

We Choose the Sub-Tropics

By F. PAGE WILSON

The story of a last frontier, seen through the eyes of a young man from a northern business office, who, deciding such a career would never satisfy, sought with his family a freer, more natural life in the Farthest South. This was in early '95.

Ever southward! Our trim little sloop danced over the greenish-blue between South Florida and the indigo blue of the Gulf Stream. Then she turned sharply west and into a channel which divided two protecting islands. A few minutes and we were in the smoother, crystal-clear waters of what looked like an inland sea. It was Biscayne Bay.

We glanced across at the mainland shore, some three miles ahead. North and South it stretched as far as eye could reach, an unbroken, curving, low-lying mass of green. It was the "Bay Biscayne country" of old Spanish maps, the "empty, island-bordered coast" of Ponce de Leon—"that great domain of sun and sea and wondrous vital air." And now, nearly four centuries later, thus it appeared to us.

Our captain blew three blasts on a huge conch shell. On closer approach we discerned a little sailboat; the mouth of a river; some white trousers hanging on a tree to dry; then the roof of a building. But what made us tingle with excitement was to recognize those wide-plumed trees towering at curious angles above the rest. Coconut palms, sure symbol of the tropic shore we sought!

Too absorbed for words, we gazed upon this place, the one which looked most likely after months of seeking and comparing. A far-down, isolated little spot whose very name was in doubt, some sources giving Fort Dallas, some Miami, others leaving it a blank! What after all did we know beyond a few bare facts of its healthfulness and climate, its arresting position on the map? . . . Now such thoughts vanished. This was some other world, new and alluring and very different; but one which spoke in silent sureness of outstanding things to come.

THE NEW LAND

We landed at the south point of the river's mouth; my wife, our small daughter (always called Bee) and myself. There to meet us was a smiling, bare-headed, sun-tanned man in blue jeans and a shirt open-throated to the February breeze. He was Hon. Frederick S. Morse, recently in the State Legislature, with whom I had had some correspondence. Originally from Boston but living here "because his health liked it", he was agent for lands of the embryo Florida East Coast Canal Company.

"Just in time for breakfast" was his genial greeting . . . "Ever taste a good ripe papaya?" He led us to his little "bachelor shack" close by. "After that, we'll say how-do to the people around here, then take a little sail down the Bay to a place for you to stay."

We had just sat down when, with a quizzical glance at our city faces, he said, "There come some of the people now." Through the open door behind us we saw a group of Seminole Indians, in brightly colored dress but of stolid mien, landing from canoes with bundles of skins. "In from the Everglades to sell their stuff at Brickell's," he told us, pointing to a substantial two-story frame building near by.

William B. Brickell was a man of the sturdy, adventurous type who had traveled widely and made money in the Australian gold fields. Arriving in 1871, he had bought land, established this Indian Trading Post and lived here with his family ever since, adding to his acreage from time to time. They gave us a warm welcome coupled with curiosity. Visitors from the North did not usually include women and children.

Next, we sailed (or paddled) across the river to the north shore. Here was old Fort Dallas, a structure of native rock built in its original form as an army post following the Seminole war of 1836-40. This, with the surrounding land, had been purchased by Mrs. Julia D. Tuttle of Cleveland, Ohio. Partly remodeled, it had been her permanent home since 1891. That lady impressed us as a thoroughly capable business woman, one too who knew how to be happy in the wilderness. Evidently glad to see new faces, she was an almost unbelievable optimist as to the future of this chosen spot.

These two, old Fort Dallas on the north side of the river and the Indian Trading Post on the other, were Miami's only two buildings. Each stood in a fair-sized clearing with a few flowers and fruit trees and, of course, the coconuts. Beyond that was dense jungle, merging further back into pine forest almost as wild.

Morse wanted me to see some large tropical fruit trees at an old settler's place up the Miami river. The trip promised rough walking, however, and the Tuttle ladies persuaded my wife to remain with them until our return. Later when I saw the terrain, I was glad. It gave my wife a chance, too, to hear about the country from the woman's point of view.

Miami (and the river) are said to have derived their name from the Calusa Indian word "Mayaimi" meaning, some say "sweet water", others say "Big Lake". Whatever the exact meaning of the name, the abundance of fresh water at this point must have proved a boon to many a mariner wrecked on the coral reef off-shore. It was to be found also in springs on shore and even in the middle of the salty Bay if one knew where to look. The river's width and volume made it quite imposing. It was a surprise then to learn that its sources, barely traceable in the vast expanse of Everglades grass and water, were only half a dozen miles or so from its mouth. Running toward the Bay in a south-easterly direction, the river reached the coast ridge in two channels, the North and the South Fork. In the latter, a stretch of protruding rock and boulders, partially damning the flow, was known as the Miami Rapids.

The whole population of six was at the boat landing to see us off. That was the last little oasis of human life before the void. The river, quickly losing width, stretched before us like a curling, silver-grey ribbon between green walls; an outer fringe of mangroves, then live-oak, gumbo limbo, a lone mahogany. Occasionally we had a peep at some long-legged bird, but this was not their time of day. We saw an alligator sleeping like a log on shore and I thought I saw the snout of another unpleasantly near our boat. We also saw that great cumbrous amphibian, the manatee or sea-cow. But that was all.

The house at which we stopped, grey from sun and rain and half-hidden in vines, was of the long, low type, mostly porch. The owner, whose name, I think, was McNeill, was a tall lean man, brown as a nut but strong and quick-stepping for his years. He led us over a very dubious "trail". We edged in between clumps of tall palmetto, scrambled through lianas and prickly vines, tore our shoes on jutting rock. But to see those trees was worth it: mangos avocados, and two or three fruits still more tropical. The mangos especially were a noble sight in full bloom. I thought of that Garden of the Hesperides . . . "with tree following tree, flowering or in fruit throughout the livelong year".

The old man, proud of his little grove, was full of plans for enlarging it. Knowing the high value given these fruits by those familiar with them,

I asked if he had ever tried them in northern markets. "Shipping them?" he laughed. "Many times. Trouble is to get them there before they rot . . . Oh well, transportation will come—some day".

Primarily, of course, our search was for the place and the climate approaching most nearly our own desires. Still, wherever that might be, it had to offer some fair promise for a living. I had always loved working with trees. Hence the idea of some all-year outdoor land where, with small stuff for immediate profit, we could make fruit trees the basis of a self-supporting home. This poor looking soil of sand and rock could certainly produce good trees. Many things had yet to be considered but I was almost ready to believe that tropical fruit culture was the answer. A new industry for the United States—and practically untried! But South Florida was different—almost the only place in which it could even be tried.

Mrs. Trapp's boarding house was beautifully situated on a silvery-rock bluff overlooking the Bay just above Coconut Grove. "Rough but we'll try and make you feel at home," she said cheerily as she showed us to a room. Her husband told us how, well past 70 and scarcely able to stand, he had come here "just to die in the sunshine." Now, with his own hands he was helping build a larger, two-story home of native rock. It was this family, with the son Harlan, who developed and gave their name to a well-known variety of avocado.

