

Across South Central Florida in 1882;*

THE ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST NEW ORLEANS *TIMES-DEMOCRAT*
EXPLORING EXPEDITION

Edited by

MORGAN DEWEY PEOPLES

and

EDWIN ADAMS DAVIS

On Lake Okeechobee, Fla.

Dec. 1882

The sun had almost entirely disappeared beneath the waters of Lake Okeechobee as the Crescent, with its weary and tired crew, row alongside our boat. Tired as all are, everybody is in good spirits, nevertheless, and excited over their arrival. We have no time for talking, for the night is fast approaching, a dark cloud rising in the south tells the approach of a storm, and as yet there is no dry land on which to pitch our tents. A small clump of trees separated from the main shore attracts our attention, so heading our boats for it, we soon pass over the intervening half mile, and to our delight and satisfaction, we find that we have struck quite a bonanza in the shape of an island above water.

It matters little to us that it is not more than 25 feet square, six inches above the level of the water, and composed of white sand. It is a place to pitch our tents, cook supper, and with room to move about and stretch our cramped limbs. Axes are soon busy clearing a spot for the tents, which in a twinkling are stretched, Cæsar has a roaring-fire, and every cooking utensil we have is in use, and our hungry, tired, but merry crowd sit around the fire, smoke pipes, and discuss the little incidents of the day. To be sure, we are far enough yet from our journey's end, but at the first stage, and as to what lies beyond we do not bother ourselves. The air is warm and sultry as an August night, with not a breath of wind to cool the atmosphere, and situated as we are on our little sandy island, only six inches above the level of the water, we feel a little uneasiness at the various signs which tell of an approaching storm, for we know that the least wind from the south,

* *Continued from the 1950 TEQUESTA in which there is an introduction written by the editors.*

east or west, will wash the waters of the lake over our temporary refuge, compelling us to take to our boats, make for the marsh, and remain until the storm is over. An hour passes, and at last comes the welcome summons to supper. Our cook has done his best and we certainly do ours. Supper finished, everybody arranges as comfortable a seat as circumstances will permit, seats himself, lights his pipe or cigar, and prepares for an evening's enjoyment. It is too warm and sultry to think of sleeping, and somehow or other the bellowing of the alligators all around us, and the sight of a black object every once and a while coming in range of our camp light, makes us feel less and less like sleeping. Everything has been repacked in the boats that we are not compelled to keep with us for fear of the water coming over us suddenly, and as we would have but little time to spare in such an event, we have made all needed arrangements for a hasty departure.

About 12 o'clock we lay down in our tents, the Colonel, the Captain, Professor and myself in one tent, and the men in the other. Previous to lying down the Professor mildly suggests an idea, that in case of the waters coming over us very suddenly, had we better not select a tree to climb, where we could remain until daylight, and thereby be able to see better where to turn for a harbor; so, adopting the idea, every man selects a tree. As we lay on our beds of green moss, the Colonel, who is a great comforter, goes to telling some of his experiences among the alligators while on his numerous surveying expeditions throughout the State, and finally closes by relating an incident which happened on the St. Lucie river, which was as follows: Camping one night on that river a few years ago, three men and himself were occupying a tent on its banks. After having slept for several hours they were all awakened by screams of agony from the man who slept next to the wall of the tent, (a groan from the Professor, who occupies that position in our tent). They rushed from the tent just in time to grasp their companion, who was half way in the water in the mouth of an alligator. After a desperate fight, they succeeded in making him lose his grip but not until the man had been terribly lacerated and maimed for life.

The Captain says something about his ability to tell a better alligator story, but he don't feel like lying, and etc. We all join in asking questions of the Colonel concerning the incident; even Cæsar wants to know "If dat man's blanket was torn by dat alligator." The Professor asks in a very serious tone if he (the Colonel) was positive and certain that the man occupied the *outside* place, which being answered in the affirmative, he (the Professor) cautions Cæsar not to go to sleep but to keep the campfire

burning all night. Cæsar promises, as he would promise anything else, and with about as much intention of fulfilling it as if he had never heard a word. We cease to pay attention to the bellowing of the alligators, the scream of a night bird in the marsh, or, in fact, anything else, for the gentle rippling of the water as it rolls in tiny waves to within a yard of our feet seems to have a soothing effect upon each occupant of the tent, and we are soon sound asleep. How long we had slept I know not, but what I do know, was that I was half awakened by the most unearthly yells from the Professor, followed by a terrific squall from Cæsar. I have made it one of the principles of my life never to spend precious moments in asking useless questions, and the Colonel and the Captain seem to agree with me, for three objects robed in spotless white skipped through the back of the tent, and before our eyes are well opened, we find ourselves in the top most branches of a tree gazing at the seven different flags of truce, which are fluttering to the early morning breeze from seven different trees. "What's the matter," we hear echoed from all sides. "Alligators," shouted the Professor from an adjacent tree. "Alligators, sartin' fore God, dey was after de outside man, what was me an' de Perfesser," comes from Cæsar, who has climbed as far as he can up a smooth palm tree, and is holding on for dear life. Our campfire has been allowed to go out, but by the overturning of pots, and the peculiar hissing noise we hear below us, we know that our little island is in the hands of an enemy.

"Shoot 'em Colonel, in de head, in de tail, on de wings; shoot 'em anywhar," yells Cæsar in an excited tone. "Shoot the devil, you infernal black imp; didn't you pack all the guns in the boats last night? Jump down out of that tree, and bring the Major and myself our rifles," explained the Colonel from his seat on a projecting limb. "Yes, Cæsar, hurry up and get those rifles. Alligators don't eat niggers," says the Captain. "Cæsar," says the Professor, "if you have ever read Professor _____ treatise on alligators habits, etc., you will know an alligator is cowardly by nature, and will always run from man if he only has a chance, so get down out of that tree, Cæsar, and give the alligators a chance to run, and then bring the firearms to the Colonel and the Major."

"Hurry up, Cæsar," "Get down, Cæsar," we hear on every side, but Cæsar remains stationary. "Gemmen," says Cæsar, "I know my duty, and I knows by rights I ought to git down and bring dem double brested shot-guns from de boats for de Major and de Colonel, but dar are resins I can't. In de fust place, I'se a married man, and de last time I counted my children der

wus eben 16. In de second place, my right leg done got cotched aroun' de tree and it won't let lose."

In the meantime things were getting lively on the ground. A peculiar snarling, snapping and grunting is going on, together with a general overturning of everything. We have certainly, camping on the island, taken possession of a regular "alligator roost," and they in turn have routed us. As to how we are going to get possession of our guns, safely stowed away in the boats, we are busy in our minds conjecturing. We are willing to sacrifice Cæsar, but Cæsar won't be sacrificed. The breeze freshens while we are trying to solve the problem, and as it blows along the coals of our campfire an unconsumed piece of pine bursts into a brilliant blaze, illuminating the scene below.

The whole surface of the ground below us is one moving mass of reptiles hurrying and scurrying toward the water on each side, frightened by the blaze which had sprung up so suddenly among them. There is a terrific splashing as they plunge in the water on every side. The last alligator had hardly disappeared, ere we slid down from our lofty perches, and after getting possession of shotguns and rifles, putting on enough garments to make a decent appearance, we open a perfect fusilade upon the black objects, which just in line with our reflecting lamps which have been lighted, are swimming around our little island.

After about fifty rounds of ammunition have been exhausted, and seeing no further signs of the enemy, we go to work to examine the damage done, which we find but slight, consisting of the loss of a portion of a box of crackers overturned and demolished, or partly so, a bag of dried venison gone, and sundry small articles scattered around generally. Every man swears he didn't know all the row was about alligators, or he certainly would not have taken a tree, but would have run for the guns and stood his ground—thought it was the water coming over them, etc. The more we talk it over the more excited we become. We are not afraid of alligators. Oh, no. "Hand around the tin cups, you black imp," yells the Colonel looking at Cæsar, "and then stand up here and let us know what you mean by—by—by—causing this little excitement in camp?"

