! A hundred! A hundred!"

Some brother made it a hundred. The hammer fell; actually, the auctioneer wagged a roll of paper.

It seemed very cheap. Miss Whissitt had paid a thousand dollars for half an acre. But that was in the boom. Still—

My companion rose, wished me Good day, and strolled off. A little interested by the bargain prices prevailing, I read the sheet he had given me.

"All Real Estate owned by the First National Bank of Lakeland. The Sale is authorised by the Controller of Currency, whose policy is to sell real estate owned by closed national banks. This method of liquidation not only hastens the return of depositors' money, but, relieving the market of this distressed property, very materially aids in re-establishing real-estate values."

I had been badly caught in the American slump, but not until I read this did I fully grasp the magnitude of that appalling crash on Wall Street at the peak of the fever of speculation. It had reverberated here, in the very heart of this little Florida town, involving the local bank, loaded up with foreclosures on clients' properties and land.

I glanced down the sheet, and saw that in a few minutes, when we reached Lot 18, we should be offered "The First National Bank of Auburndale—banking room, three vaults, banking fixtures, directors' room, and three clients' rooms."

So I could buy, from the auctioneer on the bandstand, a complete bank, with three vaults, and all fixtures! It would

probably go very cheap. A brother might get it for a thousand dollars, if any brother had a thousand dollars in his belted trousers' pocket.

For a few moments I played with the idea of buying a bank. It would be interesting to see the faces of my friends in England when I got home and told them I had bought a bank in Florida. But I remembered Miss Whissitt.

Glancing at my watch, I saw it was time to rejoin my friend. I left the auctioneer trying to induce a brother to advance on a bid of three hundred dollars for a small citrus holding, with a four-roomed frame house.

## IX

The middle of March had come. I had returned from an excursion with Howard to Jacksonville, Savannah, Macon, and Atlanta. It was time to leave for my lecture in Chicago. There was a farewell picnic for me, on a blazingly hot Sunday, at the Phillips' camp amid the pine trees on the side of one of their lakes. I had acquired a tan that would endure through the Arctic weather of the North, and last until I could display it to my friends in England, proof that I had gone sunwards. I had most successfully evaded the winter. Now the thought of spring breaking over old England, and in particular in the garden of Pilgrim Cottage, filled me with pleasurable anticipation.

So at last I heard the Doctor shout to me his farewell, and, as ever, he indulged in his boisterous humour. "We'll never see you in this house again. It's taught you a lesson to stay with a bunch of rough necks, eh? Nothing to eat, no sleep, those wild sons of mine, and oranges till you hate the very name!"

But the warmth of his grasp, the richness of his smile,



told me how true a welcome there endures for me in his hospitable home and heart. Walter looked over my bags, walked round a time or two, and then said, "Cecil, do come over again—soon—next year—not in six years like last time." Howard, as usual, had omitted no detail for my comfort on the long journey north.

And so at last my train draws out. It races through the summery land, where spring can scarcely heighten the scene. Then the palm trees began to diminish. We run through the pinewoods of Georgia, where the turpentine gatherers are busy tapping the trees, and boys on the platforms try to sell us the famous pecan nuts. It grows less warm. Night falls. The next day the scene is grey. The next morning, emerging in Chicago, I am glad of my fur overcoat, worn for the first time since I left *The Princess of Connaught*. I wind up the taxi-cab window to shut out the icy blast. They are skating on the lake as I pass through Lincoln Park, where the trees are black and leafless.

A week later, I go, from a near-midnight dinner-party in a New York skyscraper, on board the *Aquitania*. At midnight the siren screams. We are sliding down the dark Hudson River, past New York's cliffs of window-lit masonry, out to the ocean, homeward bound.