Morse was guiding us around outside when Mrs. Trapp emerged with a tray of long, juicy drinks. We sat down under a big banyan. My wife gave a little laugh as she said, "I'm trying to realize the change from what we left a week ago. This sunshine and the blue, sparkling sea! And sitting on a bench outdoors! I can hardly believe it even now."

Meantime, I'd been thinking. To "learn" this peculiar country in the way it should be learned would take a lot of exploring. Better go slow about settling on anything. I said as much to Morse.

He nodded vigorously. "That's the idea. You want to be dead sure this is the place you really want. You know," he went on with the Morse twinkle in his eye, "I'm glad to answer all those questions of yours—when I can. But I can help best by helping you find answers for yourself. By seeing places, hearing what people say on both sides. Isn't that so, Mrs. Trapp?"

"I guess so," she agreed. "Each one must do his own deciding. This is a country you've got to like for itself. It can be pretty tough if you don't."

"What about you, Mrs. Trapp?" asked my wife with her woman's instinct for concrete cases, "Do you really like it here?"

"Like it!" she answered a little testily. "I love it . . . tho I couldn't tell why. Certainly not for the money in it," she laughed.

On our way to see Morse off in his boat, a man turned from the road toward Trapp's. "Hi! Colonel," cried Morse, "I'd like you to meet some new arrivals anxious to size up what we've got here." Valentine, he explained, was a surveyor and could tell us more about it than anybody.

"Great boy for the blarney, isn't he?" laughed the new-comer, as we shook hands. "Well, any time you feel like roughing it, glad to take you along." This, no doubt, was what Morse had in mind about meeting people. I accompanied Valentine on several of his surveying trips. A couple of times I held the chain when his assistant could not come. Searching for a badly needed corner post could teach many things about a strange terrain.

The incident illustrates the friendly informality of the country. Everybody I met was glad to help and my wife had the same experience with the ladies. However, this was distinctly a "man's country". At the house, for days together Mrs. Trapp was the only woman she saw.

The road referred to, between the bluff and the Bay, was the Indian Trail through the jungle from Miami River to Coconut Grove. It was the nearest approach to a real road in the entire region. In low spots, it was the favored parade ground for regiments of the voracious, multi-colored, pop-eyed land crab in search of a nice, newly planted tomato. Little Bee loved them if nobody else did.

Another visitor at the house was introduced to us as the Duke of Dade. A picturesque and not unfitting title for the stalwart J. W. Ewan. He had been superintendent of the Biscayne Bay Co's lands on Miami River up to the time of their purchase by Mrs. Tuttle.

COCONUT GROVE

Morse drove up for us next morning in a sort of wide-wheel buggy cart to take us over the Coconut Grove section. To reach the village, we ascended—rare phenomenon in South Florida—a little hill. On the road along the crest were some nice looking homes with a sweeping view of the Bay. Several were of two stories and ornamented with the cupolas and scrolls favored at that day. As to material, some were of mahogany or other wood found afloat or on the beach; others of native Caribbean Pine heavy and hard to work but astonishingly durable.

Among Grove buildings, I remember the Congregational Church, the School, the Shone and Charles Peacock stores, and the Peacock Inn. It was

a little startling to note the enthusiasm with which the people here had gone to work to get their great desire, a Public Library. But what stood out in our minds was that this tiny settlement, a mere dot in hundreds of miles of wilderness, without transportation, without what are called the necessaries of life, should have drawn to itself so many noteworthy, or say, interesting people.

We came upon Ralph D. Munroe—the Commodore, as he was always called, his blue eyes busy with a telescope in his beloved boathouse. A naval architect from Staten Island, he had made this his permanent home since 1888. His development of a light-weight, shoal-draft yet highly seaworthy vessel almost revolutionized sailboat design. Drawn to the Biscayne Bay region by its ideal sailing conditions, he became interested also in pineapple canning, sponge fishing, mahogany from the Keys. But he loved it too much to stand for any speculative over-painting of its advantages.

Long associated with the Commodore was Capt. Dick Carney, originally one of an expedition to plant coconuts on the Beach. Also among the seafarers were Capt. Frow and Capt. Bravo. This reminds me of several other sea captains living up or down the coast. Perhaps under the spell of voyages in tropic seas, they could think of no better spot for retirement than this near approach in their own country. Of the people in general, many were from various parts of Florida but other states were well represented. We also noted a good many English. Some were up-State orange growers migrating further south: some, like the Peacocks, direct from the old country; others from the Bahamas or Keys and locally known as Conchs.

Coconut Grove had its attraction, too for authors and artists. Kirk Munroe, famous author of tales about the Coral Reef, the Everglades and Keys, lived here many years. His wife was a daughter of Amelia Barr, the well known novelist, and she too, I think, was a sometime resident. We heard of more than one noted painter roughing it in the attempt to snatch the brilliant coloring of local skies and waters. Earlier history tells of geologists like Agassiz, of the bird lover Audubon, studying nature here in phases seen nowhere else.

After lunch at the Peacock Inn (shall we ever forget that delicious green-turtle soup?), we made for the piney woods. The "road" soon petered out into a sandy, bumpy trail over palmettoes, rock and roots. Now and then we would come to the dwelling of some lone homesteader with its little clearing and a few trees.

It was easy to see why those clearings were mostly small. First, the pine trees had to be cut down and burned; then a tough, interlacing mat of

palmettoes hacked out, one by one. This still left a mass of scrub oak, myrtle and other stuff to be rooted out from a rocky bed. It was inch-by-inch, hard work and all with hand tools. What a difference, I thought, between the homesteader here and his brother on the western plains. There, in little more time than it took to break one acre here, he could plow a hundred; then look forward in three or four months to a bonanza crop. Something more subtle must have been the incentive here.

In places, the monotony of the dull-green pine and palmetto was broken by a spur of low glade or prairie. Here the soil, instead of sand and rock, was of marl or sometimes sandy loam. It looked moister and more fertile, though I saw none of it in use.

Ahead of us now we saw a large clearing with a nice bungalow and thrifty young grapefruit trees. "John Ellis's homestead," Morse told us. "He wants me to look over some hammock land with him in next section. You'll like to see it, too."

Ellis, an experienced grower from Orange county, looked more like a city business executive than a farmer. My wife was soon deep in talk with Mrs. Ellis about homestead housekeeping, the insect plague in summer and so forth. She agreed to stay with her and the children while we men tackled the hammock. That, they told us, was the Florida name for jungle and a pretty stiff proposition.

Jungle it was; an almost impenetrable wall of many kinds of hardwood trees peculiar to the tropics. With axe and machete we cut a little path toward the center. Here the trees grew larger, the soil more full of humus from cycles of decaying leaves, nature ever more demanding. For every space was filled; the ground with ferns and diverse shrubs; the trunks of trees with epiphytic ferns; the branches with orchids and a hundred air-plants. A sort of three-story garden!

The hammock opened on one side to the Everglades. Ellis cast a thoughtful eye over that vast expanse of watery saw-grass dotted in the distance with little tree-embowered islands. Then he said, "It isn't just the mystery, it's the immensity. And that long neck of land across the Bay, the miles and miles of solitary Keys! To say nothing of the piney woods! This country will surely have a host of how's and why's to settle for itself."