Cæsar hands around the cups and then taking his position on the outside of the crowd, he gives one glance in the direction of the position of the Professor, a broad grin overspreads his face, he closes one eye, and he gently rubs that one leg that "wouldn't let lose," he tells us his little tale: "Genmen 'cordin' to de orders from de Perfesser, I kep de fire burning 'til

I git sorter tired, an' laid down outside de tent, just next to de Perfesser, an' fore I knowed anything I didn't know nuthin' an' was fast asleep. De fust thing I knowed wus something movin' sorter promiscus like across dis nigger's feet in de direchum of de Perfesser's feet, which was stickin' outside de tent. De fire was done gone out an' I couldn' see nuthin', but befo' God I smelt that alligator. When I smelt alligator for de fust time de hind end of dat alligator was just gettin' over my feet and de front had about reached de Perfesser's, from de little 'citement dat was raised. I axed de perfesser if it wasn't jess so, so help me Bob."

"Gentlemen," replies the Professor, "so far as I am personally acquainted with the circumstances which have caused the little excitement in our camp tonight, I think Cæsar is correct. Whether it was 'hind end' of the alligator which reached me first, or as Cæsar says, the 'front end,' I am unable to state, but I was waked on 'one end' with a claw attached to it passing over my feet there is not a question of doubt. Thank you, Major, I believe I will: just a little sugar, if you please. Before closing, gentlemen, I will make one statement, and that is, when I started for my tree I did not ask anyone to follow me, and if you out of politeness, insisted on keeping me company, I am certainly not to blame."

While we are yet talking over the little incident light begins to dawn in the East. The contrast is great between the half dressed shivering men which were seated but a half an hour before in the top most branches of the trees, and the uproariously happy, laughing, merry crowd who watched the rising of the sun over the waters of Lake Okeechobee.

Coffee is made and drunk, and after refreshing ourselves by a bath in the lake, with sharpened appetites we gather around our campfire and watch Cæsar prepare breakfast. As we arise from our morning meal each one acknowledges that Cæsar has done credit to himself and his interesting family of 16 children in the preparation of the same. After breakfast the "Daisy" is unpacked and the Colonel, Professor, myself and two oarsmen get in her, and start on an exploring expedition on the northern shore of the lake. The waters of the lake are as smooth as glass today, with not a single ripple upon its surface. As we leave camp and head our boats toward the east we see far in front of us the dim outline of points of woods coming out of the lake, but the east, south and western shores are invisible, and nothing meets the eye but one vast sea of water shining in the sunlight. Nearing the shore, which is fringed by a thick growth of cypress trees, we find that there is a beach of white sand at the foot of the trees, but only a few yards in

width, and in many places not more than a foot above the level of the water. There is quite a thick undergrowth of scrub trees which are thickly covered from bottom to top with vines, and these vines in profusion are blooming with the loveliest flowers of the most brilliant hues we have yet seen on our journey. Even the leaves of these small scrub trees are colored yellow, brown or crimson. Landing at one point on the beach we force our way through the tangled underbrush and find that the belt of timber which marks the shores of the lake is not more than a hundred yards in width, and in many places not that much. Beyond we look over that vast marsh, through which we have been journeying for so many days. And in numerous places the marsh comes to the edge of the lake, but in almost every case that occurs where lagoons and bayous find an entrance. On every side we see hundreds of water fowl of every kind and description, either circling around or fearlessly swimming in the water ahead of us. After rowing about 10 miles our attention is attracted by the trees on a point of timber which comes out into the lake, which appears at a distance of a mile to be covered with white sheets, with not a vestige of foliage to be seen. On a nearer approach we discover that what resembled the white sheets is nothing more or less than white cranes, which have selected the spot as a rookery, and are quietly occupying every limb and branch seemingly watching our approach. When within a few hundred yards we discharged a gun, and then for the first time we realized their number. Like a white cloud they rise, and after flying a short distance light again, either on water or around our boats, or upon some tree nearby. Our ears are deafened by their screams, and we are not disappointed when we discover that the water is too shallow to approach nearer than two hundred yards, so we head our boats in the opposite direction and it is with a feeling of relief that we once more find ourselves out of the very unmusical sound. As our boat glides along the shore, from the marsh, through the reeds, and from among the trees on the beach is seen that everlasting alligator, from ten inches to ten feet, crawling toward the water preparatory to taking a plunge to the same to rise again as we pass, and float lazily on the surface as if in defiance. If he is a large one, we open fire upon him with our rifles, and it is always with satisfaction we see him struggling in and lashing the water into a foam with their tails, float for a second on their backs and sink without a struggle to the bottom.

It is the intention of the Drainage Company to lower the lake five feet by canals cut from the same to the Atlantic ocean and Gulf of Mexico, which will not only reclaim thousands of acres on the shores of Lake Okeechobee

but the Kissimmee Valley of this operation from Lake Tohopotaliga to this point where the thoroughly drained and millions of acres of the richest soil in the United States will be opened to the agriculturalists. No one who has not seen with his own eyes, can realize the magnitude of the work already done and still to be accomplished. Thousands of dollars have already been spent and millions of dollars are yet to be expended before the task is accomplished. The directors of the company allow five years of steady work to the lowering of Lake Okeechobee four or five feet. It is a herculean task, and many might feel inclined to doubt its accomplishment, but after viewing what has already been done in the Upper Kissimmee Valley, in the small space of eight months, I am ready to believe that with the millions of money lying in the treasury, the best engineering skill that the country can produce, and with the cool practical heads that are directing the work, that short as the time allowed themselves, still it is practicable, and its accomplishment I, in my humble opinion, have not the shadow of a doubt. Every inch of Lake Okeechobee is lowered, drains and renders fertile and susceptible of cultivation hundreds of acres lying in the Kissimmee Valley. As their dredge boat comes down from the Kissimmee Valley, the river will be straightened, shoal places deepened, and the great volume of water which this operation will pour into Lake Okeechobee, will for a while keep its waters at a stand, perhaps raise them higher than their present level, but that will be but for a short time, while the outlets which they will cut to the Gulf and ocean as fast as human skill and labor can do it, will soon take off this additional volume of water, and as the canals are deepened and widened, the lowering of this great body of water will commence.

At present it is the intention of the company to cut four canals, one from the eastern shore of Lake Okeechobee to the Atlantic ocean through the St. Lucie river; one from the southern shore to the Miami river, which also flows to the Atlantic; the third from the western shore, which will enter the Caloosahatchee river, which flows into the Gulf of Mexico, and the fourth has not yet been determined on. It is by way of the canal that enters the Caloosahatchee that we expect to make our way to the Gulf.

Having rowed about 15 miles along the shore, and seeing no change in the nature of the country, we start on our return trip to camp. The sun is scorching hot, and its reflection upon the water is almost blinding. We have left our awning in camp, so this bright December day, in our shirt sleeves, the perspiration oozing from every pore and noses being peeled, we sit in our boat and pray for a breeze fresh from the Rocky mountains. As

we row lazily along the shore, the Professor, pencil in hand, and sketch before him, not withstanding difficulties, takes a good sketch of the surrounding scenery. At 3 o'clock we arrive at camp, and instead of finding the Captain holding an inquest over the remains of Cæsar, we find that distinguished ebony-hued individual, the bough of a tree in his hand, keeping the flies off the Captain, who has succumbed to the weather, and is sleeping at the rate of about 10 miles an hour. The Captain has not allowed Cæsar to forget us in our absence for every available pot is on the fire, and from the savory smell which greets our nostrils, we rather guess we are going to have a good time.

It being against our will to allow anyone to sleep during the day time, we rouse the Captain, and insist on feeling his pulse. We find his pulse a little excited; in fact, he seems considerably excited all over from being so suddenly awakened, at least so we think from some remarks of his in a very emphatic style, about being kept awake half the night, listening to a lot of alligator stories (and he looks at the Colonel), and then sitting the balance of the night in a treetop (a look at the Professor), and now, when he is doing his best to catch up with his lost sleep, some fellow, to find out where he has hid the "keg of nails," disturbs his rest, and THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT man gets his share of looks. Nobody ever gets mad in our camp; and the man who is in the least danger of "falling from grace" is the Captain—the merriest, jolliest, that ever walked in shoe leather.

