

# Miami: From Frontier to Metropolis: An Appraisal

By F. PAGE WILSON

The certainty with which Mrs. Julia D. Tuttle and others foresaw a great city on the shores of Biscayne Bay must have been based on intuition rather than precedent. Isolated and remote, that wilderness of sand and rock and tough but rampant vegetation offered no chance for bonanza crops; no need for some great center to arise for their care and transportation. Nor was there sign of gold or other value for the miner or of raw material for the manufacturer. When Flagler decided on a railroad and a city, his old associates jeered. None of the usual reasons for either did they see nor could they imagine any other.

Yet it is here that a city has arisen, known throughout the world, a metropolitan area which, for its age, is the largest in the United States. Los Angeles of course has a population far greater; but Miami did not start until much later. Since then, its percentage of growth has been even larger than that of its phenomenal big sister.

Naturally under such circumstances, many questions arise. How and why this rapid growth and what type of economy has been evolved to support it? There came a time indeed when friends up-state, hopelessly puzzled by what they saw, declared there was no such thing as economics on the Southeast coast.

There was, of course. Economics still held sway, but its basis was a little different. For a clearer view of what happened, let us go back to beginnings, to the pioneers who, long before the railroad, lived in the Biscayne Bay country because they liked it despite deficiencies and hardships. They liked its sunshine and pure clean ozone-laden breeze, its warmth in winter, its opportunities for sailing, swimming, fishing, for outdoor work and play throughout the year. This, they were sure, was a climate so different from others, so healthful and benign, that thousands some day would come there to live. This, as time would show, was an economic factor of highest importance, based on a difference; a community attracted by the way of life possible in a climate of that type.

The region's power to draw population by virtue of qualities inherent in itself is its great basic resource, the very corner-stone of its economy. Its story is the story of this migration, sometimes in crowds beyond all reason; of how, against great odds, large outlying areas were brought to use for added living space; of how, with the natural unfolding of that economy, it evolved new factors to keep pace with rising needs.

A few of those early residents had private means. Others made a meager living by hunting 'coons, alligators and other creatures of the wild; still others by making starch out of koonti, a cycad they dug up in the pinewoods thereabouts. Farming was the big X, potentially favored but, as yet, done only on the smallest scale because of the wild terrain and transport difficulties. One great advantage this land did have: of being able to produce crops at seasons impossible to other parts of the country and some crops which these could not grow at all. Given good quick transportation, the high prices for such produce could be expected to offset a poor soil and distant markets. And a "lift" was in the thought of the good earth as an all-year living entity, without long months of semi-death.

This then was another economic factor: a type of agriculture made possible only by a marked difference of climate from the main body of the nation. It is these differences from other States which give to South Florida a special function on behalf of all.

Still another distinction, if not difference, vaguely realized by the pioneers as an economic factor of the future, was location at the end of a long peninsula jutting into tropic waters. As the nearest mainland point to trade centers of South America and the West Indies, Miami would have a great advantage. This distinctive, almost insular location also brought added virtues to a climate which latitude alone might have failed to give.

It seems strange that Florida, first to be explored by the Spaniards, should have been practically the last of our nation's frontiers to be tamed. We must remember, however, the change from flag to flag prior to statehood; the years of intermittent warfare with the Indians; then the War between the States with its long and bitter aftermath for the entire South. And South Florida was far beyond the Deepest South.

Stranger still is the speed with which it has grown since once it really started, despite that period's crippling wars. The noted scientist and world traveler Von Humboldt told the world that the place to live, not merely exist, was in the tropics. Perhaps this magic growth has been part of that trend towards the tropics which many have foretold. South Florida, its climate of

the modified, tropical marine type, is not strictly within the tropic zone. Yet, very close, it is also American with all that this implies socially and in government. It is significant, too, that the two or three states which are gaining most in population are those renowned for sunshine. A contributing factor no doubt lies in the changed attitude of many classes of our people. The long rough work of subduing a continent about completed, they turned more and more to the joys of a fuller, freer, more natural life in the open.

When the Flagler railroad was built to a spot in the jungle on Miami river known sometimes as Fort Dallas or sometimes Miami, this became the nucleus or starting point for the entire region. It had in itself only a dozen or so inhabitants but there were larger settlements at Lemon City and Coconut Grove, some five miles north and south, respectively, on the Bay. All three were in the coastal belt, sometimes called the Coral Ridge because of its rocky nature. The rock, in places looking rather like coral, was really a sub-structure peculiar to the region and known to geologists as Miami oolite. This, with the pine trees and thick growth of palmettos and other undergrowth, made the land exceedingly hard to clear. Interspersed with this were the prairies, usually free from rock and thus tillable but which, until recently, had defied successfully cropping. There was also the hammock, a jungle of tropical hardwoods.

On the higher lands of the coastal belt, back of the Bay settlements, lived mostly the homesteaders. In all, there were from three to four hundred people scattered over say a hundred square miles with emptiness beyond. It was here naturally, near Miami and the railroad, that development made headway first. On the West, in an irregular line a few miles back, lay the Everglades, inhabited only by roaming bands of Seminole Indians. To the East, across the Bay, was a long narrow peninsula flanked on the ocean side by the Beach, the only building a House of Refuge for stranded mariners. Stretching south or southwesterly from there at intervals all the way to Key West were the sparsely peopled Florida Keys. These constituted the region's four main component parts.

Trains were now running and people came flocking in: builders and others seeking work, adventurers looking for they knew not what in a new land, fruit and vegetable growers from further north in need of warmer winter, merchants seeking a ground-floor location. Many liked it well enough to buy a site for home or business and start building. But not all. There was the

man who, shown some lots, shouted indignantly he hadn't come all that way to see a rock heap. Others, their arrival happening to coincide with that of the mosquitoes, made a frantic rush for the next train out.

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Three months later, on July 28, 1896, Miami was incorporated as a city and under that name. Even before that, there was a newspaper. As might be expected from a place so typically American, the political-minded got busy. Too much power, they claimed, was wielded by the railroad interests. The wrangling of the pro and anti-railroad factions went on for years. The people worked just as hard as anywhere else but they liked their fun and the way that even the leaders mixed it with their politics was something for the books.