LEMON CITY AND NORTH

Our next long trip with Morse was northward. After a mile or so we stopped to see William Oxer, an old-timer who had several kinds of citrus and tropical fruit trees. He had such an abiding love for a certain spot under

a group of cocopalms overlooking Biscayne Bay that it was there he wanted, very insistently, to be buried when he died.

As in other instances, I noted here that orange trees looked less thrifty than either grapefruit or limes. My own preference, however, was still for the more tropical fruits. Not only did they seem to be well adapted to this soil, but climatic needs restricted them to a much smaller area in the entire country than was the case with citrus.

Oxer had a little patch of tomatoes, green beans and other tender stuff. Here, as elsewhere, I looked carefully for any sign of the great freeze which had devastated most of Florida so recently. I saw none. However, had crops then been planted on low land far back from the Bay, the story might have been different.

Buena Vista, facing the Bay some two miles further up, was the site of one of the more commodious homes, that of the Merritts—Pete and Z. T. and their sisters Ada and Nan. Ada was principal of Lemon City School and Z. T. county school superintendent for years.

Lemon City was our next stop. About as far north of Miami River as Coconut Grove was south, it was the only other settlement of any size this side of Palm Beach. The name is said to have been derived from proximity to the Filer lemon grove, though this was really nearer Buena Vista. Among the buildings were the Methodist Church, the School, Connolly's Hotel and a number of residences.

There was also a Post Office. Until quite recently, mail for points on Biscayne Bay had been brought by a carrier walking barefoot down the Beach from Lake Worth, sixty-odd miles North. Some in Coconut Grove still had their mail dropped by passing steamship.

Lemon City's main street contained D. R. Knight's general store, two or three smaller ones, a barber shop and a saloon. It continued to the Bay where there was a warehouse operated by L. W. Pierce, also a long wharf. A small schooner ran between here and Key West. There, if tomato shippers were lucky, it connected with the Mallory steamers for New York.

We sat on a sunny, breeze-cooled rail to watch the pelicans on top of some sea-bitten old piles. Little Bee wanted to know why they looked so sad. Why indeed, when each one enjoyed a throne to itself and, only a splash below, all the fish it could catch? From a boat just in from the Bahamas came laughter and the soft, broad accents of the colored sailors. They unloaded a few baskets of early pineapples and the captain picked out for us a couple of full ripens.

As we sat and ate, James L. Nugent and Count Jean d'Hédouville stepped up from their boat and Morse made us acquainted. Of these two, a good story is told. Belonging to highly placed families in Europe, cultured and widely traveled, they had been close friends over there for years. Then Nugent, on a supposedly brief visit to America, had—so far as his family knew—become lost in the wilds of South Florida. To appease anxiety, d'Hédouville came in search. He found him but, by this time, both liked it here so well that they decided to stay. Nugent made several trips to Central America looking for finer types of mango. He was now, with Charles F. Siebold, planting a grove at Snapper Creek. D'Hédouville acquired a large tract on the Bay at Buena Vista.

Away from the dock, signs of town soon dwindled. A couple of miles north, we came to a sizeable stream called Little River and turned inland. Among the scattered settlers, I remember George and R. F. Potter, the Soar Brothers and Bill Mattair; all with nice little homes and fruit trees.

A REVOLUTIONARY CROP

"Now," said Morse, "we're coming to a crop of tomatoes I want you to see. If it isn't a fluke—and I don't see how it can be—it's going to change this whole country. Notice the soil. Marl prairie. No rock. Easy to plow. Dozens of attempts to farm these prairies have failed—until this." A spare, thoughtful looking man now joined us and Morse, when he had introduced us, said, "Freeman, it's just too wonderful to be true. How're you coming out, if I may ask?"

"Not too bad. Lost some on the way North, but prices are away up and plenty more to pick." I was wondering why this prairie experience should be so different from the others when Freeman explained, "Just dropped a bit of wet stable manure on the roots at planting. Not for fertilizer, only to get them started. These prairies, you know, are under water all summer. Takes the life out of them."

That was it, I supposed, and the manure re-started the bacterial action. Be this as it might, word of that prairie crop and the mid-winter prices—together with the freeze in the orange belt—was already bringing new-comers to see this safer region. It was the beginning of the first little boom-agricultural!

SOME MORE EXPLORING

In between these excursions with Morse, I made some alone or with others. A man whom I met casually in Coconut Grove took me in his sailboat two or three miles north of Lemon City to see George Ihle. A retired Navy

man, he was a veritable wizard in making things grow in white sand. Quite early he had discovered that farming here was like farming nowhere else. Many a good hint he gave me.

Among explorations which I made alone was one which nearly had an unpleasant ending. It was in the wild area a few miles south of Coconut Grove, known to the Indians as the Big Hunting Grounds.

It was here the U. S. Government had granted Dr. Henry Perrine a township on which to carry out his long thought out plans for a tropical farming colony. He had already introduced several plants and trees from Yucatan and other countries, descendants of which still exist. Because of the Seminole War, however, he made temporary headquarters on Indian Key and established there a large nursery. Then came the Indian attack on that island, not by the Seminoles but by a remnant of the Calusas, former inhabitants of the lower peninsula. The Doctor was killed, the house burned and his family escaped only by hiding in a turtle crawl beneath the wharf.

Thus ended in tragedy a cherished dream which, placing less emphasis on high-priced perishables, might have changed the whole course of South Florida farming.

My opportunity to see this district had come through a fellow-boarder. He invited me to take a sail down the Bay to visit his old friend John Addison at a spot recently re-named Cutler. After admiring the famous Addison mangos, I had left the friends together and wandered off into the back-country, arranging to return in time for dinner at 1 o'clock.

It was typical good-class piney woods. Here and there was a tongue of low wet land which I either crossed or rounded. After a couple of hours of hard but pleasant tramping in the crisp bright air, I turned back. Traveling at least as far in the new direction, I came to an unfamiliar glade. That is, from its size and shape, I was sure I had not seen it on the way out. The water was deep, I saw moccasins and tried to get around it. But the further I walked, the bigger it looked.

Meantime, the sunshine had given place to heavy overcast and I had failed to bring my compass. Addison and the coast lay somewhere to the East, but where was East? Really worried now, I could only continue walking—on feet becoming sorer every moment from wet shoes.

Hungry, thirsty, I was wondering how it would feel to spend the night in these woods when I saw a wisp of smoke. Hurrying, I came to a tent and, two or three yards away, a man who was stirring something in a pot over a makeshift fire-place. "Lucky you ran into me," he said, when I told of my

plight. "Addison isn't far"—he pointed sideways—"but that way you were going, there isn't a living soul this side of the jumping-off place. I'll see you get to your friends all right. First, though, let's eat. You must be famished."

But I was not too famished to wonder a little about my rescuer. After telling me his name was Sheldon, "You see," he explained, "I've been a shut-in all my life. School teacher, up in Iowa. Just doing now what I've always longed to do. Get out into the open, live with nature, be man enough to feed myself. Well, it works all right. These sweet potatoes are from my little patch yonder. And this tail of young alligator—well, I caught him in the glade last night."