Cæsar has cooked dinner today under his special surveillance, and that meal is certainly going to be a success, from the significant smile which the Captain once in a while bestows upon Cæsar, and by the important manner in which Cæsar is rushing around, looking into the different pots and rattling the tinware. At last that important event is ready to take place. There are no snowy tableclothes or napkins to adorn the table; no cut-glass goblets or finger bowls at each man's plate; no silver forks and spoons with which to eat the dainty meal steaming before us, and no man finds it necessary to take a little absinthe as an appetizer. No, sir; none of that nonsense in this crowd. We intend putting on a little style today; so all hands haul out the "Crescent", turn it bottom side up, and before us we have a table twenty feet long and five feet wide; the tent fly is drawn over her, we have a table and cloth good enough for anybody; every place is supplied with a shiny tin cup and plate, and as for an appetizer we take "a shake" at that delapidated "keg of nails", after which we feel able to eat thirty quail in thirty minutes, and glad of the chance to do it. Our dinner is served in

course in the following style: Lifting pot No. 1 from the fire, Cæsar sets it in front of the Colonel, and in stentorian tones yells, "Soup a la Tohopoliga," which generally means bean soup or any other kind; it don't make any difference to him, or to us either, and the plates are passed. Pot No. 1 is removed and Pot No. 2 takes its place, and "Black bass a la Istopoga," next claims our attention, and it is followed in quick succession by "Ducks a la Kissimmee," "Venison of Hachinaka," etc. As we begin to observe that dinner is nearly over, this fact we are made aware of by observing that only one more pot remains on the fire, Cæsar approaches and announces that the "big dish" of the day is about to be placed before us. And simultaneously with this announcement, the last pot is lifted from the fire, and put gently down before the Captain. "Fish stew a la Okeechobee," yelled Cæsar we all thought it was the wrong time to begin on fish, but the Professor suggests an idea that we can start over again with the "stew," and go through the bill of fare once more, which happy thought we put to the company in the form of a motion, which was carried with only one dissenting voice (Cæsar's). As the Captain with a look of pride, lifts the lid from the pot, a savory odor reaches the nostrils of all, and each man is trying to pass his plate first. As soon as we are helped, and a spoonful has passed our lips, we realize the fact that none but an artist's hand could have directed the preparation or prepared that "dish," and Capt. Andrews blushingly acknowledges that his hand was the humble instrument that did the business, but that he claimed no honor or praise for his work, the recipe having been in his family for generations, our admiration is unbounded, and nothing is heard for a while, but "Cæsar pass my plate;" "A little more gravy;" "A small piece of that fish;" until our appetites are satisfied, and then in words do we shower our compliments on the Captain, who is just finishing the third plate. "Captain," says the Professor, "that dish was a 'poem' within itself; Cleopatra, when she dined with Mark Antony, never had such a seat when we hear the Professor whisper in his ear that he intends dedicating the Great Spirit who watches over the waters of the Okeechobee must have guided your hand in this mighty work." "Captain," says your correspondent, "Shake—bring us the 'keg of nails', Cæsar."

The Captain is the hero of the evening, and we all vie with each other in seeing who can pay him the most attention, but we have to take a back seat when we hear the Professor whisper in his ear that he intends dedicating his next poem to him. Pipes and cigars are lighted, and after arranging our seats comfortably for the evening's conversation, the Professor pulls out his

notebook, sharpens a pencil, arranges his spectacles on his nose, and in his softest tone of voice requests the Captain to dictate to him the "family recipe" for preparing "fish stew a la Okeechobee." "Certainly," answers the Captain, and immediately two other note-books are pulled out, and two additional pair of eyes are eagerly turned in the direction of our hero of the day. "Gentlemen," continues the Captain, "before giving you the *modus operandi*, I will state that it is imperatively necessary that your alligator should not be over four or five feet, as an old one—" "Alligator," we exclaim in one voice, "what has alligator got to do with your stew?" "Do with my *stew*," roared the Captain, "why everything; and I was about to remark, an alligator about the size of one of the ones you killed before leaving this morning, Colnoel, and which Cæsar fished out of the water immediately after being shot, is just the size, and—" "Stop, Captain," whispers the Professor; "Do you mean to say that your stew was made of alligator?" "I do," says the Captain, "out of the tail, and a more delicate morsel never was eaten by anybody, and—" "Surely you are joking," interrupts the Professor. "No joke," remarks the Captain as he lights a cigar, and orders Cæsar to bring the head and skin and show the Professor, which is done in the twinkling of an eye. I take a look at the Colonel, he looks at me, and we both look at the Professor, who with a pale and agitated face gazes at the remains of the alligator. "Gemmen," says Cæsar as we silently assist the Professor in gazing and feeling a peculiar sensation stealing over us, "dars lots mor uv de 'gator left, and if de Perfesser, de Colonel, or de Major wants a little more of de stew—" "Excuse me a second," comes in a low voice from the Professor, and he walks with quick steps toward the south shore of the island, about 20 feet from us. The Colonel about the same time starts for the eastern shore to see if the water is rising, and I start west to see if the water is falling. "Did you say it was a poem in itself?" calls out the Captain to the Professor. "Oh Lordy," sighs the Professor in the south. "What about the Great Spirit, Colonel?" "Go to thunder," gasps the Colonel. "Want the keg of nails, Major?" continues that evil genius of our once peaceful island, now a scene of turmoil. "Do you think our lives, Cæsar?" says the Professor, in a very weak voice, to that distinguished gentleman who is holding his head. "Nebber known a man to die yet, but I specs dat 'gator must have eat somethin' dat disagreed wid him to make you'll act dis away," grinned the imp of darkness. None of us died, but it took 30 minutes for us to feel perfectly satisfied that the alligator and ourselves had parted company, and if that parting had not

been a peaceful one, still our conscious was at rest, as with pale faces and a subdued look, one by one, we stole into the tent, and lay down upon our mossy beds. More than one look from three pairs of eyes are directed from that tent in the direction of the Captain, who sits calmly in front of us smoking his cigar, humming to himself [a parody on the theme-song of the New Orleans Mardi Gras, *If I Ever Cease to Love*]

“May black-eyed cats
Go back on rats
If ever I cease to love.”

We intend he should “cease to love” to make “fish stew a la Okeechobee” if ever ‘our’ turn comes.

Our campfire is kept burning brightly all night, and every available lantern is lighted and hung to the boughs of the trees. We have had enough of alligators, alive or dead, for one day at least, and so we have taken all necessary precautions to keep them at a distance.

On the morning of the 8th of December we are aroused from our slumbers by the whistling of the wind through the trees and the roaring of the waters in the distance. Hastily donning our clothes, we walked outside and found a stiff norther blowing, which makes us feel secure from an inundation; but as the wind is blowing the water from us, our island is increasing every minute in size and our boats are being left high and dry. Wishing to continue our voyage around the western shore that day, everything is hurriedly packed, tents are struck, and while we yet have enough water to get away from the island and reach deep water we shove off from shore, and the Daisy, with closed-reef sails, is soon riding the waves with her prow turned westward. Yesterday we were sweltering in the hot sun, today the air is cool enough for an overcoat, and as the wind whistles through the rigging of our little boat, every once in a while dashing the spray from some huge wave in our faces, it is a new sensation to us, and quite a contrast to the smooth rowing down the swift current of the Kissimmee.

During our leisure moments yesterday, with the combined assistance of the whole crew, we made a flag, on which the Professor in quite an artistic style wrote the words “NEW ORLEANS TIMES-DEMOCRAT, DECEMBER 7, 1882.” That flag, attached to a pole, was nailed to the top of the highest palm on our little island (which we christened “Hopkins Island” in honor of the Colonel), and is the one guide at present to the mouth of the Kissimmee river, of parties navigating Lake Okeechobee. As we take a last look at the island we see the flag fluttering in the breeze.