Yet, though there was plenty of this "small town stuff," factors were at work to keep the community moving along the right lines. Flagler, through lieutenants who had elected to stay, was always ready with advice and often a helping hand. The proximity, sometimes the interest, of so many of the nation's leading men at his great hotel, the Royal Palm, may have incited citizens to a wider outlook. The fine great city of Mrs. Tuttle's dreams may have been a little beyond the ken of Tom, Dick and Harry, but they did feel that this was a different, no ordinary place. It was their chosen home for which nothing was impossible and, like Nelson turning his blind eye on what he wanted not to see, they were prone to shrug away the difficulties. Perhaps it was this local pride which earned for Miamians the gibes with which often they have been teased.

The infant city received its first real shaking up with the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine and the declaration of war with Spain. Its nearness to Cuba; the sight of the filibustering "Three Friends" in the Bay or Keys carrying guns for the insurgents; now and then a refugee seeking asylum; all these added to the excitement and to sympathy for the struggling Cubans. The encampment of several thousand soldiers on the Bayfront brought the war still closer home. People in Miami, like the world at large, had an exaggerated idea of Spain's strength and prowess. A few had such vivid fear of her guns or perhaps a landing, that they left town and pitched their tents at the edge of the Everglades.

The Spanish-American War, of no great moment in itself, led to consequences worthy of note here. The taking over by the United States of Puerto Rico and (temporarily) Cuba was to mean a much wider knowledge of the beautiful Caribbean region, and Miami was the natural gateway. During those summer months of 1898, too, the Royal Palm was headquarters for

a multitude of Army and Government officials and newspaper correspondents. The ensuing publicity did something to break down the isolation of this little outpost of the tropics. And the return afterwards of so many of the encamped soldiers, to take up residence, was an early illustration of how, once known, it was able to draw population.

Another episode originating in Cuba brought tragedy to this section. A seaman from Havana, then a hot-bed of yellow fever, was tending his boat in the Bay when he was found to have contracted the disease. It spread and several died. Miami was strictly quarantined, of course, and this is said to have been the only period in its history when it received no new residents.

This leads to further results from our connection with Cuba. Throughout the world at that time was an exaggerated idea of the unhealthiness of tropic climates. To some such remark about Cuba, made to an eminent American sanitary engineer, there to investigate, his reply was quite pointed. "Bosh!" said he. "If New York had the same lack of sewerage as Havana, there wouldn't be many left to tell the tale. Climate—that's all right!" Under U. S. guidance, proper sanitation was installed, the carrier variety of mosquito known as *Aedes Egypti* finally controlled, and the island has been free of yellow fever ever since. Given the same degree of research and attention of the diseases of the tropics as to those of the North, the former are no harder to combat. All this has had peculiar significance for Miami, not only as a health haven but in its later capacity as a pivot point for tropic travel.

The Royal Palm and other hotels—for by this time there were several—were a scene of great activity in winter. Northerners seemed to like their spots of luxury amidst tropic wilds. Some even now had started to make their Miami visit a yearly habit. They loved the warmth and sunshine, the flowers, the exotic trees in full leaf. Many a tourist found the trees almost as much of an attraction as the climate. It makes hard to understand the urge today of some people to cut down every one "too near" their premises. The city was almost surrounded by groves, many owned by local merchants.

Then, too, for the sport-minded, there was golf or they could go sailing or swimming or, with local guides, go fishing for the big ones in the Gulf Stream or hunting 'gators or wild boar in the back-lands. Others would saunter through the streets or stores, their light bright dress in gay contrast with that of some grower or a trapper just in from his daily chores. Miamians loved all this, too; the brisk business, the new faces every day, the chance to attend the dances or hear great singers at the big hotel.

Summer was a different story and everything was very, very quiet. The optimists had become somewhat less so; were afraid the little city was not growing as it ought. They liked the rush of tourists but what they wanted was a larger permanent population. Probably however, this was gaining about as fast as should have been expected. Dade county at that time extended as far north as the St. Lucie river with its seat of government at Juno, north of Palm Beach. By 1899, population of the Biscayne Bay area had already caught up and exceeded that of further north and the county seat was moved to Miami.

The palms, fruits and other plant growths of the tropics have always held a peculiar fascination for nature lovers. Here, several of those tested had done well and the possibilities looked endless. Among the new-comers were a fair proportion who wanted land for farming. Some were orange and vegetable growers from up-state seeking a climate which, if not entirely safe from frost, was freer from it than anywhere else on the mainland. Somebody has pointed out that the only way really to understand Florida at its subtlest is through year-round close contact with its soil. It seemed at this time that many a northern business or professional man, catching the idea, decided to spend his retirement years in South Florida building a grove.

South of Miami in the coastal belt was an area where the soil, of a reddish color and almost clayey texture, was excellent for fruit. There were also large marl prairies producing fine crops of winter vegetables. In 1904, Flagler extended the railroad thirty miles south to Homestead, taking in this "Redlands" section.

Soon there were little settlements all along the line with nice-looking homes and thrifty groves of citrus and tropical fruits. The mango and avocados became Miami specialties, South Florida's food gift to the nation. Some of the finer varieties were originated by local growers. In this section Flagler planted a 100-acre orange grove. Here, too, was the famous 1600-acre tomato farm of the Peters boys. From the profits, it is said, was erected one of Miami's finer hotels, the Halcyon, designed by Stanford White. Before long, the county was able to boast of being the largest producer of winter tomatoes in the world.

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These years gave further indications of what Miami's future course was to be. Still just an attractive small town, it could have been much more so with proper planning, never a strong point with the authorities then or later. Enough for most people were the good, pure, life-giving air, the clean and shining streets and buildings, the beautiful gardens; gifts of nature which

made everything so different from what they had been used to. Tourists were increasing and, among them, were always some who built themselves homes for permanent or winter residence.

It was fortunate for a young town of this type that so many of these new residents were blessed with private means. Given enough of them, there would be the equivalent of two or three fair-sized factory pay-rolls. The tourists also of course, brought business, not merely for rooms and service in winter, but in the building of ever more new hotels and apartment houses in summer. Many of these were put up by people who, settling here themselves, desired to invest in something which would give them something to do. The groves and farms brought in fair returns, but the line of least resistance for capital in these and following years appeared to be in the tourist and allied fields.

The demand created by residents and tourists, for homes and goods and services, furnished opportunity for many more who wanted to live there if they could only make a living: builders, clerks, mechanics, business and professional men; and these, with their needs, smoothed the way for others still to come. Stated simply, it meant money in circulation, the beginning and mainspring of economics in action.