Another time, I looked over the homesteads northwest of Miami. Here the S. A. Belcher family had two or three adjoining claims, later the site of one of the largest groves. Here, too, near the river, was the Wagner place with its two acres of orange grove, probably the largest in the region. In 1855, when the first William Wagner settled on that land, the Seminoles were again on the war-path. A pioneer indeed!

Reaching home, I found visitors—John Ellis, whom I had met at his homestead, and H. Price-Williams. They were two of a small group buying a tract on the Miami River, and it had occurred to Ellis that we might like to join. The offer was tempting, as I found on looking it over a day or two later. However, the group or colony idea never did appeal to me. Besides, land at \$100 per acre looked rather steep for that place and age—certainly too steep for my pocket. Later it became a millionaire's estate and, after that, a subdivision built up with high-class homes.

WE SETTLE DOWN

Our purchase of a 25-acre tract was prompted by three facts: the soil looked good and was of more than one type, including muck and hammock; it lay prettily with a high spot for the house and a gentle slope back to the Glades; there were several settlers, some with families, within a few miles.

It was west of Little River, near a spot later given a Post Office under the name of Biscayne. Here, Mrs. Tuttle's father, E. T. Sturtevant, long acquainted with the country, and his son Wheeler, had taken up homesteads. Her daughter Fanny had another not far off, part in oranges under the care of Jack Toms, a young English planter from up-State. These 160-acre "toss-ups" with Uncle Sam were evidently considered good enough by some.

Faced now with the problem of building a house, I realized how little I knew about it. The plan would need be of the simplest: just a living room,

bedroom, kitchen with out-door extension for pump, washing, etc. and, of course, a porch. Lumber presented no difficulty. A saw-mill near Lemon City was selling native pine at \$10 per thousand. For foundation, I would cut 2 ft. pine logs. Glass being unobtainable, the windows would need shutters.

As helper, I was lucky in getting a sturdy young fellow named Charlie, of the sort able and willing to turn his hand to anything. We arranged, for the building period, to sleep in a neighbor's shack, my wife and Bee staying at Trapp's.

The house was half up when we had two very pleasant visitors, Mr. and Mrs. Fino Soop, who lived two miles west. "Just to get acquainted and see if there's anything we can do," he told me. Noticing his rather intent look on the walls, I instantly felt foolish. We had nailed the sheathing on the inside instead of outside of the frame. But he only murmured, "Kind of Swiss chalet effect, eh!" and turned away. So I said nothing, though I did confess later. Tolerance, I found, was quite a trait of these pioneers. Relying on their own ideas, they did not question another's right to do the same.

When they had gone, I asked Charlie what he thought about that way of putting on the sheathing. "Oh," said he, "I thought where you came from, maybe they did it that way." I laughed and asked him where he was from. "Born in Marion County, Florida" he told me, "but when father died, I went north with mother . . . The snow was real pretty. But—well, the trees had no leaves. I could never get used to that." Further prompting brought out that he had come down here because his father had always wanted to. He managed to make a living by 'gator hunting, trapping and odd jobs.

Bright and early next morning, Soop came again, with a friend. "Thought you could do with extra hands on that roof," he explained. They put in a long day's work and, at the end, I said something about payment. But they wouldn't hear of it. "Some day," laughed Soop, "one of us may need a new roof."

The water problem was solved with surprising ease. All we had to do was to file teeth at the end of a 15 ft. length of galvanized pipe, jerk it up and down thru the porous rock with occasional shaking to empty, then attach to the top a kitchen pump. A few minutes of hard pumping and the water issued clear and sparkling.

Digging at the edge of the Glades, I unearthed a pocket of yellow-brown, powdery stuff which looked and felt like ochre. Most houses in these parts seemed to get along without paint, but the garishly new look of ours was a

constant irritant. So, mixing the ochre with the most likely looking oil I could get and with kerosene for turpentine, I started to paint the house. The front was nearly finished when the ochre ran out and I hurried to the "mine" for more. But alas! though I dug in several places, all I could find was barely enough to cover the front wall.

The building was now finished and I drove to town to meet my wife and get furniture. The shock came when we learned that nobody had any. At last, rather than face the vague delays of shipment from the North, we decided to make our own. So we loaded up with such things as we could get: coal-oil stove, pots and pans, some sheeting and sail-cloth, a whole bolt of netting for mosquito bars and screens, also some old barrels and boxes. That night we slept on sheets and under bars, but on the floor.

In the morning, all hands turned to furniture making. Nice round hardwood branches from the jungle made legs for chairs and tables. Mattresses we stuffed with shredded palmetto leaves, pillows with pine straw. Sugar-barrels, cut down and covered with sail-cloth, dyed with tea, became easy chairs; and the same stuff, corded at the four corners, made tempting hammocks. Last, to relieve the backwoods bareness, my wife fixed up the windows with pretty colored curtains.

Then she joined me and we gave an appraising look around; at the house and "furnishings;" at the enfolding forest in which our clearing was such a tiny gash; next, a little dubiously, at one another. The simple life. Well, this was what we had come for—even if a little on the rugged side!

We had been in the house three weeks. On a couple of acres Charlie and I had felled and burned the heavy timber. Now, with him gone, I settled down with my trusty mattock to tackle the rock, palmettoes and other wild growth.

Some believe that the highest civilizations are apt to rise upon a lime foundation. If so, this region should be near the top; practically all parts underlaid, at varying depths, with a porous, coral-like limestone rock. So far as could be seen, it had but little bad effect on properly planted trees. The roots made their way thru and it helped to retain moisture.

At or near the surface, however, it had to be grubbed out, adding greatly to the labor of clearing. There was also the question of its disposal. Still, I confess to a kindly feeling for this distinctive native rock. A boundary wall which I had seen in Coconut Grove, its shell-pocked, oddly shaped pieces weathered into mellow colorings, had reminded me of historic spots in Italy. I would make similar use of ours.

OUR PIONEER NEIGHBORS

Coming from the city, we found the helpfulness of neighbors almost startling. A woman walked two miles through the woods to bring my wife a handy sort of cornbread; brought the ingredients, too, and taught her how to make it. Many offered plants and cuttings so soon as we were ready. Occasionally, one would come some distance with a mess of fish to share the reward of his day's sport.

Among these neighbors were the Soops, mentioned before; he tall and rugged, she the reverse, but both good sports with a ready smile. His father, owning large hotels in Michigan, had expected him as a young man to stay in the business. Craving something less humdrum, however, he had joined in the Cripple Creek silver rush. Finally, after many ups and downs, he had settled here as a planter and enthusiast for the South Florida way of life.

Others were the Douthits: the strong, agile old man, tobacco planter from the Tarheel State and veteran of the redoubtable Stonewall Jackson brigade; his three sons and two comely daughters; all real pioneers with roots deep-planted in this old new land. The younger girl, just as graceful with a gun as in a dance, opened the door one morning to spy a startled, fleeing deer. She got it.

Then came Mrs. Pomeroy, a lone widow so wise with trees and chickens, the legend said, that they answered to her call. She spied books; without a word, pounced on them for a closer look. Then, out of dark, hawk-like eyes in a deeply lined, leathery face, she searched my inmost being.

To break the spell, I murmured, "If there are any you'd like to read—"

"Thanks. I've got 'em," she replied, pointing to a little heap. Enigma. Beyond that, she loved snuff and analytic novels, made an exquisite wine from papayas, could talk deep wisdom in fine English but usually chose the worst.

Later, by a turn in this lady's family fortunes, the chance was given her to return north and live in comparative luxury. Hers was a hard and lonely life and everybody wondered what her choice would be. After weeks, a friend asked her. "What!" she snapped. "Did you think I'd give up all this and go back there?"

An irregular visitor at pioneer homes was one who carried the gospel throughout that hundred miles of sparsely settled coast. Constantly on the go but stopping off here and there wherever there was promise of half-a-dozen for a church service, he was called the Peripatetic Parson. An earnest, normally good-tempered young man, he was apt to fume into hot argument at any

reference to Darwin or his theories. Some of us, I am afraid, used to mention them just for a little excitement.

One dark side of pioneer life was the food. It was terrible. No fresh milk, no meat except "embalmed" beef out of cans or the atrocity they called sow belly. Now and then when something happened to the schooner, even these were missing and we had no coal-oil for light or fuel. A welcome change from store food was when we caught a gopher, a small burrowing land turtle. Or, occasionally, Indians stopped by with venison, always giving twice as much as called for by the price. Later on, of course, with chickens, garden produce and a little time for hunting and fishing, we fared better.

The absence of mocking birds was a disappointment. Then somebody told us they liked human company and would come when they knew about us. They surely did, sometimes singing us awake in the small hours. This reminds me of the old saying: that Florida birds don't sing; its flowers have no scent; its bees, having no incentive to store honey, are too lazy to gather it. Over-generalizing seems to come quite easy to critics in this State.

Like other places, Florida has birds that sing and some that do not. And so with flowers. Among the more odoriferous are the fragipanni, the oleander and, among a dozen jasmynes, one which throws scent enough to fill a forty-acre field. As to the charge of laziness against its bees, this proved to be as baseless as the others. We saw them working on orange and palmetto just as hard as they ever did on apple. Then, in cutting down an old tree, I found a large cavity brimful of wild honey. If further proof were needed, it came later from a nationally known apiculturist. So persistent, he declared, was the Florida insect through a long and busy season that it was apt to wear out its wings and die!

THE GOLDEN STRAND

We had long wanted to see the Beach. Now we seized the chance for a camping trip with the Soops, crossing the Bay in Capt. Fulford's boat. The latter, keeper of the House of Refuge for wrecked mariners, the only building there, had a homestead a few miles north in a place called Fulford from that fact.

It was a perfect day for a sail. We caught a few fish and, to Bee's great joy, one jumped on to her feet in the boat. On the eastern shore was a forbidding barrier, fortunately at this point of no great width. Mangroves. Not the straight tall trees of 60 to 75 feet like those at Little River, but a variety whose roots and branches—one knew not which was which—crossed and criss-

crossed in and out of a black oozy mire. With luck and the aid of planks thoughtfully pre-placed by Fulford, we got safely over.

Then over a waste of deep sand and palmettoes, we caught sight of the ocean. One glimpse was enough to thrill. It was the same ocean as that a thousand miles north, yet how different! "Aye," said the Captain, his sea-blue eyes beaming as he saw our rapt look. "Some day we Americans will realize what we possess in this little corner of the tropics. Even if it IS a long way from what New Yorkers like to call the center."

"But nearer by that much to South America," I reminded him. "Some day, that may be the part that's important."

The rest of the morning we spent in and out of the ocean. After lunch and another swim, Soop and I walked down the Beach. He told me of a place called Crocodile Pool from the number of those animals there. This was part of the waterway afterwards developed into Indian Creek, Miami Beach.

"More likely 'gators, aren't they?" I asked skeptically. These were an old story. We had seen them in the river, heard them bellowing in the Glade at night.

"Not from what they say," returned Soop, "and I've a good notion where it is." So we continued south along the water's edge until, on the right, we saw trees and thick bush. There we turned and at last scrambled through to the Pool.

It was a sinister, rather ghostly looking spot, dark with palms and oak in a tangle of lianas. And there, sure enough, were the greenish, narrow-snouted crocodiles, one lying on the bank, several just visible in the water.

A short look was enough, but we received a shock as we turned to go. A terrific scream as of a woman in mortal agony, a sudden sound of rushing and we caught a glimpse within a few feet of us, of a big, tawny, fierce looking creature as it leaped from branch to branch. It was a panther.

That evening the moon was near to full and we joined two young men from the mainland in a hunt for turtle. Provided with long poles, we searched the Beach for tracks. Our first find was a nest containing well over a hundred of the round, soft-shelled eggs and we stole a couple of dozen. Then we had real luck: a loggerhead which must have weighed well over 300 pounds. After plenty of excitement, we turned her over and our friends were kind enough (to us) to do the killing.

THE TROPIC SUMMER

The rainy season had now started. Not that it rained all the time or even every day; but that, when it did, it was apt to fall in torrents. A day

typical of many might start with sunshine and a clear or partially clear sky; followed in the afternoon by a banking of dark clouds, a strong, cool puff of wind, then a grey curtain of downpour as it came marching through the woods. In an hour, perhaps a few minutes, the sun again would be shining. There might be two or three such days of rain, then two or three with little or none.

And then came the mosquitoes! These had been worrisome enough for weeks, but chiefly at night. Now they came in millions, day and night, and many in the house. Venture out and, in an instant, hands and face would be black and stinging. I tried to work outdoors, my hands in gloves, head and shoulders sheathed in netting. They got me just the same. The only protection was to light a smudge to windward. This first real blitz lasted into the fourth day when a stiff blow from the East brought relief.

Other summer foes were the horse-and-deer-flies. Horses or mules, unless smeared with a compound of tar and axle grease, would be covered with little blotches of blood. Nor were these flies averse to human prey. Ants and roaches, too, were a constant trouble until my wife learned ways to control them. Snakes? Yes, plenty of them, but not more so, I suppose, than in other places equally wild. One learned automatically to avoid them.

How did pioneers like the summer? The answer calls for a sharp line drawn between summer and the insect scourge which accompanied it. Toward the season's end, most of us, I think, felt it had been more than long enough. However, I liked the constant warmth, as free from extremes of heat as from sudden change. After all, temperatures in the three hottest months averaged barely 13 deg. F. higher than in the three coolest months of winter. I even liked the way of the rain in quick and heavy showers that meant something. Above all, I loved that inimitable cooling touch of the trade-wind on a sun-scorched cheek.

As to the mosquitoes, they could have turned Heaven itself into the other place. With ironical smiles we talked of our ideal outdoor land. However, like our fellow pioneers, we learned to stress the future. Some day, with the country filled with people, the swamps would be drained and the mosquitoes vanish. Between blitzes, we tried to forget them—and nearly did.

Neither blazing sun nor tropic downpour had for us the terrors we had read about. Never in my life had I felt so super-well nor so able to endure long hours of the hardest kind of work. Little Bee was growing big and strong, without any of the usual child disorders. My wife's only real complaint was at the way we all perspired.

The prevailing good health was fortunate for there was no doctor within miles. Even malaria, that common scourge of the tropics (and elsewhere), was unknown. All this had given rise to a sort of superstition that people here did not die, but simply dried up with age and blew away.

However, there was one funeral, simple yet so impressive that it will always be remembered. A young man, visiting relatives at their homestead, died of tuberculosis. The burial was to take place on the property in the evening, and neighbors from miles around had gathered at the spot. Word passed that an uncle would be quite late in arriving. And then, as we waited under a full moon, in silence except for little creatures in the pine trees, there fell the solemn notes of a cornet with "Nearer, my God, to Thee."

AN EARLY DESPERADO

Here and there in that scattered community were a few "undesirables." Even so and with doors seldom locked, petty thievery was rare and crime practically unknown. A notable exception was the case of Sam Lewis, a man of violent temper who had drifted in from a western state. Quarreling with two men in a Lemon City drinking place, he had gone home for his gun, way-laid and killed them both, then skipped to the Bahamas.

One morning when I was working back of the hammock and had brought my gun on chance of quail, Deputy Sheriff Jim Hubell called at the house. Telling my wife that Lewis had returned and was supposed to be in that neighborhood, he casually asked for me. Instantly she divined his purpose. More loyal to me, I am afraid, than to the community, she replied. "Well, he went out to get something for dinner but he's such a poor shot"—Jim left to pick up his posse elsewhere.

Lewis, was located and, refusing to surrender, was shot in the leg. He fell, groaning, and a young fellow on the posse—the one who had wounded him—stepped over to lift him to a less painful position. But, in that very act, the injured man pulled a gun and shot him dead. The Sheriff's men lodged the desperado in the little jail at Juno, then county seat, north of Palm Beach. Fearful of his escape, however, another group quickly followed, took him out, hanged him on a pole and riddled the body with bullets.

The summer passed, with but little of the monotony which might have been expected. There were too many things to do, too many to find out. The mosquitoes continued on and off. But in September, it was one blitz after another and the rains more continuous. To make up for lost time, by grace of breeze and moon-light I worked sometimes at night. Once, I remember,

my hoe unearthed a strange bundle. Nothing historic, but simply some disgracefully old work-clothes which my wife, tired of admonishing me, had tried to put out of sight forever.

New settlers continued to straggle in. Some had children and began to worry over lack of school facilities. Meetings were held, petitions signed and sent. There may have been a little stretching of ages to include the right number of pupils, but our district did get its school and the writer was appointed Supervisor.

Among the newcomers was a good old Floridian family from Sumter County named Peters. I remember their arrival in a covered wagon like a prairie schooner of the old West, along with a barrel of flour, a bag or two of fertilizer and miscellaneous farm and household goods. I remember too, how Will Peters, in his kindly way, volunteered to teach me how to plow a "comparatively rockless" bit of pineland. I learned in a way, he doing most of the work. But that kind of land was newer to him even than to me. I rather think that, inwardly, he agreed with my own feeling that a good grub-hoe is sometimes better than a bull-tongue.

The Peters boys were wonderful farmers. Moreover, they were quick to overcome the difficulties peculiar to this section. From a small start the following winter, increasing their crops year by year, they soon became known as the largest growers of mid-winter tomatoes the world had ever known.

THE TROPIC WINTER

Winter stole upon us so gradually we scarcely realized it had arrived. The days were mostly bright and dry and my work made good progress. An occasional dip of the thermometer into the 40's overnight would leave a chilly feeling in the house next day. We learned how quickly it could be warmed by wide opening of doors and windows to the outside air.

By this time we had settled down to our new mode of life. Hard in some ways, it had compensating joys. My wife, lacking facilities for good house-keeping, yet delighted in certain features of it. There was no dust, no soot, no mud even after heavy rain; clothes and curtains remained clean so long. We enjoyed the escape from furnaces and heavy clothing; the glorious sense of freedom which this brought.

Sometimes we compared the people of this wilderness with those typical of cities. We agreed on the high percentage of real "individuals" here, even among the less educated. Naturally, we had had to make some mental readjustments—but not all to the debit of the pioneers. There were some amusing incidents.

One Sunday afternoon we had gone for a tramp through the woods. Little Bee, as usual when she was not trying to climb a tree, was ahead and now we saw her stop. A man, kneeling on the ground, was showing her a flower he had just dug up. He looked rather rough, untidy with an embryo beard, yet had a pleasant, highly intelligent, Irish sort of voice. I said, "You must be the Harvard professor we've heard about."

He laughed, shook his head in modest disclaimer. "I did graduate there but that was twenty years ago. My only professorship was at a small Ohio college. Natural history. Come up to the house. I'd love to show you what I've got."

The house was a log cabin thatched with palmetto and scrupulously neat and clean. In a corner were several plants but his main record was evidently through photographs; they covered the walls. On a shelf were some fine specimens of the beautiful tree-snail. "Had no idea they existed this side of the West Indies. That's enough in itself to prove what I've always said about staying in a rut. There I was, in a dusty class-room, talking and teaching what we've known for a hundred years. Here, with thousands of varieties, hardly anyone knows a thing about them. What a chance to work in the open, in a new fascinating field." He stopped, then finished quickly, "Well, that's why I'm here."

We were about to leave when he said, "No, no, this is tea-time. Always have it myself and I'd love to play host to the lady—to you people." Apart from his beloved specimens, he seemed quite shy. In a minute, he had the table laid with nice, white cover, cups and saucers from no local store. Suddenly he looked troubled but, after a little hesitation, slipped over to a trunk in the corner. We heard a subdued sound of tearing cloth. Another moment and he had added to the tea-table four snow-white, even if unhemmed "napkins."

THE MYSTERIOUS GLADES

So far our only knowledge of the Everglades had been of the edge. Now we joined a party to penetrate into its nearer vastness in Indian dug-outs. Made of cypress and propelled by poling, one belonged to Soop who, living at the edge of the Glades, near a water trail which led to Miami river, thus had transportation to the Bay. The other was the prized possession of Tommy Harp, reputed to be the one and only white man who knew the Everglades as the Indians did. Besides him and the Soops, we had with us a Dr. Nichols, a retired but very active-minded ship doctor from Connecticut. He was visiting Coconut Grove in a friend's yacht, on a search for palms, his hobby.

It was a world of sun and sky and infinite distance; of keen-teethed sawgrass 2 to 4 or even 6 feet tall; of clear, sparkling, breeze-rippled water in slow but constant motion toward the sea. Nothing more unlike the miasmatic swamp of popular fancy could be imagined.

I cannot tell where we went or even the direction. It was like trying to follow the intricate paths of a spider's web. Often we would glide over open water lined by giant bullrushes and full of fish and lilies. A dozen times, poling our way through tortuous trails in the sawgrass, we would come to what seemed to be the end. Then a sudden twist and the way would be clear for another spell.

We stopped at a little hammock island in the sawgrass. Here, surrounded by old cornstalks, pumpkin vines and bananas, was a temporarily abandoned chickee, the palm-thatched, open-wall house of the Indians. Harp had induced them to let us use it for the night. In an hour we caught fish enough for twice the crowd, cooked and ate it, then sat around the lingering fire.

Dr. Nicols, who had been telling us of his travels in tropic waters, broke off to say, "You'll be having me for a neighbor soon. I'm buying that little Williams place near Little River. You know—that old fellow who's always grouching against the country?" At our reminiscent smile, he went on, "What's the good of raising palms inside when you can do it so much better in the open? . . . Or humans either? Climate is something which goes far deeper than mere warmth."

"Yes indeed," observed Mrs. Soop, "but I wish we could get our friends up North to believe it." She laughed as at some recollection.

"Oh, they will," put in the Doctor. "More and more they'll get sick of all the wasted effort involved in that long dead season. They'll come trooping by the thousands to the tropics or, at least, the sunnier portions of their own country. That idea of theirs about the health and vigor of zero weather is a joke. Notice how they rush to light their fires at the slightest cold?"

Tommy Harp, a man of about 50, spare but strong and lissom as the wild creatures he hunted, joined in with a quiet chuckle. "Always thought those old actinic rays would get Doc to Florida for keeps some day. Joking aside, what he says is all so. At least, it's what I acted on myself thirty years ago. Couldn't stand that shut-in feeling." Then he told us of his grove at Fulford, of wild adventures in the farthest Everglades in search of plume birds. Until, as he reminded us, it was time to get some sleep in readiness for a long, roundabout journey home tomorrow.

But, as we retired to the chickee and our mosquito bars, I was thinking more of certain traits in the man himself. Something similar I had noted in other old-timers in long close touch with nature in the raw. From a bubble in the water, the color or the bendings of the blades of grass, from signs unnoted except by him, he would draw the right conclusion. The soundness of his judgment was apt to be equally striking in other matters. Like nature herself, he refused to be side-tracked by the merely plausible but, reaching for the crucial point, decided then and thus.

The above rough sketch of the Everglades applied to some two million acres of it. Further North, toward Lake Okeechobee, the deep black soil grew a thick bush of custard apples. Away South and toward the Gulf, the picture merged into something more like those in the old geographies: the great buttressed trees of the hammocks; giant birds; mangrove swamps, saw-grass swamps, cypress swamps; all in a confusing maze of winding tidal creeks; a chaos of land and water so involved that one knew not where each began or ended. Like a world in veritable process of creation.

Christmas drew near. Some of the pioneers, those born amidst ice and snow, were naive (or forgetful!) enough to imagine something lacking in any celebration of the great day in a land of sun and palms. Two great-hearted neighbors, Captain and Mrs. Felix C. Brossier did their best to make them forget all that. They invited one and all to a real old-fashioned Xmas dinner with wild turkey and all the fixings.

The guests, as a return surprise, arranged to turn out for once in "civilized" garb. Many an old mothballed trunk was opened for the first time in years. The ladies, instead of cotton blouses and wide-brim palmetto hats, wore silks and bows and funny looking pieces on their heads. The men threw aside their jeans and leggings and appeared in city suits. One even sported a silk top hat. It was a great party!

Through Morse, I met Joe Higgins who grew pineapples on Elliott Key. As I planned to set out a good-sized patch and would need plants, I arranged a trip with him. It would have been worthwhile if only for the incredibly beautiful colors of the waters through which we passed. The Keys themselves were largely in dense tropical forest. I saw mahogany trees up to 3 ft. through. Clearings were a revelation in rough and rocky agriculture. The scanty soil, most of it in crevices between the rocks, must have been fertile, for pineapples, tomatoes, even lime and sapadillo trees, all looked flourishing.

Until now, the only Key I had seen was Biscayne, with its historic lighthouse at Cape Florida, across the Bay from Coconut Grove. This visit and others further South enlarged my outlook on the region as a whole. I had seen something of all its main divisions: the piney woods, the ocean beach, the Everglades, and now the Keys. It was like an immense empty scroll of parchment, open for the writing sure to come.

We had to admit, despite some advantages in the country's flatness, that we missed the scenic variety of hill and dale. True, there was the expansive beauty of the Everglades, of the tropic ocean. There were also entrancing spots: grouped cocopalms overlooking water under the full light of moon; a hedge of pink oleanders against the blue of a sunlit Bay; a creek passing through a fern-clad, rocky gorge under a canopy of leaning trees. Even in the piney woods, longer observation brought a wealth of flowers and other plants, interesting if not always showy. And often toward sundown, the mellow, golden light permeating every stick and crevice made even the forest mass look lovely.

Still, if we wanted a little Garden of Eden to live in we would have to make it for ourselves. And nature was wonderfully responsive to man's efforts. It was this quick response, I suppose, which lured the pioneers on, despite a rough, poor soil. But, while nature was so helpful, the wise ones discovered it was just as well to let her have the final say.

Our farming experience here, though short, had included many trials and tribulations. Now, however, we began to see reward for our work in the fine growth of vines and ornamentals around the house. Fruit trees in the grove were also doing well. Thanks to a climate which allowed transplanting at almost any size or time, we already had a mango and a guava at near fruiting stage. Our papayas were loaded with swelling fruit. More and more I sensed the soil potentials of this ultra-southern land. Plants and trees common in the tropics were doing well; a thousand more waited only to be introduced and tested. No wonder James Nugent, like Dr. Perrine before him, loved to explore with this in mind.

Of my little crop of eggplants between the tree rows, not much need be said. Planted early on that light pineland soil to take advantage of fall rains, it had done well for a time. Now, with dry weather, the yield was falling off even with plenty of the fertilizer so necessary on most Florida soils.

Nobody, so far as known, had ever planted anything in Everglades muck. The moist, dark brown soil—result of decomposition through the ages of saw-

grass and aquatic weeds—looked so invitingly rich that I had to try. Digging two wide and shallow ditches 8 feet apart, I threw the dirt between them, making a high bed for drainage. On this, without too much expectation, I planted a dozen kinds of vegetables and grain. Most of them grew more or less luxuriantly—for awhile, then turned yellow and stopped. Perhaps in time somebody would hit on the right method as had happened on the prairie.

Meantime, I had no good moist land for a late crop. The hammock was good soil, but my only use of it so far had been for seedbeds and as a source of humus for pineland plantings. The truth is, it was one of those distinctive spots we both hated to disturb; the very epitome of nature's intense vitality in these latitudes. We could see this in the speed with which she covered up a trail; produced new leaves or fruit when the first had been destroyed; in the way a fallen tree refused to die but grew new roots and started over. Maybe the same influence was at work on men and women. We vowed to cut nothing in that hammock except for access to its beauties.

Despite South Florida's heavy vegetation, the warm tropic sun and heavy showers do much to keep down its store of humus. However, could its poor sandy pinelands be kept free from fires, many believe they would in time become one immense hammock. Fire in the dry season was indeed a deadly menace as I realized one memorable afternoon.

On the way back from a trip to town, I saw smoke, then a big blaze which a strong breeze was blowing towards our clearing. Hurrying on, I met a grim picture of frontier life; great clouds of suffocating smoke; the roar of flames; the staccato notes of palmetto leaves just catching; and—off at the far edge—my poor wife and a woman neighbor, dressed in men's overalls, blackened from head to foot, and almost exhausted in desperate efforts to stamp out, with wetted sacks and pine switches, the fire's stealthy, steady advance.

Finally, by burning against the wind and making a fire-guard, we managed to save our place. But the fire swept on through the night. Finding tinder in the outer bark, it had crept into the tallest tree tops. These overhead blazes and the showers of sparks; the burning stumps and logs in all directions; the noise of crashing branches; the pall of ruddied smoke lending to even well-known objects a weirdly foreign shape; all made a scene of terrifying grandeur like some great Vulcanian city in a strange environment of trees.

MAKING STARCH

Growing wild in these woods and practically nowhere else was a pretty, fern-like little plant called comptie or koonti. From it could be extracted a starch, good either for food or laundry. The Indians had made use of this "gift from Heaven" for ages and several pioneers followed their example. Alone among tuber plants, it gathered nitrogen from the air, the by-products thus being an excellent fertilizer. Because of this, plus the promise of a small but regular income, we became part-time comptie makers.

The crux of our equipment (home-made, Indian pattern) consisted of a smooth, cylindrical pine log some 18 in. long and 12 in. through, its circumference studded throughout with shoe-brads beveled to a cutting edge. This was set in a hopper and rotated by an old-fashioned cog-and-gear machine drawn by horse or mule. The tubers, chopped and water-soaked over-night, were dropped in the hopper, cut up by the revolving cylinder and, now a pulp, channeled into a sieve-bottom box. Here it was washed in several waters which, now called "red water" from its color, fell into a tank below. After an hour it was drawn off, leaving the starch to be taken out and dried on canvas trays. It realized about \$5 per hundred pounds in Key West.

This starch made such a delicious blanc-mange that I was prompted to seek a wider market. Food interests up North to whom I sent samples acknowledged its similarity to arrow-root. However, they pointed also to its inability to compete with other starches costing less to produce. This was no doubt a sound opinion, especially as the tubers were by no means inexhaustible and did not take kindly to cultivation. So the Biscayne Bay region had to regard koonti starch as one of those things peculiar to itself.

BIG THINGS COMING

Spring is the season which many say Florida does not have. It does, of course, even if the new-comer be apt to miss its subtler signs. Spring of 1896 was to show the region under a man-made change more drastic than that of nature. It was the culmination of plans made by Henry M. Flagler in preceding months to extend his railroad from Palm Beach south to the Miami river and there establish a town-site and a great hotel.

Mrs. Tuttle, the lady of Fort Dallas with an unquenchable vision of the future, for years had been urging this idea on Flagler. As an inducement, she had offered him one-half of her land holdings. Later, the Brickells joined in a somewhat similar arrangement.

Not until after the Great Freeze and Mrs. Tuttle renewed her proposal did Flagler consider the extension seriously. He visited the region and

agreed on the basis of her donating 100 acres of land on bay or river and (except for a few acres in her home-site) one half of the rest of her holdings in alternate lots. Thus the escape from disastrous cold, Freeman's phenomenal crop, focused a vivid light on this unique but little known land. Agriculture, new and rare products of the soil, loomed large in Flagler's eyes, just as did his plans for winter guests. But, as he often said, these were only two of the many activities for which his railroad would pave the way.

Transportation, the one thing needed through the years, at last assured! It would mean the taming of our sub-tropic frontier, the building of a segment of America quite different from the rest. Many a hard problem would these differences bring—but also many a great new opening peculiar to itself.

For a time, the attitude of many an old-timer was one of wait and see. Too often had their hopes for a railroad been raised only to be blasted. Flagler's New York associates thought him crazy and were trying to dissuade him. The normal reasons for a railroad and a city were lacking and they could imagine no other. A right-of-way survey showed only one habitation in a stretch of fifty miles. Later, Flagler confessed that, though he had expected "little or no return for a few years," he did foresee the time when this railroad would be "one of the most profitable in the country."

Our own doubts, if any, were dispelled when Morse drove up with the suggestion that I, with two or three others, should go with him to meet Flagler. He explained that it had been almost decided to locate a flag-station at Biscayne, a couple of miles away, and Flagler liked to talk with settlers along the line. Aside from his outstanding position in the business world, he impressed me as a pleasant, quietly observant man with a bent for shrewd questioning.

"Well, young man," he said to me with a smile. "I suppose you're another in this new country in search of a fortune."

"Not so much that" I began . . . But before I could find words for something more adequate, another of the party was speaking.

Soon, near "town," everything began to hum. On a hastily cleared space just north of the river, the many tents and frame structures gave the appearance of a military encampment. Big, burly John Sewell, Flagler's right-hand man in construction work, had arrived. He was now busy leveling the Indian mound (built, not by the Seminoles, but by the Tequestas, the Indian tribe which inhabited this section at the coming of the Spaniards) on the site of the Royal Palm Hotel and gardens. The building itself was to be in charge of J. A. Macdonald. Roads in the townsite were made by cutting down the trees and slicing off the rock, leaving the sidewalks a few inches

higher. It made a good solid roadway but the glaring white under the blazing sun was quite trying.

This native rock ("Miami oolite" to the geologist) was to prove one of the country's most useful resources as a road base and building material.

Meantime, building sites were placed on the market, prices ranging down from \$800 and \$900 for choice corners on Twelfth Street. Frank T. Budge built a hardware store, the first of brick in town. Isador Cohen opened a clothing store, temporarily south of the river. The Sewells (John and E. G.) were getting ready to start one on 12th Street. For a time it was to be in charge of E. G., tall like his brother but lean and wiry. Our good friend Morse established a real estate office specializing in railroad and canal lands. The METROPOLIS newspaper was issued by Graham and Featherly before there was a town. Holes were cut in the jungle to make room for Flagler houses. Some lumber came in by boat. But most of the actual building awaited the coming of the railroad.

On its completion late in April came crowds in search of work, adventure, fortune in a new land. But so, in good time, did the mosquitoes and many of the faint-hearted or the merely curious rushed to take the first train home.

But population was building up. By midsummer, the usual municipal needs—jail, firehall and so forth—had been erected, and arrangements made with the Flagler interests for light and water. It was felt the time had arrived to establish local government. On news that the railroad favored certain men for councilmen, the political-minded took exception and a warm campaign ensued. This fight between the pro- and anti-railroad factions lasted many years. The election, in which 380 voted, resulted in the incorporation of the city; the choice of Miami as a name rather than "Flagler" or "Fort Dallas;" and the seating of the pro-railroad slate for Council with John B. Reilly as the first Mayor.

Thus, on July 28th, 1896, full fledged from the jungle, without preliminary step of town or village, was born the

CITY OF MIAMI, FLORIDA

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