On leaving the island we recommended Captain Andrews to reef his sail, as we were fearful that the "Crescent" could not stand up under the canvas she usually carries, in such a gale as was then blowing, but no sooner does the Captain see the "Daisy" outsailing him, than prudence is thrown to the winds, and as we look behind us, we see the Crescent with every reef shaken out and every stitch of canvas he has on board stretched to the breeze, plowing through the water, the huge waves that almost at every plunge sweeping into or over her. Fearing for the safety of those on board, we "lay to" and wait for her to come up, which she does in double quick time with the water foaming at her prow, and the Captain at the helm wet as a rat from the spray which is thrown over him. His crew, including the Professor, consists of three men, and as they pass within 10 feet of us a more bedraggled looking set of men I never saw, as, with buckets in hand, I see them bailing out water for their life, which is thrown back again almost as soon as thrown out. "Captain," we cry, "reef your sail or you all will sink or be capsized, certain." "Attend to your own old 'smoothing iron'." roars the Captain; "I command this craft, and by the eternal gods I am going to outsail you or drown every man on board!" "Oh, lordy," cries the Professor; "This is worse than eating alligator." "Bale, you lubbers," roars the Captain, "or I'll be hanged if every mother's son of you don't drown sure enough."

We know the Captain too well to expostulate, so the only thing we can do is to crowd more sail on our boat and follow in his wake, for the purpose of picking them up when their boat goes under or capsizes.

For hours that mad race goes on, we expecting every minute to see the Crescent keel over, but she does not do anything of the kind, and being satisfied she has a fine sailor at the helm that has forgotten more about sailing than we ever knew, we change our course and steer for the shore, about three miles from us, for the purpose of noting the topography of the country, and at the same time watch for a flag, which the officer in charge of the dredge boat working between the Caloosahatchee river and Lake Okechobee, has been instructed to put up at the nearest point on the lake to which he is at work, that we may be enabled to guide ourselves in getting to him through the saw grass in case he is not in sight of the lake. These instructions were sent to Captain Menge, the officer in charge of the dredge-boat, over three weeks ago via Fort Myers, through the courtesy and kindness of the officers of the Drainage Company, who when they learned that THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT was organizing an expedition to visit the scenes

of their future labors, forwarded instructions immediately to all the officers in charge of their different works to render every assistance in their power to aid us in getting through to the Gulf.

As we near the land I notice that the banks of the lake are much higher, but the land, as that which we examined yesterday, is but a narrow strip a few yards in width. The aspect of the country remains unchanged, except that groves of palm trees become more frequent, and occasionally we come to small islands, which have originally been points of the mainland, running out into the lake, and cut off by the action of the water. This we know, as in many cases cypress trees are yet growing in the middle of the channel, between island and mainland. Beyond the fringe of woodland which marks the banks, nothing meets the eye but one vast marsh of saw grass, which has to this time guarded like a faithful sentinel the entrance of the Everglades of Florida. The soldiers of France, Spain and the United States have each in turn followed the dusky Indian warrior to the borders of this, his lair. Each in turn have seen their foe disappear from view in their light canoes, winding like snakes through the tall grass, and when they attempted to follow, have met naught but defeat and suffering. It was not, in the majority of cases the Indian that compelled them to retreat, but the utter inability to get through the saw grass marshes.

This grass grows to a height of from eight to ten feet, the roots firmly embedded in the earth. Grasp it in your hands and like a penknife it cuts through the flesh; attempt to push through it, and if one of the needle-like points, which tip the end of each blade, does not stop your course, you will soon find, that if nothing worse happens to you your clothing is slashed and cut into ribbons, as if you had just had an encounter with someone who used a razor as a weapon. There are certain seasons of the year when the Indians meet in and around Lake Okeechobee, and in their canoes sweep across the southern shore of the lake, disappear from sight in the tall grass, and are seen no more for months. As the woodsman knows each bridle path in the vast forest, and is never lost, so do these Indians know each lagoon and bayou which penetrates the Everglades, and where they take their canoes upon their backs, trudge to the next lagoon and launch them once more, until their journey is ended, and they find themselves safe from the prying eyes of the white man, in their palmetto huts, upon some of the beautiful islands, which the imagination of the outside world has vested the Everglades. Threats, promises, tortures, and offers of reward, with even the half-civilized remnant of the Indian tribe that still inhabit Florida, have failed to induce

them to act as guides through what is to the white man an unknown and unexplored country.

The waters are comparative smooth near to the shore, and our little boat glides swiftly on her way. Off to the left, in the distance, the white sails of the Crescent are glittering in the sunlight, as she pitches and tosses in her attempt to ride the waves, which seem to be rolling mountains high. The Colonel and myself have a hearty laugh as we picture to ourselves the condition of the Captain's crew, especially that of the poor Professor, as we recall our last sight of him, with spectacles high on his nose, wet to the skin, baling for dear life, looking as if the last trumpet was sounding, and he didn't want to go.

It being 12 o'clock, the Colonel proposes that we take our "latitude or longitude," I forget which, but I know we always took it in a tin cup with a lump of sugar, after which we take our lunch of cold venison and duck, and renew our gaze along the shore for the signal which is to tell us of our proximity to the canal, which we intend to attempt to reach.

At 2 o'clock, comes the glad announcement from Mac, who is on the lookout, that about ten miles on our front he sees the smoke of a steamer about half a mile from shore in the saw grass. It is welcome news, and every eye is strained to catch a glimpse. We crowd on all sail, as we wish to camp as near as possible to the dredge, and have time to select our camp. We soon find ourselves sailing along a shore destitute of trees, the saw grass marsh reaching to the waters edge, and the unpleasant feeling comes over us that, perhaps, we will see no more dry land on which to pitch our tents, and be compelled to sleep all night in our boats—but we do not let such unpleasant thoughts occupy our minds very long. The Captain has also seen the smoke of the dredge boat and the Crescent is headed for the same point as our boat, but the smooth water we are sailing over near the shore gives us little advantage, and when we arrive opposite the dredge, which lies a little over a quarter of a mile from the shore, we are ahead. Waiting for the Crescent to come up, we spend the time in scanning the adjacent country, hoping to get a sight of a piece of dry land large enough to camp on, but no such good luck seems to be in store for us, for nothing meets the eye but the tall marsh, except an island of trees about two miles farther. Signaling to the Crescent to follow, we sail by the flag which marks our course, and go toward the only spot which promises us a refuge for the night. When we arrive at the island we find it submerged with water at a depth of

from one to two feet, and although Mac wades into the woods in search of dry land he finds none, and we realize that we are in a quandary.

About that time the Crescent comes up and anchors alongside us. All hands are still baling, and we are informed by the Captain that "Give him six more sails for his boat, eight more men like the Professor to bale, and by the eternal gods he can beat the world." Every thing is dripping wet, and rice, beans, potatoes and other articles are mixed in hopeless ruins in the bottom of the boat. We furnish all hands with lunch, and give the Professor a dose of the only medicine we have on hand, which we hope will prevent him from catching cold. There is no use in sleeping in our boats where we are, so we conclude to return opposite the dredge and see how near we can get to her by forcing our boats through the marsh. We find on arriving there, that we have sufficient water to pull within about a thousand feet of the dredge, from which distance we are observed by Capt. Menge, who kindly sends one of his men, who hails us and invites the whole party to wade to the boat, where they have ample accommodations for all. The Colonel, the Captain and myself take a look at the tall grass marsh in front of us, and cramped as our accommodations are we prefer them, and decline the invitation with thanks and decide to sleep in the "Daisy". Not so the Professor, who, in "Georgia uniform," minus the shirt collar and spurs, gallantly places himself at the head of the men, and off they start in quest of a hot supper and hospitable bed. As usual misfortune follows in the steps of the Professor for he does not go ten yards before he tumbles in an alligator hole, and thereby loses his spectacles, his only article of attire on this auspicious occasion. Cæsar rescues him, and the last glimpse we catch of him he is leaning upon his rescuer's arm, gingerly pushing his way through the tall grass, as if he feared to tear his clothes, safe in a bundle on his back.