The following were years of expansion, of daring projects for opening up the region's great outlying areas. Because of the difficult terrain and the novel methods employed, they seized the headlines of the nation's press. Since its one great need was to be better known, this public interest was good though sometimes it back-fired.

First of these projects had to do with the Florida Keys. That chain of Robinson Crusoe-like little islands, hanging like a necklace around the south-east coast, had long been joined in fancy with Spanish buccaneers, pirates and treasure trove. The people, known as Conchs, were descendants, some of them, of the Eleutherian Adventurers who, for freedom's sake, had settled in the Bahamas some 300 years ago. Living mainly by and from the sea, for pocket money they grew limes and pineapples between the rocks. And now these tropic islets in a sapphire sea, each little beach or mangrove cove so like yet differing from its fellows—all this, the very heart of nature unalloyed, was to be opened up by extension of the railroad from Homestead to Key West. South from Key Largo for more than a hundred miles it would skip from Key to Key over the ocean by means of bridges, fills and viaducts.

Flagler found himself in a maze of obstacles. The idea was unprecedented and no responsible contractor would offer a firm bid. So he organized a staff to carry it to completion. Materials and supplies, even water, had to be

shipped in by sea. Housing of the great army of workers was a problem solved by converting large lighters and even stern-wheelers into floating camps. A hurricane in 1909 washed some of these away and many workers drowned. Surveyors found that the Earth's curvature made their work too difficult, so platforms were erected to tower above the ocean. Deep water and swift currents hindered the laying of foundations. One bridge alone, the Seven Mile, had 544 piers, some of them 28 feet below the water-line. Test by trial and error had to be the rule throughout.

The Overseas Railroad, opened to traffic in 1912, continued in operation until 1935. On Labor Day of this latter year, a major hurricane swept away much of the embankment and the Florida East Coast Railway decided to abandon the line below Homestead. The bridges and viaducts, however, remained intact and, sold to the State, became the foundation for the Overseas Highway. By bus and automobile now instead of train, hundreds of thousands enjoy the thrill of traveling over miles of sparkling blue-green ocean, the Atlantic on one side, the Gulf of Mexico on the other.

Everglades Reclamation, "in the air" for years, actually started in 1906. Instead of the few years anticipated, it has taken many more and the end is not yet. Against numberless setbacks, either legal or by failures on the land itself, with little to keep hope alive except marvelous crops in one or two favored sections sometimes, this great but complex project, once it was begun, has always been a "must."

It is not quite accurate to say its sponsors had no plan. The land was 20.42 feet above sea-level at the southern edge of Lake Okeechobee, catch-basin for a large area to the North. From that point it dropped very gradually southward and to the coast. On the strength of these and other data gathered by Buckingham Smith years before and by Governors Jennings and Broward, it was believed that, by building canals to take water off the land and keep the Lake at a safe level, cutting through the coast ridge to give them access to the sea, the Everglades could be effectively drained. Such as it was, this was the plan adopted.

The State dredged canals and sold great tracts to land companies. These "developers" broadcast the nation with salesmen and literature extolling the joy of owning a little piece of fabulously rich soil in a land of warmth and sunshine. Thousands bought and many came to view their land, either to plant and make a miserable failure or to foresee it would be hopeless. True, it was potentially very fertile, even if not quite like the Valley of the Nile with which so often it was compared. For this muck soil, the result of genera-



tions of decaying saw-grass, was purely organic and, though extremely rich in some elements, was comparatively poor in others. The fact remained that drainage canals alone were not sufficient to make it productive.

Apparently, not enough thought had been given to the time required, in a region of often heavy rainfall, for the water to run off three or four thousand square miles of heavily grassed, barely sloping land. Apparently, too, it had been assumed that the Everglades was the same all over, both in soil and substructure. This, of course, was far from being the case. Other errors made themselves known later and in costly ways.

Protests by those who had bought such lands were loud and bitter, locally and throughout the nation. Work went on but the episode brought the Everglades into a disrepute which lingered many years. Even so, there were many who, drawn to South Florida by interest in that great project, liked other features well enough to stay.

Miami Beach, scene of the next great expansion, made its first appeal, as did other parts of the region, as a spot for tropic planting. In the early days it happened that a man and his son named Lumm saw a few coconut palms growing on the Beach. Imbued with the Humboldt idea that a land of the cocopalms would make an ideal home for man, he pressed others to join him and, a few years later, they started planting for miles up the coast. Then John S. Collins, a large nurseryman in New Jersey, came to investigate. He formed a high opinion of the country but, dubious about coconuts as a commercial crop, planted a large avocado grove.

South Florida owes little to its politicians but a great deal to men of wealth and vision, who, intrigued by something distinctive in its atmosphere, have built greatly and in tune. Such a man was Carl Graham Fisher, living in Miami for his health upon retiring from a big business in Indiana. By chance he met Collins, then past 70 and building, against financial difficulties, a wooden bridge across the Bay. Impressed by his courage and faith in the country, Fisher helped him in return for land. He also helped J. N. and J. E. Lummus, Miami bankers who had bought the Lumm holdings and started a subdivision on South Beach. Soon there were three concerns: the Carl Fisher, the Collins now joined by his son-in-law Thomas A. Pancoast, and the Lummus Brothers, all building a place where, in Carl's own words, "the old could grow young and the young never grow old."

It was a herculean task. To those who never saw the beach peninsula in its primeval state, it is hard to convey a true picture of the obstacles or of the vision, the dogged will, the unstinted expenditure of money needed for

their conquest. Hundreds of acres were in swamp, a black oozy mire criss-crossed with roots and branches of the stilt-like mangrove. These had to be chopped down and covered with dirt sucked from the bottom of the Bay. Luckily, this killed two birds with one stone, for it left a fine channel for yachts. Inside the belt of mangrove was hammock, some of its trees so hard that broken axes became a problem. The few open spaces were filled with big palmettos of the toughest kind. Dredging alone often took over \$50,000 per day and the total cost must have been appalling.

But Fisher was not the man to be appalled. Rough and ready in word and action, fantastic on occasion in his methods, he knew exactly what he wanted. If not an artist, he had the artist's conception of the one thing fitting for his plans. The land, covered by black dirt from the Everglades, was divided into lots, leaving space for polo, golf and tennis grounds. Fisher's first hotel, the dignified Lincoln, was quickly followed by others. Lincoln Road, the coming Rue de la Paix of our western world, was cut through the jungle to the sea. In no time at all, it seemed, the place was a fairyland of green grass, red, pink and white oleanders, bouganvilleas, palms, with here and there a beautiful home peeping through the tropic landscape.

Miamians watched the change but took it in their stride. To them it was a furtherance of their own ideas on a more lavish scale. Some asked, why all that expense on wild land across the Bay when there was so much on the mainland? The extension of that glorious beach amid beautiful surroundings was a pleasant thought, but many wondered if Carl Fisher was crazy. Up North, they knew he was.

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Flagler lived long enough to look on Miami as the "City of Eternal Youth." One reason for its lack of excitement over cross-Bay doings was that it was so busy on its own side. Newcomers, both tourists and permanent residents, were more and more in evidence. In summer came a rush to build for extra needs next winter. Miami had little of the usual small-town atmosphere, even if its stores were not quite so metropolitan as their owners liked to think. The minister of a fashionable New York church, lamenting his decimated congregation after New Year's, added with a half-rueful smile, "They seem to look forward to that place among the coconuts as a sort of promised land on earth."

In fact, Miami was doing so well that E. G. (Ev) Sewell, that dynamo of action for his beloved city, decided the time had come to do better. So

far, except some by the Flagler interests, its only advertising had been through word-of-mouth or letter by residents or visitors. Sewell argued for national publicity. Tourism was not so purely commercial in those days and some demurred, believing that a taste for South Florida was too personal a matter to warrant such a "mass appeal". He had his way, however, and a campaign started to raise funds by public subscription. Asked why the advertising was addressed to tourists rather than homeseekers, he replied, "Oh, once here, they'll sell themselves the homes".

Miami has always been a publicity-conscious city. Perhaps under its economic circumstances it was bound to be. It had to sell, not automobiles or other products, but itself, its homes and way of life. Information was needed and columns poured from city hall; mostly, however, about glamorous events and bathing beauties to catch more date-lines. And much publicity, for a place as for a person, can react like a boomerang, easing the way for any little off-key happening to be puffed up into a highly colored "story" for the nation.

Among newcomers in these years were wealthy men who, in quiet but effective ways, did much to preserve the distinctiveness of the region. James Deering, after searching the world for the ideal location, established on the shore of Biscayne Bay, a palatial villa of the Italian type, replete with carefully chosen art treasures from Europe. Vizcaya, as he called it, is now a county museum. Hating to see rare native trees destroyed to make room for a new building, he often permitted the use of his specially constructed crane-truck, with crew, to remove them to safety. His brother Charles established two estates with fine mango and avocado groves. The Matheson family were equally fond of trees. To their generosity the county owes two of its finest parks.

Dr. David Fairchild, the noted plant explorer, came first in connection with an early U. S. Plant Introduction Garden, taking up residence later. Then he induced Washington to develop a much larger Garden at Chapman Field and, a few years later, with Col. Robert H. Montgomery, established the Fairchild Tropical Garden which bids fair to become one of the world's great arboretums. Charles Torrey Simpson of the Smithsonian and Dr. John C. Gifford, a noted forester, were other old-time residents who, writers like Dr. Fairchild, have done much to picture this very individual region to the world.

It is now time to revert to the Everglades, to see what progress had been made, if any, since the issue in 1913, of the famous Isham Randolph report. Besides some new canals, it had recommended reclamation by progressive

steps. That is, on only such land as was needed for immediate use. One result was that the Everglades Drainage District, created by the legislature that same year, organized sub-districts equipped with reversible pumps under local control. This did much to forward the great project. Production of winter vegetables advanced year by year. Sugar was a proven crop. Shipping centers became busy little towns. Despite orthodox opinion against planting orange groves in muck soil, they thrived and the fruit sold at premium prices. All this, however, was in favored sections of good water control. A few thousand acres were wonderfully productive but millions of acres remained no nearer to safe cultivation than at the beginning.

There was, however, a trouble which lay far deeper. This unused land was now a positive danger. By opening the way, without let or hindrance, for millions of gallons of water to flow out to the sea, the delicate equilibrium of nature had been upset. Its water-table lowered, this muck land dried out, oxidized, was subject to burning, sometimes down to bedrock. It also shrank and subsided, to the detriment of drainage even if otherwise possible. South Florida is blessed with a practically unlimited supply of water—billions of gallons of it in the underlying porous rock. Now, to crown all, with removal of freshwater pressure from the surface, conditions had become ripe for salt to infiltrate into city drinking water and further and further into the farms and gardens of the coastal belt.

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Miami Beach had been incorporated as a town in 1915. Carl Fisher, to say nothing of the others, had spent millions in getting the land into shape. Now, strangely enough, the public showed little interest, even with prices far below true value. Perhaps the old Puritan tradition was still at work, warning against anything beautiful for its own sake. Or, more probably, the hesitation was due to the unsettled conditions during World War I.

At its close, everything changed. Fisher, acting on a hunch, made a drastic advance in prices, and demand rose quite rapidly. Then he put on a great publicity campaign: a vari-colored dome on top of the Flamingo Hotel visible for miles at sea; gondolas with native Venetians on the canals; every day a new galaxy of posing bathing beauties beneath the palms. The demand grew and grew. On a site which had been advertised as free to anyone building a \$200,000 hotel, the Roney Plaza went up at a cost of \$2,000,000. Dozens of the nation's great industrial leaders bought, built palatial homes and estates under the tropic sun.

The War drew attention to another factor based on the region's primary asset, one which was to prove of highest economic importance. Its equable climate and freedom from fog, its non-mountainous terrain, made it ideal for flying. Washington established its first air training school at Dinner Key, afterwards headquarters for the Pan-American Airways. Glenn Curtis, too, famous aviation leader, started a flying school northwest of Miami. On land owned by Curtis and added to by some bought originally by James S. Bright for a cattle ranch was built the new city of Hialeah. Miami was spreading out.

The U. S. Census for 1920 drew wide-spread comment. It showed that the population of Miami had multiplied more than five times over in that decade. So far its economic system, to call it that, had worked quite well. An active real estate market, the building of homes, hotels and apartment houses for new arrivals, the hundred and one services for residents and tourists, kept money moving briskly. Still, there were but few ways to make a living, particularly in summer, and this lack of diversity doubtless kept many people away. Despite this, it looked as if Thomas A. Edison had been right years ago, when he said there was only one Florida, and, sooner or later, the people of America would know it. Many plans were under way to provide the foreseen need for homes.

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Coral Gables was first the name of a large fruit and truck farm in the southwest section, started in the early years by George E. Merrick's father, a Congregational minister from New England. As a youngster, George worked hard on the farm, then graduated at Rollins and was studying law in New York when his father's failing health brought him back. Always fond of art and something of a writer, his thoughts had turned to self-expression in stone and iron and wood. He loved this region and what he called its "deep, indigenous romance." Just writing about it was not enough. His dream was of a Coral Gables to be; a beautiful and balanced city of well built homes of Mediteranean type. Everything which counted was to have its rightful place. Above all, the prevailing note was to be of harmony, with no building, or any part of it, clashing with its neighbor.

Merrick's new city, the "Master Suburb", started amid great fanfare. That strict idea of harmony, he confessed, was harder to sell than the land itself; buyers were used to cities which grew up any which way. But they got over that, in crowds they came; by train and auto; by special bus from Chicago and New York. Soon there were curving boulevards and fine houses

in park-like grounds, with roofs of picturesque old tiles from Cuba, Spain and Morocco; and, in other zones, were smaller, equally pleasing homes. Some fine buildings were erected: the City Hall, two country clubs, the Miami-Biltmore Hotel with illuminated tower, a replica of the Giralda in old Seville. Gateways of mellow native rock, Italian renaissance style, gave a touch of old-world charm. A large and ugly rock-pit became a fairyland pool for water sports. There were parks, tennis and archery courts, golf links where tomato fields had been.

Demand grew and, with it, Merrick's plans for Coral Gables. The original 1600 acres had spread to 10,000, through to the Bay. The waterfront section was to be the most luxurious of all, with canals and lakes and yacht basins. The extension brought it south of Coconut Grove, favored spot of the first pioneers and, now a part of Miami, still a zealous guardian of its native beauty against urban inroads. From the beginning, it has been the home of well-known authors and artists.

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It was becoming Greater Miami with a vengeance. The tempo of growth in all parts increased daily. Real estate was very active. A growing community needed more land and houses, more stores and churches, larger theatres and other buildings. One man seeking property for a certain purpose might find it profitable to pay a higher price than that given by the present owner. A third might consider it a good investment at a price still higher. There had been cases, too, of land needed to round out some big project and selling at very high figures. On the whole, however, the buying and selling, though on a large scale, had been of a quite legitimate type.

Insidiously a new spirit entered. All over the country reports had spread of the big and certain profits on land and other property in and around Miami. Speculators flocked in from every State. The impulse which had brought people to South Florida, the desire for a fuller, freer, more natural life, was still in force. But now, commercialized, it became the basis of a land selling campaign such as the world had seldom seen. The changing viewpoint, at first a tiny seed hidden in a mass of real development, was to reach fabulous heights. And the seed contained the germ of sure reaction.

Investment became a forgotten guide. Land long unsold at \$100 per acre or less sold for \$1000, then more, and finally much more. Two or three local real estaters, fearing ultimate results, tried to stem the tide. It was like Mrs. Partington with her broom. Carl Fisher did his best to stop speculation

in his properties by a drastic increase in down payments; this failing, he took them off the market. Meantime, it was not all a gambler's fantasy. Big capital had entered and perhaps this made it harder for the little man to discriminate. Biscayne Boulevard was on its way. Corporations with great resources were putting up fine hotels and office buildings. Miami was reaching for a sky-line.

The City's newspapers had always taken on a duty beyond that of publishing the usual local, national and world news; that of educating their readers in the ways and differences of a strange near-pioneer land. This has not stopped them from giving space to sometimes biting criticism of local doings or conditions. Now in these days of boom, it was hard to keep pace with the daily rush of new developments. Each achieved a world record: the Daily News with a special issue of 504 pages; the Herald with an advertising lineage for the year exceeding that of any other paper to that time, with whole pages turned down for lack of room or paper.

A thought long in the minds of George Merrick and his father was now revived. Perhaps in reaction against this money madness in a region whose beginnings had been so markedly the reverse, it spread with mounting enthusiasm. It was for a University of Miami in Coral Gables, a great university in keeping with its distinctive location at the meeting place of temperate-tropic zones and of Latin and Anglo-American cultures. Merrick promised 160 acres and \$4,000,000 cash, the public \$15,000,000. Time would be needed for full fruition. But it was one great movement, in those crazy days, whose influence was to be incalculable in many diverse ways.

The F. E. C. railroad, unable to cope with the accumulating mass of building and other supplies for the southeast coast, declared an embargo. Then the harbor, jammed with cargoes trying to unload, was blocked by a ship which ran aground in the outer channel. Contractors and others were put to heavy loss, but this was only the last straw. That tiny germ of reaction, hidden in the excitement, had never ceased to grow. Real estate owners began to note a touch of resistance when they tried to sell. Lots sold more slowly and second payments were not always met. By the winter of 1925-26 the boom was over, though many failed to realize it.

The effect of this collapse was ruinous, particularly on such sections as Coral Gables which had only started recently. But it is very necessary to look on the episode as a whole and from the true perspective. In 1920 the population of Miami, twenty-five years from the jungle, was still under 30,000. To

picture it, however, as some have done, as a sleepy little fishing village awaking to find itself the center of the world's greatest boom, is quite misleading. From the very beginning, as we have seen, it had drawn residents from all over the country. Slow at first, this migration had gained impetus with each passing year. So much so, indeed, that in the early 'twenties, the longing for Florida was seized as a text for salesmen. Without that deep feeling in the hearts of thousands, any such great upheaval would have been impossible. In other words, it was simply a phase, but luridly intensified, of the movement which had been under way for many years.

Nor is it correct to say that, at the expiration of the boom, there was a sudden cessation of work or a drastic drop in population. With the lifting of the embargo, many buildings (but not quite all) were completed and work went on for years on several large public projects already authorized. How far the population was from any actual "drop" would be revealed in the next U. S. Census. It is true that many, coming in the hope of making this their home, now found it impossible. Thousands more, lured simply by the easy money of those hectic days, had come and gone. Certainly, they could not be counted as part of the population. In any case, other thousands still believed enough in the country to stay, including some who are among Miami's most valuable citizens today. The really sad plight was of some of its own people who, tempted by absurdly high prices to sell cherished homes or groves, eventually were obliged to take them back in a half ruined condition.

The ill feeling against Florida was wide-spread, though the speculators themselves were at least as much to blame. A few, knowing when to stop, came out ahead. Many more lost. Some complained of dropping \$100,000 or so in Florida. Perhaps some did but, probably, more came down with a few hundred or less, pyramided it sky-high, then lost all in the slump. Others talked of being swindled. Quite likely. Hundreds bought off nothing better than a blueprint. It is true that many of the lots sold so glibly ought to have been sold by the gallon. On the other hand, many still under water when bought, soon afterwards were the sites of charming homes and gardens. Two boom-time speculators were talking over their experiences. Said one, "The truth about Florida is a lie" and the other agreed, but added,—“though it would be just as true the other way around.”

A few months later, on September 18, newspaper headlines told the world that the Miamis had been "wiped out" in a terrific hurricane. All wires were down, so perhaps a little exaggeration may be forgiven. The facts



were bad enough. The shrieking, wailing, thudding sounds of that great storm were well nigh incredible even to those who heard them, and so was the ruin it had wrought. Hundreds of homes and other buildings had simply fallen down, thousands damaged more or less. Boats, swept across newly made Bayfront Park, lay on the front street. One hundred and sixteen lives were lost so far as could be discovered; but there may have been more. Many streets were impassable because of fallen trees; other trees lost their leaves and many branches. In exposed buildings near the sea-shore, corridors and ground-floors were blocked by several feet of sand.

It has been asked, why the enormous damage from this particular storm? First, there was but little preparedness against it. No storm of any violence had struck this coast for twenty years. Most of the people, largely newcomers, had but a vague idea of hurricane as something that happened in some far-off place. Above all, this was a giant storm which had come just after a period of poor construction for quick sale during the boom. Careful survey showed that reasonably well built houses had generally come through with little or no structural damage except perhaps to roofs or through unprotected windows. The fatalities, largely, were of people who, taking advantage of the storm's "lull" to go outdoors, had been caught in its violent second half.

Miamians learned that their usual kindly Caribbean climate could wield a vicious thrust. Records of hurricanes since 1926 show that, aided by an efficient Weather Bureau, they have learned how to deal with them. Building regulations of course were studied and made more rigid. The fact is that scarcely a year passes without a number of these "tropical disturbances" starting somewhere in that vast stretch of ocean between Florida and the Cape Verde Islands. Another fact is that, at first discovery, most of them are headed in the general direction of Florida; the great majority, however, veering off, within two or three days, in one or another of the dozens of directions open to them. Sometimes, of course, a hurricane comes right on to hit Miami or other southern point. But more often, it turns toward some other place, occasionally as far as New Jersey or New England. And in this case, even if the storm has never reached within hundreds of miles of the Florida coast, the New York broadcasters still call it the "Florida storm."

As a test of morale, so important in any economy based on appeal to the homeseeker, the great 1926 storm could not have come at a worse time. The name Miami, for a time, became synonymous with hurricane the destroyer. Property owners who had hoped, in the coming tourist season, to recoup money lost in the boom or in failing banks, faced instead an outlay

for repairs. People, dazed at first, were quick to see the need for clearing up the ruins. Such signs appeared as "Down but Not Out" on a tumbled cottage, or "Boom, Bust or Blow we're still here" on many a tattered Ford. Visitors that winter were startled to find the return to normalcy so well on its way. Surprised, too, to see anybody smiling. But perhaps this, as the cynic would say, was only the Miamian's habit of shutting his eyes to unpleasant facts.

Business and general conditions in the Miami area were slowly improving when news came of the Wall Street crash. It was the beginning of perhaps the worst period in the history of the United States. Worst, too, for Miami, because it had only barely pulled out from two great disasters of its own and this National Depression would make the third within brief time. To bring this fully home, a large Miami bank, one of the two which had survived boom and hurricane, closed its doors with little ultimately for depositors.

The U. S. Census for 1930 told a story which should put aside a great mass of misinformation. The economy of this region had been based from the beginning on its innate attractiveness to home-owners. What then, had been the net combined effect of the boom, the hurricane and now this national depression? The census reported for Miami proper a population of 110,637, an increase of 274 per cent, the largest of any city in its size-class. Surrounding it now, too, were daughter cities growing still more rapidly. The boom and its collapse, the 1926 hurricane, were great landmarks in the history of this thirty-year-old city. The vital question in any appraisal of its character is the way it came through those disasters of its own and the nation-wide one so soon to follow.

It is fortunate that human needs are definitely less exacting under a friendly sky. Yet it is hard to say how people managed to live during those dark depression days. It was sad to see families of refinement trying to earn a pittance from pretty arrangements of coconuts, sea-shells, odd-shaped flowers or plants, free gifts of a beloved country which offered so much but not a living. The tourist business, of course, was "off", with hotel and room rates cut to the bone. Strangely enough, some tourists and a few new residents came for the very reason which kept so many away. "My business up North no good," they said, or "I've always wanted to come to Florida and now I have a good excuse." Some, repelled by conditions they had seen during the boom, now returned to stay.

It was during this period that racing started on an authorized basis. Against the ideas of some who disliked gambling in any form, pari-mutuel

betting was legalized and Joseph E. Widener, a wealthy man of highest standing, proceeded to build at Hialeah the "most beautiful track in the world." It was followed by other ventures, both in horse- and dog-racing. To such extent, indeed, that Miami merchants and others asked for moderate limitation. But it was of no avail. The people of the many small counties having a combined population far less than Dade's—the same people who scold Miami for its "racing, night-club atmosphere"—objected to any chance of reduction in their county dividends. A day at the track affords a pleasant, colorful time for thousands of visitors. But it is funny how racing fans take credit as upholders of the "season". Winter racing came to Miami because this was where the crowds were.

The great depression started to lift from the Miami region sooner than in most other parts. Many fine homes had been bought up quietly, some at prices much lower than the cost of reproduction. New building started in earnest about 1933, and, frequently in the next two or three years, the value of permits exceeded that of cities of much larger size. Banking and commercial indices showed improvement year by year and so did the number of new residents and tourists. Rents which had been cut from \$100 down to \$50 or even \$40 were now advanced to \$75 and Miami again was raked for its shocking prices!

A few of the more thoughtful, in recent years, had pointed to the growing need for industries. Many living in the region, many more wanting to come, had no inclination for the tourist business even if they had the means. Thousands of young people leaving school or college desired a wider choice of careers. But the idea had made little headway against the all-pervading resort psychology of the time. This was, and always had been, a tourist area. People came here to get away from smoke and dirty air. An industrial atmosphere would spoil it.

Gradually it was realized that light industries such as proposed did not call for smokestacks and that, with proper zoning and restrictions, the area's living conditions need not be disturbed. Moreover, both management and workers would be helped by the same qualities of nature which brought the tourists. For that reason, too, investment and operation costs would be smaller. During these years, a number of new industries were established and the movement grew. Almost as much as on the purely business aspects, many such decisions rested on choice of a place to live.

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Then came news of Pearl Harbor and, with it, some misconceptions of the Miamis. Now they would become ghost towns, some said. Perhaps it

needed some such crisis to make clear the basic facts about this area. It might not get the tourists. But the facilities, the health and sunshine for which they came, would be put to more important use in the housing, training and rehabilitation of our fighting men. Another and rather silly accusation was that the Miamis "didn't know there was a War." But certainly they did know. More closely than most, they saw it with their own eyes: torpedoed ships drifting aflame off-shore; dead or sorely wounded sailors washed up on the beach; private boat owners organizing at their own expense into hard-working groups to spot submarines.

Compared with the great industries of the North, of course, the contribution of local factories was but a drop in the bucket. As we have seen, South Florida's function in the War was vital but quite different. Its quota of war goods, however, was sufficient to kill that old myth about workers in the South being less active or efficient than their northern brothers. As the Chairman of the Smaller War Plants Board put it, "Florida plants with fewer hands turned out more goods."

The end of the War found the Miamis crowded to the gunwale. Tourists flocked into an area occupied largely by friends and relatives of service men. New residents, fewer than usual during hostilities, seemed to be making up for lost time. The number of such arrivals, then and since, is calculated at 30,000 each year. Many of those trained in the area, now veterans, came back to stay. Miami never was the Old Man's Town that some imagined. Accommodations were hard to find and, as in crowded spots elsewhere, prices soared. But in Miami, it was because all the black marketeers in the country had gathered to buy up everything in sight. At least, so said the smart ones.

The University of Miami at Coral Gables, after the War, was recognized as one of the outstanding independent schools of the nation. Started under woeful conditions following the great hurricane and fighting against such obstacles as only dogged determination, unswerving loyalty of staff and the administrative genius of Dr. Bowman F. Ashe, its first President, could have overcome, its campus buildings strike a new and interesting note in functional architecture. To meet the cultural needs of the community, in music and art it has done wonders. Its scientific contributions, particularly in marine biology, medicine, tropic food research, are widely noted. In conjunction with the county, it recently inaugurated a medical training school which, with the climate and medical skill of this area, can be expected to fill an impressive role. In football and other sports, its teams, with the usual up-and-down luck of the years, have made an excellent record. All through the work of

this University can be traced a full recognition of the distinctive character of its location.

Readers of Cardinal Newman's "Site of a University" (ancient Athens) will remember some striking points of analogy, topographic and human, with our own little segment of America.

Another fine institution, on the same Pan-American lines as the University of Miami, is Barry College for Women, located in suburban Miami Shores and conducted by the Sisters of Saint Dominic. There are several widely known private schools. Coral Gables, with its Century Club, and Miami Beach, with its Bath and Surf Clubs and Committee of One Hundred, are better provided in that respect than is Miami proper. In view of its fame as a convention city and the fondness of its people for music, exhibitions, forums and group gatherings of a hundred kinds, it is strange that proper facilities were so long in coming. Now, however, the Beach has a commodious auditorium and Miami no less than three. An adequate central Public Library also was erected a few years ago.

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Everglades reclamation, largest but least satisfactory of the great regional projects, again seized on public attention. Two or three very dry years, marked by many muck fires and alarming inroads of salt, were followed, in 1947, by floods which damaged homes and groves in the outskirts of coast cities. The U. S. Engineers, aided by data already collected by Everglades Drainage Engineers and U. S. Geological and Conservation agencies, proposed a plan to avert either flood or that still more dangerous enemy, drouth. The plan, now being carried out, is really a compromise with nature. That is, it allows large acreages of the less desirable land to revert to a wild state, thus holding huge supplies of water in reserve and keeping the water-table up and the salt down. Another part consists in many miles of levee for protection of the better lands. So, after all, we may see the Everglades reclaimed. Not the immense empire envisioned fifty years ago but still a great area of highly productive land.

Remembering how we have suffered for past sins, we can sympathize with those who wish the Everglades had never been touched by the hand of man. Yet, to be realistic, we should not forget existing facts. The Everglades south of Lake Okeechobee—to take the chief of two or three favored areas—is probably the largest producer of winter vegetables in the world, of higher protein content than most. Its 100,000 tons of fine cane-sugar is kept at that

low level only because of the quota. Its sleek herds of cattle are famous. Ramie, rice and materials for plastics are a few of its other crops. The total cost of reclamation up to date, large as it has been, is less by far than the value of its products every year. And, without those questionable canals, Miami's living space would be considerably smaller than it is. Even so, the difficulty still is to keep buyers and builders away from land which is too low.

The Everglades, South and Southwest, takes on a role quite different from the above. It merges into a wilderness of tropic jungle, cypress and sawgrass and mangrove swamps, criss-crossed with a veritable spider's web of forest-banked tidal creeks. Lacking the mountain and ravine scenery of many national parks, this is unique in its trees and birds and other animal life. After years of never ceasing effort by Ernest S. Coe of Miami, helped greatly at the last by John D. Pennekamp of the Miami Herald, and others, this great area was formally dedicated in 1947, as the Everglades National Park, a strange, unforgettable wonderland which many travel thousands of miles to visit.

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We have now seen Miami in the making; in the throes of boom and other disasters; in process of surmounting their effects. We have seen, too, the working of that great basic resource on which it has built from the beginning. And we have seen how, far from dormant even in time of stress, it soon resumed its old-time vigor and insistence, continuing through the years despite dislocations of the War. Now let us look briefly into the ways in which this economy has branched out to meet increasing and more varied needs.

Tourism is less predominant than in past years. Not due to any actual decline but to the rapid advance of other activities. As a revenue producer, it is still the largest single item. Business in winter is a good deal larger than before the War and now continues throughout the year with many visitors from Latin America. The annual return ranges around \$220,000,000. Greater Miami has lost a little of its old-time near-monopoly as a tropic vacation land, though side-trips to foreign lands add to its own attractions. As an offset to some loss of tourists, it is becoming a trade and transit center for the rival spots.

It is said that, in the resort area of Miami Beach, more de luxe hotels have been erected since the War than in all the rest of the world. That long array of fine hotels is a wonderful sight. But to allow great masses of con-

crete and cabanas to obstruct the ocean view is the sort of planning to make a man like Carl Fisher stare aghast. Some casual hotel visitors seem to imagine that the resort atmosphere is typical of the entire area. Even on the Beach are thousands of quietly beautiful homes in no way connected with tourists, just as there are very large sections of the mainland devoted to pursuits entirely different.

The fact is, there are many Miamis besides the famed resort, each a little world of its own, at times so intense in its activities as to be mistaken for the whole. There are the worlds of fishing and boating and other sports, of research and gardening, of trade and cultural relationships with Latin America, to say nothing of the great world of business of the usual and some unusual kinds. Some have decried Miami as a city of night-clubs. It may have more than most places of its size, but so also does it have more churches and, probably, many more educational and social groups.

Then, scattered here and there but fairly large in the aggregate, is the army of health seekers. The tropic sun is a mighty power for health even if tourists are sometimes tempted to hasten the process to their cost. The South Florida climate is of great help in many ailments and physical conditions; but there are some for which it is not recommended. More often than not in the latter case—for they persist in coming—the sufferers reap enough benefit to stay, though they might reach nearer to a cure in some equally sunny, but drier, climate. However, for general well-being or in cases calling for recuperation after wounds or after illness, accident or operation, that of South Florida is outstanding. There was full evidence of this in the War when thousands of patients were flown almost directly from the battlefield to Miami's International Airport.

Another of the old standbys, of course, is the construction industry which, in the first year after the War, carried through a new building program in Dade county (mostly Greater Miami) to a value of \$71,000,000. During each of the past several years, it has varied between nearly \$150,000,000 and over \$200,000,000, the largest, per capita, in the country. Later a rush of new building started on the Keys: hotels, motels, fishing lodges, homes for residents or for Miamians desiring a week-end change.

Agriculture has advanced but not perhaps to the degree that was anticipated in the early days. However, with a contribution of about \$50,000,000 per year, Dade stands third among all Florida counties for the value of its products. Scientific research has always been a strong point in regional plant and soil doings and this bids fair to continue.

Aviation's high place in the Miami scene is the direct result of climate and geography plus fine citizen cooperation. It is forging ahead so rapidly that figures are of little value. Aside from indirect benefits, the annual income is about \$120,000,000. The New York to Miami air route is the most heavily traveled in the world. Its International Airport is rated as the second busiest in the United States, while its foreign business is as large as that of all others combined. Air cargo, increasing very quickly, is a special boon to local manufacturers of lightweight goods shipped to the Islands and South America. An important feature is the size and completeness of the plane repair and conditioning shops, employing 17,000 skilled mechanics.

The number of manufacturing plants in and around Miami at last counting was nearly 1600. At a recent exhibition, some 10,000 articles of local make were on display, ranging from boats to furniture, awnings, shutters and other house accessories, apparel, food products, metal goods and machinery, electronic articles, cement and stone products and many others. Some plants make a point of employing the physically handicapped. Twenty-seven per cent of the entire country's factories using aluminum as chief material are in Dade county. When Paris fell to the Germans, Madame Schiaparelli, the French dress designer, passing through, was asked where the world's fashion center would be now. Smiling, she replied, "Why not Miami?" The needlecraft firms, few then, number now well over two hundred and are associated with an ambitious group known as Miami Fashion Council. One advantage they do have is that a favored winter style in Miami is usually a fore-runner of summer acceptance for the nation.

It should now be clear that the economy of this section, deep-rooted but different in its beginnings from most, has developed as needed, into one which, for soundness and diversity, compares well with that of other prosperous sections. If proof be wanted, study the banking and commercial indices for the last twenty years. In practically every case—bank debits and deposits, income, post-office receipts, telephone and electric light usage, etc.,—the ratio of increase has been equal to or above the best national averages, often quite markedly so. Even in the recessions, the local effect has been a slowing rather than a setback. Trade, too, wholesale and retail, has increased materially, both as to area covered and in volume. A feature of recent years has been the growing trade with foreign countries.

Miami, with the twenty-six municipalities surrounding it, bids fair to become one of the nation's larger metropolitan areas. It is unfortunate that



so many of these great centers seem to lose something in the growing process. Some advantages, of course, may accrue: the opportunity, for instance, to hear or see the world's very best in music and art, the drama, lectures and so forth. More apt to be provided are the long felt needs. Plans are under way in Miami for an enlarged and better sea-port and for extension of the Overseas Highway northbound to that city. It hopes soon to see the long expected Inter-American Cultural and Trade Center in action. The Historical Association of Southern Florida, already possessed of a large store of archives and valuable relics, plans to build a museum for their public display. A greater population will mean more diverse thinking, still more ways and means for the dissemination of knowledge.

On the other hand, mere size, without the utmost care for quality, can aggravate conditions which are not so good. Already Miami's traffic-parking problem is such that many look back longingly on the old days. Railroad tracks are still permitted to bar the city's westward expansion. Its law enforcement officers, seldom noted for zeal, often have been suspiciously lax. Not long ago, racketeers and gamblers from the big cities tried their hardest to make this their multi-million Winter Capital and, for a time, looked as if they might succeed. Too often is quick profit for the individual given headway at the expense of space or lasting beauty for the public.

Such shortcomings are hurtful to any city, particularly one based on attractiveness to the home owner. Yet, mere surface conditions brought about by man, they are for man to remove as speedily as he can. Those who really know Miami, who have seen how the sheer force of its nature has prevailed over far worse troubles, know it will always be the uniquely desired city of Sub-tropic America.

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