As the last man disappears from view we arrange our beds for the night. A lighted lantern is placed on both bow and stern and a red light run up to the masthead, a danger signal to any prowling alligator. Our boat is only $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide at the stern, so our accommodations are rather narrow. The Colonel lies on one side, the Captain on the other, and I force my way into the middle place. We are packed like sardines, and during the night when a man wants to turn over the middle man has to get up and give him a chance; consequently I spent my night getting up, and getting back again. But what's the odds so we are happy?

[MARCH 15, 1833.] During the night of 8th December, that we spent in the saw-grass marsh opposite the dredge boat, we are aroused from our

uncomfortable bed by a shower of rain, the first since we began the voyage, but with plenty of India-rubber clothes we keep dry. The morning breaks beautiful and clear, and the first sight which greets our eyes as we gaze in the direction of the dredge boat is Cæsar, who is bravely struggling through saw-grass and mud, with a large pot of hot coffee in his hand, sent by Capt. Menge. Being unable to cook breakfast on board of our boat, we have to depend on crackers and canned meats for that meal, but which, nevertheless, we enjoy. Cæsar brings word from Capt. Menge that as soon as possible a sufficient force will be sent to drag our boats across the marsh to the canal and launched. About 9 o'clock our crew returned bringing with them several cables belonging to the dredge, which are passed around each boat, a rope is attached of about 200 yards in length, the end carried to the men, about 15 in number, who are waiting on the land, or at least where the water is not more than a few inches deep, and the work of hauling us over begins. Each boat is pulled and turned to within 300 yards of the dredge, a hawser is attached to us, connected to the powerful engine on the boat, and at a signal the rope tightens and the boats are quickly pulled across the intervening space. Stepping on board of the dredge, we are grasped warmly by the hand and given a cordial welcome by our fellow-Louisianian, Capt. Menge, who in the kindest manner tenders us the hospitality of his boat. We accept an invitation to dine with him, and the use of a stateroom on board, in which to take a few hours of rest and sleep, for our last night's experience in the "sleeping line" was not a success. A good sleep, a good bath, and feeling like new men, we leave our rooms, join our host, who introduces us to Capt. McIntyre, the chief engineer of the boat, and all hands sit down to a sumptuous repast prepared in honor of the occasion. We received a very pressing invitation from our host to remain several days and witness the working of his boat, but as we have learned that we have as yet to encounter difficulty of navigation before reaching the Caloosahatchee river, which will likely detain us several days, we decide, very much against our inclination, to resume our journey that evening.

After dinner we climb to the highest perch on the dredge and with the aid of a field-glass, get a splendid view of the surrounding country, including Lake Okeechobee. A vast level plain, unrelieved by woods, except on the borders of the lake, stretches for miles to the right and left of the canal. To us from our lofty perch, it resembles a vast plain, but we know in reality, that we are gazing across saw-grass marsh, and do not wonder that the attempt to penetrate from the Caloosahatchee river to this point has invariably been a failure. In front we gaze across the largest body of fresh water

in the South, and very properly named Okeechobee (Big water) by the Indians. But our island is in sight, and that we know by the experience of yesterday, is covered with water. In our rear or to the west, we see the canal, the work of months, with all appliances that money could obtain or skill devise, which, running straight as an arrow, is lost as it ends in the waters of Lake Hickpochee, at a distance of about three and one-half miles. Looking at the land lying immediately below us, we are informed by Capt. Menge that six months ago, when the canal was begun from Lake Hickpochee, from four to six feet of water covered the ground, which now in many places is perfectly dry; and in others not more than six inches of water can be seen, and yet the canal is not completed or the water draining out of Lake Okeechobee. On examining the soil through which the dredge is now cutting, we find it the same as around Lake Tohopotaliga, a decayed vegetable mould, resting upon a subsoil or pan of hard clay, reaching to a depth of from six to eight feet.

As 3 o'clock arrives, we get ready to resume our journey, accompanied by Capt. McIntyre in his steam launch, who will guide us as far as the entrance to the Caloosahatchee river. As I will have a better opportunity of examining the nature of the soil, and of seeing the surrounding country I accept the invitation of Capt. McIntyre to accompany him in the launch; and so after being joined by Capt. Andrews, we step on board; the "Daisy" and "Crescent," with their sails unfurled, push off from shore, and as our boat gives us our first "puff," the dredge boat and tender whistling in salute, which is answered by the launch, and our party is once more en route to the Gulf of Mexico.

As we leave the dredge we find but little current in the canal, but after going about a mile it becomes swifter. Half way the land becomes higher, and more is to be seen high and dry above the water, but the same rich soil remains unchanged, with no perceptible diminution in depth. Weeds from eighteen to twenty inches in circumference, reaching to a height of ten feet, have sprung up on the banks of the canal, where the earth has been thrown out in digging, and on every side the saw-grass is wilting and dying as its natural elements, the water, is being drained off. Take the water from the saw-grass, and when it becomes dead and dry, put fire to it, and the soil is rid of it, and the land is ready for the plow. The canal we are now floating down is just the beginning of the work of the drainage of thousands of acres in our immediate vicinity, for the company, as soon as the three or four great outlets are dug, which will take off the waters of Lake Okeechobee to the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic ocean, will begin cutting a

series of small canals diagonally across the present one, which are to answer a threefold purpose to the planter, viz: First, an additional means of drainage during the rainy season; second, a means of transportation for their crops, which can be shipped from their very doors; and thirdly, a saving of fencing to keep out stock. From what I understood in conversation with members of the company, one canal to every thousand acres will about be the proportion. Peculiarly adapted to the cultivation of cane, rice and corn, I have no hesitation in saying, that from six to eight hogsheads of sugar can be made to the acre, with one-half the labor and teams it requires to cultivate an acre in any other Southern State in the Union. The soil neither cakes nor bakes when exposed to the sun, but crumbles and pulverizes easily, reminding one very much of an ash heap, and instead of from two to four mules to a plow as in Louisiana, to cultivate the ground, after the first year one mule will do the cultivation, which no where else can be done with less than two. Cane has been known to ratoon for 12 years, and yield well (about 30 miles from this point) even when cultivated in the most primitive manner. I believe that on such soil, and with the climate it possesses, that to replant every fifteen years will be amply sufficient. Cane in this country has been known to grow untouched and uncultivated after the first year, for seven years, was then cut, ground and yielded well. Frosts are almost unknown, and when they do come, they are so slight as not to injure the most delicate tropical plants.

Concerning the richness of the soil I make the broad assertion that its equal is not within the boundry of the United States, and its superior no where in the world in such a large body. Instead of having the rows seven or eight feet apart in planting, four or five is ample in this soil and climate. In Louisiana, in the beginning of October, whether the cane is ripe or green, the mills are started, the cane manufactured into syrup or sugar, and the chances are it is not ripe, thereby losing a large percentage of what otherwise would yield if thoroughly matured. Frost and freezes wait for no man, and so, nolens volens, when the last hour arrives which the prudence of the planter tells him he can wait, cane is cut, and the work of sugar-making begins. Break a piece of machinery, and while the slow work of repairing it is going on at some foundry, freezes come, and the labor of a year, the savings of years are swept away; while here how different will soon be the picture. If your cane is not ripe in 8, you will wait 18 months, or as long as you find it necessary for the perfect maturity of the same. Crops can be taken off in July or August as well as in October, and many small planters prefer this month, as they are able to put fresh syrup on the market when

it commands a high price. Mr. Hough, living on the Caloosahatchee, had his mill burned while grinding his cane, and was of course compelled to stop. His new mill being rebuilt and refinished in June, he resumed his work of taking off his crop, and found the yield greater than when he first began. Until cane is in full blossom, no one thinks of grinding, that event depending upon the month in which you plant, as regards "plant cane," and the month in which you cut, as regards ratoon or stubble. Almost all the cane seen so far (December) is in full bloom.

One of the greatest advantages of the large body of land lying on each side of the canal, between Lake Okeechobee and Lake Hickpochee, is the water protection which these lakes will afford in case of a heretofore unknown spell of cold weather. The question of transportation has already been solved, for, as I write, by telegraph comes the news that by the route we already traversed, and will pass over in the next few days, a large steamer has made the trip, and a line of boats have already been put on to ply between the Gulf and Kissimmee City.

Swifter and swifter flows the water through the canal, as we near Lake Hickpochee, and not many minutes elapse are we are riding the waves of one of the most beautiful sheets of water in Florida. This lake is from four and one-half to five miles wide, and six or seven miles long. The lands on the banks of this lake are low and covered with saw-grass; the woods on the western shore coming down almost to the water's edge, and when the drainage is perfected on the lands in the vicinity of Lake Okeechobee, high banks will take the place of the present low lands.

Our boat is headed for the northwest shore, at which point we once more find ourselves, after steaming for about five miles, at the entrance to the canal, which is a continuation of the drainage system which connects Lakes Hickpochee and Okeechobee with the Caloosahatchee river.

The Colonel, who is sailing the "Daisie", has completely outstripped us, and as we turn into the Canal the white sails of that craft are seen about three miles from us, sailing swiftly down the current, which at this point is running at the rate of about six miles an hour, showing plainly the great fall there is between Lake Okeechobee and the Caloosahatchee river. The swift current is widening and deepening the channel every day, and when the dredge returns to this point for the purpose of perfecting its work, the crew will find its work done for them. This canal is about five miles long, straight as an arrow, and hundreds of acres, which a few months ago were covered with water from two to four feet are now high and dry. As the

saw-grass has already been burned off from a great deal of this land, we have a better opportunity of seeing how perfectly the company are succeeding in this, the grandest undertaking of the present century in the United States. There is no change in the soil from that already described, except that in several places the clay sub-soil has been reached at a depth of about six feet from the surface. On seeing the traces of where dams had been built across the canal, we are informed by Capt. McIntyre that when the boat had dredged the canal about a mile from the river the water drained off so rapidly that in several places before reaching Lake Hickpochee they were compelled to build these dams in their rear to keep their boat afloat.

We indulge in alligator shooting this evening on a grand scale. On every side as we steam down the canal, we see effects of the Colonel's rifle, and a number of dead alligators lying on the bank. He has had the cream of the shooting, but we decide to knocking over a few. Our boat soon enters the Caloosahatchee river which at this point is no wider than the canal. We land here for the purpose of camping all night on a high hummock a few hundred yards from the river, but as the "Daisie" and steam launch draw too much water to approach near to the shore, we are compelled to anchor them in the river, and after getting as near as possible in the "Crescent" we wade ashore.

We are visited by a shower during the night, and everything gets wet in camp. Not liking our camp grounds, we pack up everything wet and resume our journey the next morning, intending to camp and dry everything at the first good camping ground. A run of seven or eight miles brings us to a beautiful grove of palm trees, situated on the banks of the river, with good landing for our boats, so boats are headed for the shore, and ere long tents are up and everything spread out in the hot sun to dry. Capt. McIntyre being unable to come any further in the steam-launch, on account of the river being choked up with wild lettuce, has left his boat about three miles above, and has accompanied us in a skiff to our present camp. We spend this day (Sunday) in washing out the boats, drying our wet baggage, and in repacking provisions, which, as our voyage is drawing to a close, are gradually growing less. The "keg of nails" gives an ominous rattle when shaken, and on close inspection we realize the fact that one more day will see the last of it.

After taking dinner with us Capt. McIntyre returns to the dredge, and we, by his advice make our preparations for a hard day's work ahead through Lake Lettuce, which lies about one-half a mile from us, and covered

with wild lettuce so thickly that it is almost impossible for a boat to get through.

Before daylight the next morning everybody is astir, boats are packed, and at the first streaks of dawn we push off from shore, and are soon floating down the river. Our progress is soon impeded by the thick lettuce, which stretches out before us for a mile like a green field, with not a foot of clear water in sight, although we know by measurement that there are some seven or eight feet of water beneath the green covering. We have been told by Capt. Menge that it would likely take us two days to go the mile and one-half through this lake, and after our first vain attempt to force our way through it we are inclined to believe him, and for the first time during our voyage, we realize that we may be compelled to abandon our boats and walk to the nearest settlement on the Caloosahatchee.

Written directions have been given us by Capt. Menge as to how we are to go by land, should we be compelled to abandon our boats. We find after an hour's hard work we have gone about ten yards, so we hold a consultation to devise some means of getting through. While we are consulting, Cæsar is busy on his own hook, pulling up the lettuce with his hands and throwing it aside, and by the time our consultation is ended, we find the way cleared for several feet in front. A new idea enters our heads; we all go to work pulling up lettuce, and as a space is cleared, the boats are pushed forward. Our progress is much faster, and although the hot sun is pouring down upon us, everybody works with a will, as we see a prospect of getting through. One little incident happens to enliven us. Cæsar, in putting his hand in the water to pull up the lettuce grasps hold of and brings to the surface a huge water moccasin, the first we have seen on our trip. Luckily for Cæsar, he has grasped the snake next to his head, a worse scared nigger never was seen before in Florida, and the snake is dropped much quicker than he was picked up, notwithstanding the entreaties of the Professor to get Cæsar to hold on to him until he could determine his species. Cæsar don't take the same interest in science that the Professor does, and is satisfied with his short inspection of his snake.

We see clear water ahead at 2 o'clock, and feel so much elated that we stop working and take a cold dinner sitting in our boats. A half-hour's labor and thoroughly exhausted, we take our seats and our boats are allowed to float down the current while everybody takes a rest, so much needed after our four hours' toil in the wild lettuce of Florida, the difficulty of getting through which can only be appreciated by experience.

An hour's row and we enter Lake Flirt, which is but an enlargement of the river, being about two miles wide, and so shallow that any deviation from the main chanel of the river finds us stuck fast in the mud. Here seems to be the home of the water fowl. The shores are white with cranes, among which we see numbers of pink curlew, and the waters are black with every species of duck. We enjoy the best days sport we have yet had on our voyage, we notice several flocks of wild turkeys feeding on the edge of the lake, but are unable to get in shooting distance, owing to the shallowness of the water. The huge hummucks surrounding this lake are noted throughout the State as being the finest wild turkey and deer ground there is in the South. Two or three weeks before our arrival a band of Indians camped on these grounds and went deliberately to work slaughtering the turkeys, leaving hundreds on the ground dead, not even picking them up. No other reason could be given for such wanton destruction, except to keep away the white hunters they wished to destroy the game.

The sun is but half an hour high as we leave the lake and find ourselves floating down the high banks of the Caloosahatchee river .

A few hundred yards from the point at which we enter, the banks are of solid rock, and almost before we know it our boats are shooting over what is known as the "rapids." The water being quite low we are able to see and avoid the rocks which jet out from the surface of the water, and soon find ourselves in safe harbor opposite Fort Thompson, our camp ground for the night. Fort Thompson takes its name from having been used by the United States troops during the Indian war, as a supply depot, but was abandoned at the close of the war, and today nothing remains to mark the spot.

Our tents are pitched beneath a large oak tree, which furnishes an ample supply of moss for our beds, fires are lighted and every man is soon busy picking ducks and snipe or cleaning fish. Our appetites are sharpened by our day's work, certainly the hardest we have had since our voyage began, and the sumptuous repast that we sit down to at 9 o'clock puts everybody in good spirits. Pipes and cigars are lit, and tired as we are, it is 11 o'clock ere we hear the last story, hold an inquest over the last remains of the "keg of nails," (the verdict rendered being too much attention on the part of Cæsar) and all tumble into bed.

It is 9 o'clock next morning, and the sun is high in the heavens ere we are ready for our days journey. We feel rather sore from yesterday's work, and do not move quite as sprightly as usual. Capt. Andrews puts the Crescent in command of the Professor and joins the Colonel and myself in the

Daisy. Our awning is stretched over the boat to shield us from the hot sun, and after telling the men to take their time we light our pipes and prepare to enjoy the row down the Caloosahatchee. We were too completely "done up" to notice the beauties of this new country last evening, as our boats, almost before it, were born swiftly from the lake and into the river and then to our last night's camp, about a quarter of a mile from the lake; and now we quietly note and enjoy and feel for the first time since we landed in Florida that we are really and truly journeying through the "Land of Flowers."

High banks, a rich soil reaching to a depth of from three to four feet, a strata of shells embedded in limestone, commonly called "coquina," coming next, resting upon a solid foundation of rock, is what first meets our gaze on each side of the river, which at this point is not more than forty or fifty feet in width. Clear as crystal, sweet and delightful to the taste, are the waters of the river, and we spend hours of this days journey in looking over the gunwale of our boat at the numbers and the varieties of fish we see darting and swimming around us. Large wide spreading live oaks fringe the banks, throwing out their huge limbs half way across the river, and growing side by side is the palm tree reaching to a height of fifty or sixty feet. After rowing a few miles we land, climb up the steep bank, and it needs no imagination to convince us that we are in the tropics. The woods are densely thick, so thick that but a few straggling rays of sunlight seem to penetrate to relieve the intense shade which shade greets the eye on every side. Vines covered with flowers of the most brilliant hue, have twined themselves around the trunks of each and every tree, and growing upon the branches, instead of mistletoe is the "airplant" sometimes a brilliant green, and at others a dark purple color. Branches of different varieties of trees have met together overhead, or if they do not meet, the vines which encircle their body and limbs, have grown across to the intervening space, and have twined around each other. Over the carpet of green grass we tread, unimpeded by scrub or weed, as we walk through the woods gazing in wonder and admiration at the magnificent live oaks, magnolia and palm trees, which have grown to such extraordinary heights and size. Here for the first time we see the cork tree, which grows in profusion, and why some enterprising manufacturer has never attempted to utilize the wood, is an enigma to us. Even in its green state, it is but little heavier than cork, and when dried equally as light. We also see the india-rubber tree, at least it is so called here, but whether that species can be utilized or not, I am unable to state. Numerous other trees, which we have never seen before, meet our eyes at every turn. It is so cool

and pleasant under the dense shade of the trees, that it is with reluctance we retrace our steps to the boats, which on reaching, we step on board, shove off from shore, and our more than pleasant voyage is resumed.

At 10:30 we pass Fort Denaud, formerly used as a garrison by the United States troops during the Indian war. No vestige now remains of its former occupancy. We do not land and examine the spot for a hundred reasons. The first is that there are two cross-eared, bobtailed "yellar dorgs" standing on the bank, and when Cæsar attempts to jump on shore with a rope to tie the boat they each make a break for his legs, and as Cæsar assures us that "he ain't got no more clothes nearer dan Jacksonville," we do not insist on him making an attempt a second time. As one reason of the one hundred is sufficient we won't give the other 99 for shoving off from shore and continuing our voyage.

[MARCH 16, 1883.] On every side, as we proceed down the Caloosahatchee, we see the marks of the great flood of 1874, when the whole of the lands adjacent to the river were covered with water to a depth of from eight to nine feet. Previous to that year, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant or the oldest Indian living in Florida, the waters were never known to overflow the banks of that river, and no marks were to be seen upon trees over one hundred years old. For over thirty days storms raged on the Atlantic ocean and Gulf of Mexico, preventing the waters of the Everglades from flowing out, and Lake Okeechobee having no other outlet through which to drain off, the vast volume of water which the Kissimmee river, also higher than ever known before, swept down the Caloosahatchee covering the banks from its sources to its mouth and spreading destruction on every side. Luckily for the few settlers who then occupied this portion of the country the water rose slowly, and they had ample opportunity of moving back to the pine woods, which at some points are not more than a few hundred yards from the river and above any high water. Many who moved to the pine woods remained there, and although they cultivate the rich soil of the river bottom their residences are back among the pine trees.

When the drainage company having finished outlets of the waters of Lake Okeechobee, and it will no longer be compelled to depend upon the slow process of seeping through the Everglades, during the rainy season, pour into it, then all danger of the occurrence of such an overflow as that of 1874 will be prevented. Many trees have fallen into the water, and would to a certain extent obstruct the free navigation of it by any large craft, but a few thousand dollars judiciously expended would make it perfectly

navigable and to large steamers from Fort Myers to the canal. It has been estimated that five or six thousand dollars would be amply sufficient in proper hands.

At 1 o'clock we pass Fort Simmons, another old fort used by United States troops during the Indian war. As for the others (Forts Thompson and Denaud) no trace remains except the clearing, to denote its former occupancy. We begin to pass numerous places being cleared and buildings being erected, which tell us plainer than words that this, the garden spot of Florida, will in a few years show the balance of the State its superiority as regards climate and soil for producing everything that is now grown in Florida, and a hundred other tropical products that they cannot grow for want of soil or climate.

After an hour's rowing the familiar odor of a sugar mill during grinding season greets our nostrils. It is a familiar odor indeed, and two, at least, of our little party who begin to look anxiously for a first sight of a Florida sugar mill.

A flatboat loaded with sugar cane, tied to the bank, tells us the mill will be somewhere in the neighborhood, so we land, and as we step on shore we are met by the gentlemanly proprietor, Col. Jas. McKinley, and after introducing myself and party, we are cordially invited to walk over his Florida farm. As we reach the top of the bank we find ourselves in the midst of sugar making. The kettles are two in number, set in the open air, and the coolers consist of a large cypress log which has been hewn out, holding about ten or twelve barrels of syrup. The kettles are nearly the same size, but little larger than a large-sized wash-pot. The mill is run by one horse, and a boy of 10 or 12 years of age feeds the same with cane, which crushes one stalk at a time, and if that cane gets crooked as it is going through, the horse is backed, the cane is straightened, and everything is lovely once more. Col. McKinley is not making sugar, although the juice is cooked to a sugar point, but by adding pure lemon juice, it is prevented from granulating and when cooled is a clear and thick syrup equal to any Louisiana syrup in flavor or sweetness. We watch the process of boiling and are surprised at the short time it requires to cook, but are informed that it requires five gallons of juice to make one of syrup, cooked to a sugar point, the cane being thoroughly matured, and is therefore, perfectly sweet. I have, in describing the mill, neglected to state that the cane juice is caught in buckets as it comes from the mill and transferred by hand, in buckets, to the kettles. We visit the cane field, containing about eight or ten acres, and

are surprised at the size and thickness of the cane, which is fourth year's ratoon. It is so thick and matted; that no man can, without cutting his way, get through. In this case, where the cane was ten feet high, it was blown to the ground by the winds, where it took a fresh start and continued to grow until it reached a height of six feet, when it was again blown to the ground and compelled to start upward again. From this statement our readers can form an idea of the appearance that cane field presented to us. Cutting one of the stalks, we pulled it out with difficulty from among the others, for it is as crooked as a ram's horn, and we find that by actual measurement it will cut 18 feet for the mill, and this is neither the largest nor tallest we find in our examination. The rows are four and five feet apart. Colonel McKinley also exhibited to us cotton which had been growing in the open air for four years. We measure one of the stalks and find it eighteen inches in circumference six inches above the ground and nine feet in height. The plant, or perhaps I had better say tree is covered with green leaves, blossoms, forms, bolls, and open cotton. Colonel McKinley informs us that there is no day in the year that open cotton can not be found on the stalk, and that it has never been cultivated since the first year. The reader will recollect that on the 15th day of December when in Northern Florida frost and even ice are the order of the day. Leaving the field we accompany the Colonel to his residence, where we visit his garden and fruit orchard.

The following vegetables we find in full bearing, viz: Tomatoes, egg-plants, beans, peas, watermelons and both sweet and Irish potatoes. Of fruits we note the following varieties: Oranges, limes, lemons, cocoanuts, pine-apples, tamarinds, alligator pears, mangoes and mazapotas. The Colonel also points out his rice field (pinewood land), on which he gathered this year seventy-five bushels of rough rice to the acre. He is experimenting in raising tobacco, which will be equal to the Havana in quality.

How the cane is cultivated.

On returning to the mill our conversation on the cultivation of sugar is resumed, and in a few words I give the results. Cane is planted about four feet apart, plowed three times a year with a single horse, is cut and ground any time after it matures; his meanest cane which he is not grinding, although at least 30 per cent is left in bagasse from inability with his present mill to properly crush the same, has yielded 350 gallons of syrup to the acre, already sold at 50c a gallon; cost per acre to cultivate this crop is \$7. Cane will ratoon indefinitely if properly cultivated, and can be planted or ground any month in the year. Colonel McKinley showed us a very fair specimen of

sugar made for his own use, but considers syrup with his present means of manufacturing as the most paying crop. He expects to make a specialty of pineapples and will plant it largely. Colonel McKinley who was for years a mate on the Mississippi river, but has been living for six or seven years in Florida, is happy, contented and prosperous.

While we are indulging in a glass of sugar-house beer, Dr. James Kellum, accompanied by his charming lady and his nephew, Mr. Higby, of St. Louis, arrive in their boat from their place about two miles below. He has his little daughter Sallie with him—about five or six years of age—whose exquisitely beautiful face, charming and winning little ways, soon has three devoted admirers in the persons of Col H., Capt. A., and myself. Dr. Kellum was for years a surgeon in the United States Navy before the war, was Chief Medical Director on the staff of Gen. Walker in his Nicaraguan expedition, and during our civil war was chief medical purveyor and inspector on the staff of Gen. Longstreet. He needs no introduction to any of the old Confederates of the Virginia army. He is a Virginian by birth, and left a princely home and a large practice to come to Florida about nine years ago to settle (as he says, and we agree with him), in God's country, the Caloosahatchee Valley. We receive a warm invitation from the Dr. and his lady to accept the hospitality of his roof, but we are compelled to decline. We do accept an invitation to camp on his place, and bid adieu to Col. McKinley, after thanking him for his offer of hospitality and courtesies, we, in company with the Doctor, resume our voyage down the river, arriving at our camp-ground after dark. Tents are pitched and supper cooked, after which we turn in and sleep until sunrise next morning. After breakfast having attempted to make ourselves presentable, we all go out to the Doctor's residence, about half a mile from the river, to call upon him. His residence is built upon the edge of a pine woods, he having removed from the river bank after the flood of 1874. His house and outbuildings are built of pine are large and commodious. We do not find the Doctor at home on our arrival at the house, but are kindly received by Mrs. Kellum and Miss Sallie. Her variety of flowers and plants in the parterre are the most rare collection in the State of Florida. Previous to the flood of 1874, a large horticulturist from New York attempted to propagate and grow all the different varieties of tropical plants in the open air about half a mile from the place. His success was perfect, but unfortunately the water flooded him, and over \$5,000 worth of valuable plants were killed and swept away, just as he was beginning to realize from his venture. Previous to that time, Mrs. Kellum had obtained

roots and cuttings from him of his rarest shrubs and flowers, which she saved, and all of which have grown and flourished under her personal care. It would take too much space to attempt an enumeration of all the different species, or describe in words the loveliness of this perfect wilderness of flowers presented to our view, or the rare and exquisite perfumes which are wafted to our nostrils in this beautiful garden in South Florida.

After bidding farewell to Mrs. Kellum and the charming little Miss Sallie, who is perfectly willing to join our party, we wend our way to the cane field of the Doctor, and if we were surprised yesterday by size and luxuriant growth of Colonel McKinley's cane, we are doubly so today, when we view that of the Doctor's, which is growing on some of the richest low lands of the Caloosahatchee Valley, in full blossom, superior in size and height to any we have ever heard or dreamed of in our lives. We attempt to find a fair sample for the purpose of shipment to the office of THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT, but the largest is so crooked that it would be impossible to ship them, so we have to content ourselves with smaller sizes, which will give an idea of the size and type of cane in South Florida.

The Doctor having returned joins us and we soon engage in a conversation on the culture of cane. As in the case of Col. McKinley, I have a synopsis of the information furnished me upon the subject, which was as follows: Dr. Kellum has lived in Florida for nine years, and planted cane for four years. The land he has in cultivation is high hummock, with a top soil of decayed vegetable matter mixed with sand, reaching a depth of from two and a half to three feet; then comes a strata of marl about two feet, the subsoil being clay, reaching to an unknown depth. He has not devoted much attention to cane, but will plant 35 or 40 acres this year—not for the purpose of grinding, but for seed for those immigrating to that section—for the purpose of planting cane. Such cane as I see growing is worth for plant cane \$300 per acre, and even that price could not buy it now. One acre of such cane, by planting a single cane, which is amply sufficient, will plant 15 acres. It begins to yield its best and will ratoon indefinitely, increasing every year its yield, with proper cultivation. The Doctor plows his cane three times a year with a single plow, and plants and grinds any month in the year. He has never ground but one year, and his means of taking off his crop were so primitive (wooden rollers and boiling in kettles in the open air) that his crop yielded him \$100 an acre, net. He considers that cane will yield best after being allowed to tassel for four months.

In further conversation with the Doctor I learned that there is yet a large amount of government land open for entry to actual settlers, back from the river, although but little on the river bank remains unentered. He also shows me two mango trees, which will bear this year, which are about 12 or 15 feet in height, and resemble slightly the Japan plum in foliage and appearance. This is considered one of the most delicate tropical trees, and easily killed by cold. The Doctor seems perfectly in love with his Florida home, and says that money would not induce him either to sell or abandon it. He is anxious to see immigration set in the direction of the Caloosahatchee, provided it is of that class, which could be considered an addition to the society and intelligence of the community.

The inhabitants of Caloosahatchee are all from Southern States, notably Alabamians, Virginians, Mississippians, and Texans. I met no Louisianians, although I understood there were several.

We are introduced by the Doctor to Wm. E. Loper, his nearest neighbor. Mr. Loper is a highly educated and intelligent gentleman, a native of Mobile, but for several years after the war was occupying the position of bookkeeper in a large mercantile house in New Orleans. His failing health compelled him to seek Florida nine years ago and here he still remains and hopes to remain the balance of his days. He is the owner of one of the finest lemon groves on Charlotte harbor, which he has abandoned for the purpose of planting cane on the Caloosahatchee. He will have about 30 acres in this year. We cross the river and examine his field of cane, which, although very fine, is much younger and inferior in size to Dr. Kellum's, it being plant cane and the Doctor's fourth year ratoon.

The Doctor and Mr. Loper have made an engagement to meet us in three days at Fort Myers, and join our party in a cruise around the Gulf coast, we say *au revoir*, and our little boat, the Daisy is soon skimming over the water and our party is jubilant over the idea of reaching Fort Myers that night, it being only thirty-five miles from this point by water. The Crescent was sent ahead early in the morning, and has about five hours the start of us. The river at this point is quite wide, and continues to widen as our voyage progresses. After going about ten miles the high banks disappear and the marshes come down to the water's edge. Occasionally a high ridge of land comes down to the river, but that does not happen often. We pass innumerable small islands, but they are low and often covered with nothing but mangrove trees. But few settlers are seen below Dr. Kellum's, the land not

being considered of the best quality for cane but is the very best in the State for pine-apples and cocoanuts.

Dark finds us still rowing down the river, with Fort Myers not yet in sight, a strong headwind, and the river a mile in width. About 9 o'clock we begin to think we will be compelled to anchor and spend the night in our boat, when ahead we see a light flame up and are made happy, for we know it is a signal to guide us into port, made by the Professor and the crew of the Crescent, who have arrived at their destination. We taste the water which is flowing by the side of the boat, and find that we have reached salt water, and our journey of over five hundred miles has been accomplished. We are soon moored to the wharf at Fort Myers, which for the first time has the honor of holding the first boats that ever made the through trip from Lake Tohopotaliga to the Gulf of Mexico, via the Everglades, and at the masthead of those two little boats floats the flag of THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT.