

North to South Through the Everglades in 1883

PART II*

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THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES

We publish elsewhere a full account of THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT'S expedition into the Florida Everglades. The story covers several columns, but is told in as brief and condensed a manner as possible, considering the many features of the trip, the innumerable incidents and the important problems investigated and solved.

The expedition was planned many months ago, and ample time given for its preparation. It may be said to have grown out of a former expedition sent out by THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT under the command of Major A. P. Williams, and which explored the Caloosahatchie and Kissimmee rivers, and attracted much attention toward Southern Florida — its picturesqueness, its climate and the possibilities of its soil. The articles in THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT interested the whole country in Florida, and a general desire was felt to know more about the country and particularly about the Everglades.

It was discovered that in this country, in a State which can boast of being the first colonized of any portion of the Union, there existed a region, of which less was actually known than of the interior of Africa.

The best authority on the subject of the Everglades has been considered to be the report made by a committee of the United States Senate in 1848. The question of the drainage of the Everglades being submitted to the Senate committee on public lands, an exploration of this region was attempted. This

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exploration was a failure. Mr. George Mackay, United States surveyor, reported to the committee: "Very little can be known of the North Glades. They are uniformly saw-grass, and it is *impossible to penetrate them* with canoes in high water, and in low water they are so generally boggy that it is impossible to explore them on foot."

Lieut. Francis Marion, in company with Mr. Buckingham Smith, attempted to explore them in 1847. He says: "It was my desire to reach the northern end of the glades and the region of Lake Okeechobee on this expedition, and to examine the islands above New River, but I found I could not without great delay and trouble, and therefore *abandoned* it."

In no wise daunted by the many failures, THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT decided to make a full and thorough examination of this region, and solve the many important problems regarding the Everglades. The expedition was not one merely of adventure; it was designed for useful and practical purposes.

It was desired to find the character of the immense region of Southern Florida, known as the Everglades, covering millions of acres, to discover the quality of its soil, and to what crops and purposes it was best suited.

To test the possibility of draining this immense region, and thus giving millions of acres to cultivation.

To discover the condition and manner life of the Indians who have sought refuge there.

And finally, at the request of the Western Union Company, to test the practicability of constructing a telegraph line down the peninsula.

All the arrangements for the expedition were perfected, boats built for it, laborers secured and every preparation made; but as we have already described all these, we need not dwell on them further, nor need we follow up the preliminary movements of the party to Cedar Keys, Punta Rassa and up the Caloosahatchie River to Lake Okeechobee. All this has been told in former letters. This morning we give the eventful portion of the expedition, the story of its march from the Lake through the swamps, the saw-grass and the glades to the Gulf.

The present story commences with Nov. 4, when the expedition had reached the great central lake of Florida, Okeechobee. This lake was found to be shallow, but subject to very tempestuous and stormy weather, during which its waves became as threatening as those of the Gulf, and with its shores low and swampy and only here and there any dry spots. Game and fish were both very scarce, but alligators were superabundant.

It had been determined that the expedition should proceed due south. It made, therefore, for the extreme southern point of Lake Okeechobee. A gale in the lake, in which the small boats and canoes were of little use, detained the party for several days, but on Nov. 6 and 7 they continued their journey southward along the shores of Okeechobee, discovering a number of islands and several small rivers emptying in the lake. These were explored in the hope that they would take the party some distance into the Everglades, but after following their course a short distance this idea had to be abandoned. After several failures a stream, to which the name of T.-D., in honor of THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT, was given, was found somewhat larger than the others, and it was determined to ascent it as far as possible, and from its source to start into the swamp.

On the morning of Nov. 10 the party found itself on the borders of the Everglades, confronted by a barrier of boughs, bushes and vines intertwined, through which it was necessary to cut their way. All the arrangements were now made for the journey. Each boat was loaded with its own provisions, so that, should they by any chance become separated there would be no danger of starvation. The axes and machetes, or knives, were then brought into play and the work of cutting through the barrier of willows and brushwood began. It was slow, tedious work, and after a day of earnest labor it was found that the party had moved forward only a quarter of a mile.

When this thicket of willows was finally cut through, by much arduous work, the party were brought face to face with the saw-grass, which had frightened back the United States engineers and officers who tried to explore this region in 1847, and who declared that it could not be done either on foot or in boats. In all directions, as far as the eye could reach, was one unlimited expanse of tall, waving marsh-grass, with not a tree or bush rising above it. Marks were found that indicated that the water had been five feet deep here, but at that time it was only five inches. To haul a lot of canoes and batteaux in water from three to five inches through a grass like this

seemed an impossible task, and for a time failure stared the expedition in the face, but Major Williams soon hit upon the happy idea of burning away the saw-grass ahead of him. This fortunately was easy, for the grass was dry and burned like tinder to the water's edge. A party was sent ahead and fired the swamp. In a few minutes the whole region of saw-grass, for ten and tens of miles, was one mass of seething flames. This was the fire that so alarmed the friends of the expedition, and gave rise to the belief that it had perished in the flames.

Following the pillar of smoke before them, the party marched boldly into the saw-grass. It was slow work here. The fire left the roots of the grass behind, and the men had to desert their boats and slowly push them forward through the mud and grass. In one day, moving in this way, they proceeded barely a mile, with the men wearied and broken down by the arduous work. Their life was certainly rough and hard for the next few weeks. There was not sufficient water to float the boats, and they had to be pushed along by the men, who traveled slowly, sinking above their knees in the mud. At night they slept cuddled up in the boats the victims of millions of mosquitoes and other stinging insects. The fires which they cooked their meals had to be made in pots on the decks of their canoes. When rain came they were without protection from it, and morning, noon and night they were wet. They were doomed to disappointment in a serious matter. They had imagined that this saw-grass region was only ten miles wide, and that in a week, or at least ten days, they would be in deeper water. But at the end of ten days the character of the country was completely unchanged. It was the same desolate saw-grass desert. They found the country utterly devoid of game of any kind. A deathlike oppressive stillness prevailed everywhere. There were no fish in the water, no birds in the air; even the air itself seemed to be without life or motion.

The situation of the men grew worse day by day. They had to toil onward, waist deep, in the mud and water; with leeches clinging to their legs until the water around them was dyed a deep red; with thousands of bugs pestering and bothering them; with prickly plants to bruise and poison them, and with the water alive with moccasins. Rest at night, cuddled up in the canoes, was scarcely pleasant, for the moccasins had a way of crawling into the boats to get warm and comfortable. It was thought for a big day's journey to travel a mile and a half in twenty-four hours.

The grass was burnt up ahead of them, and in this way they were able to move somewhat faster. But as they moved onward they found the grass

too wet to burn, so that they were compelled to cut and break through it. As they proceeded further the water got deeper, until it was possible to float the boats. Still there was no sign as far as the eye could reach of anything but the same unbroken level plain of grass. When the grass was fired one day to clear it off, the party was surprised to see signals of smoke replying to it from all quarters. It was the work of the Indians, the remnant of the great tribe of the Seminoles, who sought refuge in the swamps of Southern Florida. Throughout the remainder of the journey the party found themselves, wherever they went, surrounded by scores of these signals. It was evident that they were well watched by the Indians. How near the latter came to them they never knew, for they met none of them, saw nothing but these Indian fires springing up around them whenever they camped out.

On Nov. 22 the water in the swamp became suddenly much deeper, the boats moved easily through it and it was found that the sails could be used with great advantage. It was now decidedly a new country. The broad expanse of saw-grass was broken by basins or little lakes, fifteen feet deep or more, covered with water lilies and connected with each other by innumerable streams. The ponds or basins were of water as clear as crystal, and filled with trout and alligators, the latter utterly fearless and impudently poking their noses into the boats.

On the 23d the provision batteau, Queen Anne, had to be abandoned in the swamp, as her bottom was completely worn out from dragging over the grass and she leaked badly. Next day the party found the first piece of dry land they had seen since they left Okeechobee, a very small plot of only a few feet, but the expedition, hungry for land, greeted it as warmly as Noah did the summit of Ararat as it raised itself out of the water. It was thought best that Capt. Hendry should be sent due west so as to reach the coast sooner, and make the needful preparations to send boats up Shark's River to meet the expedition. The character of the country now improved with every day's journey. The water was deeper and the boats moved more easily. In making soundings it was discovered that the bottom was no longer mud but rock, the first that had been met with. The party were evidently approaching the islands lying in the southern portion of the Everglades. The first island they found was about three acres in extent, well covered with wild fig and orchard apple, but only about twenty feet square of it was solid dry land. Here the party rested and recuperated, for they were completely fagged out, ragged, barefooted and broken down. This island upon which

they rested proved to be a bird roost, for at night the trees were filled with cranes, curlews, water turkeys, blackbirds and other varieties never seen before, which kept up such a noise all night that it was difficult to sleep. For several days the party moved through a region of islands. Islands there were innumerable, but all of them very small, not over three acres in extent, with very little high and dry land on them, and separated from each other by streams and saw-grass. On several of them traces of Indian camps were discovered, but the Indians never put in their appearance, although whenever the expedition made a fire it was answered in every direction.

They were now on the lookout for the smoke signal which was to direct them toward Shark's River. It had been arranged that Major Hendry, who had taken a short cut to the Gulf, was to send a party up Sharks River to meet Major Williams' party, the signal to be a column of smoke. So well had the movement of the explorers been calculated that when the smoke was finally discovered, they were but two miles from Sharks River.

The rest of the journey can be told in a very few words, because it was simple and easy—the descent of Sharks River into White Water Bay, and thence into the Gulf.

Such are the main features of this expedition. For a full and exhaustive account of the trip we refer our readers to Major Williams' letters given in another column. It will be seen that the task was an arduous and severe one, much harder than was imagined when it was inaugurated.

It has set at rest all questions about the Everglades, which have been found much different from what was imagined. The saw-grass extends 100 miles south of Lake Okeechobee, instead of ten. South of this is a region of islands, but islands so small as to be of little value for any practical purposes. The Indians who were supposed to live in the Everglades, do reside there, but they seem to be peaceful and well-disposed, and gave no evidence that they were unfriendly or inimical to the whites.

As to the question of building a telegraph line through this country—a matter which the Western Union has been anxious to solve—Major Williams reports that this is impossible and not to be thought of.

Finally, as to the soil and character of the Everglades and the possibility of draining them. In 1848, when the United States Senate investigated

this question, a committee reported that the swamp could be drained. Major Williams reports adversely. He can see no hope or possibility of redeeming the greater portion of this region, which must remain a swamp forever. The country is very low, in most cases below the level of the land fronting on the Atlantic and the Gulf, and a canal will not drain it, but will probably increase the depth of water in the glades. In the Southern glades many of the islands can be utilized and cultivated, but with this exception, the Florida Everglades are of no value agriculturally. We regret to learn this, but it is better that it should have been brought out now, instead of the world being encouraged into the mistaken belief that the Everglades could be redeemed.

Such is the story of our expedition. It has accomplished all it was organized to do. It was the first party of white men to go through the Everglades, and it has solved all the problems of that mysterious region.

(Sunday, January 6, 1884. Page 6 and 7 of The Times-Democrat)

THE EVERGLADES

Detailed Report of The Times-Democrat Exploring Party.

Seeking an Entrance Through the Willows Bordering Lake Okeechobee.

In the Saw-Grass Country—A Wilderness of Desolation.

Twenty Days' March Through the Swamp—Neither Land Nor Water.

In the Glades Proper, with Thousands of Streams and Innumerable Islands.

Indian Camp Fires Surrounding the Expedition on Every Side.

THE HEADWATERS OF SHARKS RIVER.

An Easy Voyage Down That Stream to the Gulf.

The Entire Region Uninhabitable and Irreclaimable.

The Times-Democrat gives below a detailed report of its expedition through the Florida Everglades from the time the exploring party left the southern shore of Lake Okeechobee and entered the saw-grass to its arrival, through Sharks River, on White Water Bay, at the southern point of Florida, after passing through the center of the hitherto unexplored and mysterious Everglades. Heretofore we have published a series of letters from our correspondent, Major A. P. Williams, who was in command of the expedition, describing the start from Cedar Keys, the arrival at Punta Rassa and at Fort Myers, the trip up the Caloosahatchie River and the voyage along the Western Shore of Lake Okeechobee.

I.

At 8 o'clock on the morning of Nov. 4 we take advantage of a lull in the wind to continue our course around the shores of Lake Okeechobee. Burke Island, so named by the captain of the steamer Bertha Lee a few weeks previous to our present voyage, lies about three or four miles to the eastward of us, and although it was our intention to visit this, the only island with any amount of highland in it in this lake, we know our boats cannot reach them in safety with the winds and waves against us. The Gulf of Mexico never presented an angrier appearance, or waves rolling higher, than what we have experienced and seen for the last three days upon the waters of Lake Okeechobee, an inland sea about fifty miles in length and breadth, with nothing to break the force of the wind or waves until the water-covered swamps of the Everglades, which form its shores, are reached.

The water is too shallow near the shore for the larger boats, so we are compelled to stand out from shore about half a mile, while the smaller boats and batteaux keep in the grassy waters, which extend for about an hundred yards into the lake around its whole margin. In an hour after our departure from camp we find ourselves sailing

ALONG THE SOUTHERN SHORE,

peering anxiously for a spot of dry land on which we can camp and dry the contents of our boats. After traveling about eight miles, we discern with our glasses a white sand beach backed by quite a forest of large trees, and immediately signal the other boats to follow, and sail for it. On reaching it we find a high strip of land about a mile long and fifty yards wide, a beautiful white sand beach, and in the rear a little land-locked harbor in which our boats can lay perfectly protected from the wind. It is, indeed, a perfect piece of good fortune to find such a resting place, and as each boat is borne by the waves through the channel to this little bay, which lies calm, still and quiet, quite a contrast to the war of the waves from the lake as they dash upon the shore but a few yards off, the men give a hearty cheer. Allen's canoe, the "Judson," capsizes in getting through the channel, losing all our knives, forks, cups, plates, and some of the cooking utensils. Mr. Harlander, our artist, suffers the same fate, so far as the capsizing is concerned, but loses nothing. Mr. Phillips, our commissary, ships a sea, and comes very near sharing the same fate. Both batteaux, half filled with water, and immediately all hands are at work unloading the provisions and drying them in the sun. As soon as the hurry and hustle of going into camp subsides, we get our rifles, and for half an hour there is a perfect fusilade in camp,

each man trying to see how many alligators he can kill in a given time. The whole surface of the water is

DOTTED WITH THESE MONSTERS

from three to ten feet and over, who perhaps for the first time have seen a human face, for unconscious of danger, they come swimming from all directions, never stopping until they get within a few feet of the guns. Those that are not killed or wounded do not seem the least alarmed at the crack of the rifles or the struggles of the wounded. Some of the dead ones the men pull on shore, measure, and cut the teeth out, to keep in remembrance of the occasion.

Mr. Marshall, the photographer, is quite busy all day taking photographs of the encampment (alligators included) from different points. Our artist, Mr. Harlander, is also occupied with his pencil in sketching the scenery. We name this beautiful little bay "Kitty Harbor," and in time, when Lake Okeechobee shall become one of the thoroughfares of commerce, many a vessel will find refuge from the angry waters of the lake, and here rest in perfect security until the storm is over, should they ever be caught as we have been.

In the evening, with a machete to cut a path through the dense undergrowth, we explore the woods growing upon this little peninsula. Here for the first time we see

THE INDIA RUBBER TREE OF FLORIDA

in large numbers and of large size. One in particular we notice, which is about six feet in circumference, reaching to a height of about forty feet. Each limb, as it reaches a certain length, bends down until it reaches the ground, when it takes root, forming an additional support to the parent stem. We cut a gash into the tree with a machete, and immediately a fluid resembling milk in appearance begins to pour out, and continues to do so as long as we remain, forming a pool at the bottom of the tree. This fluid, after being exposed to the air a short time, becomes thicker, and at the same time assumes a dark brown color. Many cabbage palm trees are also growing here. Button wood and a species of ash, quite new to me, also abounds. Small scrubby cypress line the shore, and their innumerable knees, which stick up in all directions in the water, make a landing among them in rough weather very dangerous.

We know it is impossible to move while this gale of wind lasts. Our camp is a pleasant one, so we make ourselves contented, spending the day fishing, and occasionally

SHOOTING AN ALLIGATOR.

We see no ducks or game of any kind, and fish are scarce. Only a few black bass, and numbers of cat-fish, are caught.

We are all able to sleep on dry land tonight, and enjoy our beds of green moss gathered from the trees. Nothing happened to disturb our rest that night. We go to bed tired and worn out, sleep soundly, and when the sun rises on the morning of the 5th of November it finds every man still rolled up in his blanket. The gale still continues, and after our experience of the last two days, we dare not expose the men and boats a second time to its fury, so decide to remain quietly where we are.

The men spend the day washing clothes, cleaning out boats, and drying the different contents of the boats. Climbing to the top of the highest tree we are enabled to get a view of that portion of the Everglades which we will first encounter. Beyond the line of swamps, which extends about two miles from the margin of the lake, a vast marsh of saw grass extends as far as the eye can reach, unrelieved by brush or tree. We are not yet in the extreme

SOUTHERN END OF LAKE OKEECHOBEE,

the point selected as our point of departure, and are in hopes that ere we reach that point we will discover some water-course flowing from the lake to the Everglades, which will relieve us from the arduous labor of cutting through the dense swamp of trees, the first obstacle we expect to encounter. There is no change in the weather to-day. The wind blows as hard as ever, and when we recall to mind the experience of an old hunter, as related by himself to us a few weeks previous, who was caught in just such a gale on the lake, and was compelled to remain three weeks on one little spot of dry ground he was lucky enough to find, waiting for the winds to subside, it does not add to the cheerfulness of the party.

At 3 o'clock on the morning of November 6, we awake to find the wind subsiding and the lake comparatively smooth. No time to be lost, so the camp is aroused and the work of cooking breakfast and packing boats is hurried up, as we do not know whether the lull in the wind is temporary or will continue during the day, and therefore wish to take advantage of present bright prospects. It is daylight ere the first boats shove off from shore, which are the two provision batteaux, which are followed soon after by the

others, we bringing up the rear to watch over the progress of the smaller craft. We have not gone a quarter of a mile, ere the wind is howling around us with redoubled force. We crowd on all sail on our little boat to overtake our provision boats, which we know cannot live in such a sea. The last we saw of them they were not more than a hundred yards from the shore, about a half a mile from our last night's camp. We find them both near where we had last seen them, pulled up on the shore, half filled with water, and everything they contained wringing wet. Calling to the men in charge to unload, dry everything and remain where they were, we hastened in the direction of the other canoes. The first canoe we encounter is the "Burke," in charge of J. R. Phillips, our commissary. We throw him a line and take him in tow. We do not come up with the other boats until 12 o'clock, and find them safely

WEDGED IN THE MARSH GRASS,

where they have gone to protect themselves from the fury of the gale. We all take lunch, and, after giving orders to return to our last night's camp, hoist sail and start back to look after the provision boats. We arrive at camp about 4 o'clock, and, after ordering Caesar to build fires and go to cooking, we walk down the shore about half a mile where the provision batteaux are laid up, see that our loss has been very little, and that everything is being dried, after which we return and wait for the other boats. The only two boats that do get in are the Susie B. and Page M. Baker, in command of Col. Hopkins and Mr. Harlander. We know the others are safe, as the Whitehall boat is with them, but it is not pleasant to be separated and scattered as we are on this night. On the morning of the 7th of November we find the lake calm, with hardly wind enough to fill our sails, so we take to our oars and row along the shore, looking for our lost hosts. We find the provision batteaux have already started, nor do we catch up with them until we come to the camp of the remaining boats, where we find the whole crowd waiting for us. The men tell of a rough time after we separated the day before. Nobody lost, boats unhurt, and nothing injured, so we are perfectly satisfied as our little fleet shoves off and, keeping all together, move slowly down the shore.

After having traveled for twelve or fifteen miles, we come in sight of an island lying about two miles from the main shore. Capt. Hendry, in the sailboat Queen Anne, accompanied by the Whitehall boat, sails for the northern end of island, while the remainder of the boats continue their course down the shore of the lake. When we are abreast of the island, we make an examination of the shore of the lake on the mainland, discover an

opening in the woods, which we row for, and soon find ourselves at the mouth of a river running in

THE DIRECTION OF THE EVERGLADES.

The river at its mouth is about 100 yards wide, the depth of water being about eight feet. To say that our little party were over-joyed would but poorly express it. We do not go an hundred yards before we hear exclamations from the members of the party in praise of the beautiful scenery which greets the eye on every side. There is no perceptible current so far as we can discern. The water is clear as crystal, the banks fringed with a dense tropical growth of trees, presenting to the view a solid green wall, impenetrable to the eye. This wall is formed by vines, which have twined around the trunks and branches of the trees, and have interlaced and wound themselves around each other until they form a screen which is almost sufficient to shut out the light of day. Looking behind us we find that we are followed by innumerable alligators, who are swimming along lazily in our wake. From all sides we see them plunging in the water, remain under a few seconds, rise after we pass, and join the crowd behind us. We do not go two miles before the river begins to get narrow, and we find ourselves in a little stream only a few yards in width, the sunlight completely shut out by the branches of trees and vines, which have interlocked and twined around each other until a perfect roof is formed. We can go no farther without unshipping our masts, so, taking one of the small canoes and one man, we leave the party to clear a camp-ground during our absence, and continue our explorations of the river, still hoping that we have discovered an outlet to the Everglades through this almost impenetrable swamp which surrounds us. After going half a mile, we find we are no longer in any stream, but winding around in dark, sluggish water, the roots and branches of the trees forming a barrier to our further progress.

DISHEARTENED, HUNGRY AND TIRED,

we return to camp to report the bad news. As we return we examine more closely the vines which grow so luxuriantly, and find they are a species of gourd, with innumerable gourds hanging from them, perfectly round, and about the size of a billiard ball. The vines run all over the trees, and on the ground form a mat two or three feet deep.

We reach camp, take a hasty dinner, get in our canoe and go in search of the remainder of our crowd, leaving the present crowd to arrange a comfortable camp ground. We meet Capt. Hendry after sailing about an hour, who reports having also discovered a river running in the direction of the

Everglades, on which the other boats have gone into camp. We take the captain on board of our boat and send his crew back, with instructions to his part of the men to come early next morning to where we have established camp. On our return we examine the shore thoroughly, and find two or more rivers similar to the one we have just left, which we will explore on the morrow.

Surely among all the rivers we have already found running south we hope to find one running into the Everglades, and so, consequently, we are in better spirits on our return to camp. The ground is too full of snakes for us to sleep on shore, so we wrap ourselves in our blankets, lie down in the bottom of the canoes, and fight mosquitos all night.

On the morning of the 8th of November the remainder of the boats having arrived, all are unloaded. Some of the men in charge of Col. Hopkins, who will explore more thoroughly the river on which we are encamped, are left, and the rest of the boats row out to the lake with the intention of making an examination of each stream or river running south. To the first river we come to we sent the canoe "E. A. Burke," in command of J. R. Phillips, to trace it to its source. The second is assigned to W. Harlander, in canoe "Baker"; the third to Capt. Hendry, in canoe "Judson." Before half the day is past we have found

THE MOUTHS OF EIGHT RIVERS,

all running in a southerly direction, from a hundred to two hundred yards in width where they empty in the lake. Six of them we assign boats to, with instructions to trace them as far as possible. We also note two small islands lying about one or two miles northeast of the last river we ascend.

When we all met at camp that night one man's report will answer for all, which is as follows: "Rivers run about two or three miles through swamp, and as suddenly as they began, just so suddenly do they cease to exist, the waters spreading out over and forming the swamp which lies in front of us."

The river on which we encamped last night we have named "Rita River," and the one on which we are now encamped and will use as a means of reaching the Everglades we name in honor of the journal we represent, "T.-D. River."

We have a heavy shower during the night; all getting wet. The mosquitos do their best to eat us up, and if we sit on the ground a second a

million worms of all kinds, shapes and sizes are crawling down our backs or up our legs, and to make a long story short, there is hardly a man in the party that is not sorry he's living, or, at least, life has no attractions for him at present, and would rather be dead than live on the banks of Okeechobee.

II.

On the 10th day of November, ere the first streaks of dawn, every man in camp is astir. The changing of different articles from boat to boat, for part of our programme is, that so far as each boat is concerned, they shall be independent of each other in the matter of provisions, for although we expect to be together at night, still to a large extent we will be separated during the day. We find our meal and grits have been

SPOILED BY THE FREQUENT WETTINGS,

so, with feelings of sorrow, we have it all thrown to the alligators, who are gathered around our boats, waiting for their departure. Some of our coffee suffers the same fate. Everything is stored in as small a compass as possible. When we left our first camp on the Caloosahatchie we imagined everything was properly stored, but the experience of two weeks has taught us that there were many things yet to be learned in the manner of packing boats. All is ready as the sun rises and boats are pushed from shore, the first boat being the lightest batteau we have, in command of Murray, two of the best axmen we have in the crew, loaded with part of the meat, and our implements for clearing the way for the boats behind. Your correspondent follows in his canoe, the small canoes next, with the largest batteau loaded with camp equipage and provisions. Col. Hopkins brings up the rear in his canoe, and keeps everything moving behind. A few hundred yards are passed, and the order is given to stow away oars and take to the boat poles. When we give this order we are aware of the fact that many days will pass ere those oars are put in use again, and that poles will have to be used for many miles to come. The river has now narrowed down to a stream not more than five or six feet, a few feet of water in depth, dark, sluggish, and with a slight perceptible current running north. The boughs of the trees lap over the water, the vines form a perfect net-work to bar our progress, and to all appearances when we approach these barriers it seems as if the end of our water course has been reached, but with a few strokes of the machetes, axes and hatchets our way is cleared, and our journey is resumed for a few yards, until the next obstruction is reached, sometimes a sunken log, the roots of trees extending across the whole channel, or the branches of trees which reach the surface of the water. We have gone but a couple of miles when we

discover that the river no longer exists, but has lost itself in a dense swamp of custard apples. Our compass is now, and will be until the end of our voyage, our only guide. We are now penetrating a portion of the State which has never been done before by any white man, and never even by Indians, except when compelled to do so during the last Indian war as a means of escape from the soldiers who were in pursuit. Our course is due south, and our present object to cut our path through this, to all appearances, impenetrable thicket. The axes and machete are kept busy until 2 o'clock, cutting trees and slashing vines. The trees soon become thinner, and about 3 o'clock we find that our course has brought us to the borders of a marsh of yma grass, wampu or warmpea, and mixed with scrub willow. Now we begin to realize the difficulties which lie before us, many of which we had never taken into consideration. In the first place, by close examination we find that at this season, when the water is highest, that it is at present at its lowest. The water mark upon the trees indicate that it has been five feet above its present level; how long ago we are unable to state. The mark certainly is not very old, and portions of grass, which have lodged between the branches of the trees, still remain there, indicating that not many years have elapsed since the mark was made. Perhaps it would be better to say months, instead of years. We examine

THE DEPTH OF WATER

in our front, and find we have about five inches of water and fifteen feet, more or less, of mud. In other words we might say, "no bottom," and above the water level marsh grass and scrub trees, through which nothing but muscle will propel the boats. Climbing up a tree and examining our situation we find that a line of timber extending southeast about four miles, and southwest about the same distance, leaves us in the centre of what is commonly known as a "bite," and in our front or southward there extends before us one vast marsh, in which even with a field-glass we see no sign of water or trees of any description. We do not include in this description a thin line of custard apple trees lying about one-quarter of a mile from us in front.

There is no use in discussing the situation for a single minute, so orders are given for every man to get overboard, and overboard they all go, and the boats are propelled inch by inch, the men sometimes sinking almost out of sight. Our journey is pursued in this way for several hundred yards, when we find out that the men in charge of the batteaus are unable to push them through the tall grass, and are therefore compelled to send back the men from the foremost boats and bring them up. We are compelled to do this

during the whole day, and after a hard day's work we find we have traveled about two miles, but only one-quarter of a mile from where we left the swamp and came into the marsh. Orders are given to camp. Provisions for a few days ahead were cooked at our last night's camp, but there is the indispensable coffee to make, so the different pots and skillets are distributed among the boats, fires are built in them, and each man soon has his tin cup of boiling coffee. The bows of each boat touch, so communication is kept up with each other. Every one is kept busy for awhile passing down or up the line certain articles needed by his neighbor. Although our canoes are resting on the bottom firmly and do not tip over, still we are aware that it is soft and yielding mud, and unless a fellow wants to sink to his chin he has to stick to his boat. Supper is soon over, and the men are soon busy making down their beds for the purpose of getting under bars from

THE MOSQUITOES,

who, from the way they swarm around and attack us, could not have had a square meal for many a day. Even the bars are not a perfect protection, for our artist, Mr. Harlander, will certify under oath that at bed-time they began lighting on the top of his bar, and he quietly smiled to himself as he thought of his impregnable position. In one hour, after a short nap, he awoke and found, as he supposed, some kind friend had stretched an awning over him to protect him from both dew and moonlight. He thought nothing more of it until the top of his bar caved in, and to his horror he found that it had been caused by the weight of the mosquitoes on top, all of them having combined to attack him in that peculiar and original manner. It is even amusing (provided your mosquito bar is a strong one) to lie and watch them trying to scratch a hole, holding on with their hind legs and scratching with their forelegs and "sticker". An Everglade mosquito in rest, that is to say when he gets exhausted from some such fruitless attempt as to scratch through our "keg of nails," shows but four legs and one "sticker," but just let him get a good hold between your shoulders where you can't reach him, and there is no scratching-post near to rub him off, and he becomes all stickers, and no legs. Experience will prove all and more than I can possibly say on the subject. On the morning of Nov. 11 (Sunday) the men do not need any calling to awaken them. Long before we get up, and that is before day dawns, there is a hum of voices and smell of boiling coffee. This sleeping cramped up in boats is something new to the majority of the party, and they are glad to rise early. At day-dawn the men have all breakfasted, and soon every one is stripping off their dry clothes and donning the wet suit of yesterday. Before starting into the Everglades we knew our first diffi-

culty, and, as we supposed greatest, was cutting through the dense thicket bordering upon Lake Okeechobee, and our next

CUTTING THROUGH THE SAW GRASS.

The last we expected to overcome to a great extent by burning ahead of us. We did not anticipate that the strip of intervening marsh between swamp and saw-grass, was of any great size, or even if it was, that we would find plenty of water to float our boats, and be able to pole through without much difficulty. To our sorrow we find that we have a task before us which will entail such hard labor upon the men that if it continues for many days will completely break them down. Two men are dispatched at daylight, with a compass to guide them and machetes to cut their way through the tall grass. Their instructions are to go due south, walk until 12 o'clock, and if they find the edge of saw-grass marsh to fire it and return. In a few seconds the tall grass hides them from our view, though for many minutes we hear them floundering through the mud, and we resume our labors, tramping down the grass and pushing our boats over. Once in awhile one of the men misses his foothold upon the roots of the grass, and if he is not lucky enough to catch the side of the boat for a second, he disappears from view. We occasionally strike large ponds grown up thickly with wampee, or warm pea, and in a few seconds the men are suffering agony, caused by coming in contact with the roots, which produce a terrible burning and stinging sensation. We usually stand up in our canoe and pole it along, assisted by Caesar, who wades along in the rear and pushes. On this day we used a little more strength at one time than usual, or there was a weak place in our pole, as we find out by its snapping, and the T.-D. correspondent finding himself on his way to China, or some other place we won't mention, and worst of all, going there head foremost. Caesar nobly comes to the rescue and pulls us out by the legs, and after looking around and seeing that no one, except our artist, has seen the mishap, we beg for silence on his part, and conclude rather muddy and wet our boat, to assist Caesar in pushing. Caesar said afterward he wanted to laugh awful bad, "but de looks of de major's left eye wid about a pound of black mud ober it skeered him for de time." Slowly and sadly we wade on behind our canoe, pushing without spirit or animation for half an hour, when suddenly we are the liveliest and most animated man in the crowd, judging by the way we cavort around, and finally jump in our canoe, mud and all, and go for a dry suit of clothes. We had come in contact with

THE INFERNAL "WAMPEE,"

and it had conquered. One minute I felt as if the skin was rubbed off and

red pepper was being rubbed in, and the next I lacked about an hundred hands to do the proper amount of scratching which the occasion warranted. The peculiar pain was so great that I feel warranted in saying that if its intensity had lasted for an hour, it would have put me in the condition of a raving maniac. Still the men for two days have been working on it, and they say after the first sensation of pain subsides, which it does in a few minutes, leaving only a slight itching, which subsides as soon as clothing is changed, or contact is removed. Its appearance is similar to the water lily, the leaf being from six to twelve inches across, the root running to a depth of six inches, and resembles a shalot in appearance. We had the curiosity to taste it. We shall do so no more. We can almost imagine that the sharp needles, which seemed to be pricking every nerve in our face, is still at work.

Just before 12 o'clock we heard a roaring sound like an approaching wind, followed by a cracking and popping, reminding us of the distant firing of musketry in a battle. Looking ahead a column of smoke is seen rising, and next flames shoot up to a distance of twenty or thirty feet. It burns steadily for about an hour and then goes out. At 4 o'clock the two men return, wearied and hardly able to drag one foot after another, and report that they struck the borders of the saw-grass marsh, fired it, found about one foot water, and that the distance is about two and three-quarter miles from present camp. This is cheering news, and we put up our mosquito bars in a more contented frame of mind this night and are all soon fast asleep.

III.

On the 12th day of November, wishing to reach the saw-grass marsh, a distance of two and three-quarter miles from our camp of last night, we arouse the men early, and at daylight the whole party, cheered by the prospect of easier work in the future, begin their task of dragging the boats through the tall marsh grass. Not many yards are passed before we encounter a new impediment to our progress, which consists of a species of

SCRUB WILLOW,

growing thickly among the grass. In height it is not more than four or five feet, not much larger than an ordinary walking cane, with a root as large as a man's leg, reaching several yards in some instances, and lying a few inches below the surface of the water. Our canoes are not more than the fifth of an inch thick; consequently we have to be both careful and watchful, for snagging a hole in one, situated as we are, means its abandonment. The large batteaus are unable to pass over such obstructions when met; conse-

quently the men are compelled to go ahead with axes and clear them from our track, doing a few yards at a time, returning to the boats, pull them over, and then resume their task. It is hard work, and when the sun goes down and we find that we are only three-quarters of a mile from our camp of last night we feel almost discouraged and ready to try some other point of departure from the lake, but when we look around and see the men cheerful and if not contented, certainly looking so, we feel encouraged and ready to

FIGHT IT OUT ON THIS LINE.

Boats have to be farther lightened, so several articles and a portion of our stores are returned by a batteau which has accompanied us this far, and will meet the expedition on their arrival at the Gulf. We are advised by the other members of our party to abandon the largest batteau we have, or at least let it return; also a large portion of our supplies, but this we do not think proper to do as long as we can possibly get along, notwithstanding it impedes our progress, as we do not know what difficulties may lie in our path or how long we may be detained ere we reach the end of our journey. Another reason is that the hard usage our canoes are receiving by being dragged through the mud will more than likely wear them out, and we will then depend entirely for transportation upon the two batteaus which accompany us. As usual we have to camp in our boats, take our usual supper of bacon, hard bread and coffee, and at 9 o'clock there is not a sound in camp except the song of the festive mosquito as he lingers lovingly around some mosquito bar, seeking to find some unnoticed hole through which to make an entrance. He finds it in some cases, for occasionally we hear a muttered growl down the line, and the occupant's language is not exactly suited to a camp meeting. No one thinks of any other protection from the heavy dews except their mosquito bars, and even if we had tents we could not use them.

We are up early on the morning of Nov. 13, and before the start is made we climb the mast of the batteau, and examine carefully the country in our front. We see before us one unlimited expanse of

TALL, WAVING MARSH GRASS,

without a tree or even a bush rising above the level of the grass. Again and again we bring into use our field glass, but alas, the same unbroken level plain meets our view, the same brown color unrelieved by even a patch of green or a depression or rising of the surface. We are unable to distinguish where the marsh grass ends and the saw-grass begins, for it is all alike, all

the same color, the same height, and what is worse still, all the same difficulties and perhaps greater for the next ten miles in our front, on our left and on our right. Still, we are like all the rest of mankind—we would rather cope with difficulties we cannot see and know not of than to return and re-encounter those of which we know so well.

THROUGH WE MUST GO,

so the orders for “all overboard” is given and our snail-like progress begins, and is continued until 1 o’clock p. m., when we find ourselves upon the borders of the saw-grass. Even though our difficulty of getting through may be increased, still anything is preferable to the dull monotony of the last three days, and the men involuntarily give a cheer as they see what lies in front. The water has not increased in depth, and as for the mud our pole, which is over twelve feet in length, has failed to find bottom. Orders are given to put fire to the grass, and in a few seconds the flames are sweeping a clear path in our front, leaving only a thick stubble of four or six inches above the level of the water. The boats are pushed forward, and although they are more easily propelled through, yet the men’s foothold upon the roots of the saw-grass is more precarious, and almost every second some of them are slipping up to their necks in the soft mud, consequently our progress is unchanged. When night comes on we reckon up the distance traveled that day, and find that one long mile will tell the tale. We take another look through our field glass before sun-down, with the same result as in the morning—no open water or trees in front.

Before going farther, by reference to a map of the Everglades, it will be seen as already stated, in a previous letter, that our point of departure was from the extreme point south on Lake Okeechobee, our exit to be through Shark, or Harney’s River, into White Water Bay, or some of the numerous channels running into the Gulf to the Ten Thousand Islands,

OUR COURSE

to be south, diverging westward only a sufficient distance to bring us on our due south course to one or the other of those two designated points.

Our course, while cutting through the swamps surrounding Lake Okeechobee was a little east of south, so that now we are clear of the swamps, our course is southwest, which we expect to bring us out in the vicinity of Prophet or Cabbage Island, in the centre of the Everglades. Part of our expectations was to reach the open waters of the Glades, and cruise around among the islands until we reached the head of Shark or Harney’s River.

The saw-grass marsh we expected to be about ten miles in width. In this we were disappointed. The eyes see nothing ahead even at an elevation of ten feet, gained by climbing one of the boat masts, but the same level plain of dead grass. We know it is over ten miles, and at the rate we are going, and the obstacles to surmount, the prospects ahead are not encouraging.

We stop work before sundown to give the men an opportunity of cooking supper, which is done by building small fires in their iron pots in the boats, frying or broiling their bacon and boiling their coffee. Our boats are small, hardly of a sufficient size to carry the requisite amount of provisions, consequently we are unable to lay in a supply of fuel in the shape of wood, always trusting through the day to get enough of dead twigs to answer the purpose. To-night we realize one of our future troubles. The fires which cleared our path has also cleared it of everything else except the green stubble of grass left standing, and few of us have laid in even a small supply necessary for immediate use. By hook or crook, each boat has succeeded in borrowing from his neighbor or found an extra box, for the fires burn as usual, and hot coffee is the order of the night. We are supplied with canned meats for such emergencies, and the commissary distributes them.

The camp that night is illuminated by the flames of

THE BURNING GRASS.

We are encamped within a perfect circle of fire, and the eye never tires of watching the different fantastic shapes assumed by the flames, as they leap in the air to a height of thirty or forty feet, roaring and crackling as they envelop everything before them. Their course is sometimes stopped by meeting with ponds, but it is only for a minute ere they sweep around it, and their onward course of destruction is resumed. The fire is perhaps two miles from us, yet we can read by its light.

The 14th of November dawns upon us, and by the appearance of the sky we are satisfied that we are in for a hard rain. Everything in the boats is protected as well as the means at our command will allow, and our onward course is resumed. The front boat at present is the canoe "W. H. H. Judson," occupied by Capt. Hendry, pushed by two men, and followed by our smallest provision batteau. The canoe is the opening wedge, which breaks our path through the rank stubble of saw-grass left standing by the fire, and the others following, widen and deepen the channel, so that our large batteau is considerably assisted in getting through. Messrs. Harlander and Phillips in the two small canoes "E. A. Burke" and "Page M. Baker," disdain

assistance from any one, but stripped to their underclothing, they walk behind their canoes and propel them along. The two large canoes "Susie B." and "Daisy W." are able to get along with Caesar and Tiger to push. Col. Hopkins and your correspondent aiding with poles, except in extreme cases which occasionally arise, and then we too take to the mud and water.

This is now the fourth day since we left our camp on Lake Okeechobee, or at least the banks of The Times-Democrat River, yet a large cypress tree standing at our point of departure looms up as large as ever in our rear. Each night as we camp, we hear the wish on every side that when we camp again the old cypress will be out of view. There is nothing worthy of recounting that occurs on this day, except that we

HOISTED THE SAILS

on our boats for the purpose of drying them, they having been wet in the rain that morning, and found that they assisted so materially in propelling the boats, that soon every boat had every stitch of canvass spread to a stiff northeaster that was blowing, and consequently made over a mile. We are all in better spirits when night closes in and go to work getting our suppers with more vim than usual. We have had a barrel of bread emptied, and after breaking it up, distributed the barrel among the boats to cook with. Mr. Phillips, our commissary, whose canoe rests beside ours at night, and follows next to us during the day, is our only messmate, Caesar officiating as head waiter. The other boats have formed similar messes with their next neighbors and everything works harmoniously. We are compelled to do this while our present situation continues, as we are unable to move from canoe to canoe, although we are in line and touching without seriously inconveniencing each other. In fact none of us want visitors at this time, although we have no objection to sit in our canoes, talk, smoke, laugh over the events of the day, or discuss our next day's movements, and being so near each other, conversation is always general, and joined in by all the gentlemen of the party.

OUR COLORED CREW

occupy the batteaus, and hard as their labor is compelled to be during the day, they are cheerful at night, and we have heard no grumbling from any of them, which generally occurs where men are obliged to do so much extra work and of such a nature. Since our departure from the Caloosahatchie River we have neither killed nor seen any game of any description. Ducks we certainly expected to see, but so far have seen none. On Okeechobee, in all our wandering through the swamps, up and down the different streams,

we only saw one squirrel, an otter and about 10,000 alligators, more or less. All around us reigns

A DEATH-LIKE STILLNESS

unrelieved by any sound of animal life of any description. The croaking of a frog, the hoot of an owl, or the bellow of an alligator would be a relief. Neither sight nor sound to relieve this desert surrounding us on every side causes a feeling of depression we cannot avoid, and the men do all they can to keep everything lively by the sound of their own voices, until the time comes for them to roll up in their blankets and forget in slumber the labors of the day gone by, or that which the morrow will bring.

Our usual labor is resumed on the morning of the 15th of November, and the same hard work goes on. We hold a consultation with Col. Hopkins, our civil engineer of the expedition, and Capt. Hendry that night, and they, like myself, are inclined to look at our prospects of getting through as rather doubtful, and, personally, we are all inclined to turn westward, strike

THE INDIAN TRAIL,

running from Lake Hickpochee around the western shores of the Everglades, and thence to centre of Everglades after reaching the Big Cypress Swamp, but when we realize that to do so would not be carrying out the programme of the expedition, the idea is abandoned, and for weal or woe we determine to adhere to our present course. We have caught sight of a small bunch of green bushes about two miles to the southeast, which we hope is a good indication that the face of the country will soon change, and when the prospect is announced to the men no set of shipwrecked mariners ever scanned the horizon as eagerly as they did in the direction of that little clump of green bushes—to the eyes a perfect little oasis in the desert, which surrounds us on every side. Small as the encouragement is to persevere, it is surprising to see how quickly everybody's spirits are raised. Men are heard singing in the boats, jokes and laughter is heard on every side and we are certain if a man in the party had attempted to croak or dampen the spirits of the men, some kind hand would have been found ready to pitch him overboard in the mud.

No need to give the order "all overboard" on the morning of the 16th of November, for every man is eager to go forward, and daylight finds every man busy putting on his wet clothing and hurrying those who are lagging in making their morning toilet.

The water is a little deeper to-day, a strong wind is blowing from the northeast, consequently our sails are of great assistance, and our progress is a little better than the previous day, as we make one and a half miles, the greatest distance made since our departure from Lake Okeechobee.

There is no change in the prospects ahead, so far as we can see, and that haven of rest we expected to reach, or at least catch a glimpse of by sundown, is still hid from view. We do our best to cheer the men, and try to convince them of the almost certainty of a change for the better on the morrow, and to a certain extent succeed, but they are not quite as cheerful as on the night past. All are aware that as long as provisions hold out there can be no turn back, and ahead they must go. In fact, the dread of having to go back over the same route is, if anything, greater than that of facing the unknown difficulties ahead. Still, working in mud and water up to the waist, stung every minute by the numerous insects which infest the water, burnt by wampee, coming in contact with moccasins at almost every step by day, and sleeping cramped up in small boats at night, is not an enlivening life to lead.

IV.

It is blowing quite a gale from the northeast on the morning of the 17th of November, as we rise from our beds in the boats, don our wet clothing pulled off the night before, and all jump overboard to begin the usual work of pushing the boats through the saw-grass. It is not a very pleasant feeling to exchange comfortable dry clothing for that which is wringing wet, and jump overboard into mud and water which reaches to a fellow's waist, but by the time you have

LEECHES

sticking to every square inch of skin under water, but by a species of stinging bug every five minutes, and the enlivening sensation of feeling a moccasin wriggling between your legs, or hissing in your face at almost every step, you feel glad to know you are living, and care but little for water, mud, or anything else. Every half hour the men stop, get on the bow of the boats, and go to pulling off the leeches which cling to them. When ever a leech is pulled off the wound bleeds profusely for several minutes, and it is an hourly occurrence to see the water around the boats changed perfectly crimson with blood from the men. By 12 o'clock the wind is blowing quite a gale, the sails of the canoes are lowered, but before our large batteau, the "Queen Anne," can follow suit, a gust of wind strikes her, the masts snap

off, down comes her sails, and we realize something that has never to our knowledge before occurred, to wit: a shipwreck in water only four inches deep, and without a single wave. The whole party are sorry, for her sails have materially assisted us in getting along. No material change is found in the country through which we travel this day. It is the same through which we have traveled for seven days. Nothing but saw-grass, a little water, plenty of soft, black, slimy mud, and with not a single tree or bush in sight, except those which we left on the 10th of November. The old cypress which marks the point from which we left the swamp is still plainly in sight to the naked eye, to the great disgust and discouragement of everybody. The first thing the men do when they finish their day's work is to get on the bow of their boats and look in the direction of that tree, and then the sad news goes down the line, "It's dar yit." We have hardly time to cook supper and eat it, before we are warned of an approaching rain, and just have time to stow things away, don our oil-cloth coats and caps, when down it comes, and for two or three hours we sit on the deck of our canoes Turkish fashion, wondering if the bottom has not fallen out above, or trying to recall some instance of a man being drowned by rain beating on his face. The end comes at last, and after bailing out boats, wringing the water out of our blankets and neglecting to say our prayers, we tumble down in the bottom of the canoe and sleep until sunrise.

On the morning of the 18th of November, before giving orders to start, one of the men, acting as spokesman for the rest, inform us that they are

COMPLETELY BROKEN DOWN,

and, ask that we give them this day to rest in. They inform me also that it is Sunday, a fact which I had lost sight of. Their request is granted, so we lie in our boats all day and read over and over the only thing we have in the shape of reading matter in the camp, which is an old copy of a newspaper called the "*Bitter Sweet*," published at Kissimmee City by Col Will Wallace Harney. The darkies lay down in their boats completely worn out, and do not stir until dark, when they only stay up long enough to get their supper and then back to bed again.

Everything is ready for an early start on the morning of the 19th of November, so before sunrise we are on our journey. The grass is too wet to burn, so we are compelled to cut and break through it. The grass is much thicker and higher than heretofore, but the water is deeper and the bottom much firmer; consequently, we make a good day's journey, and by sundown

have accomplished a mile and a half. We have another shower during the night to enliven us. Everything is soaked with water, as we had made no preparations for such an occurrence. It is clear and bright on the morning of the 20th of November, and we spend several minutes looking from the mast-head of our boat, through a field-glass, at the country in our front, to the right and left, and nothing meets our eye but the same unbroken level plain of brown grass, reaching as far as the eye can see. There is water sufficient to float the boats, which is encouraging, and the men work cheerfully. About 11 o'clock the boats are crowded together in a small pond, and orders are given for the grass to be fired. In a few seconds the dense black smoke rises, the flames leap in the air to a height of twenty-five or thirty feet as they clear our path in front of us, the men pushing the canoes in the opening as soon as made, and following in the wake of the fire. The fire soon leaves us far behind, with nothing to remind us of its past or present existence except the dense, dark column of smoke in our front, and the black and burnt stubble of grass over which we wearily drag our boats. Suddenly all is excitement in our little crowd, boats are stopped, and the men crowd the decks looking eagerly to the west and southwest of our present course. The cause of this are two

COLUMNS OF SMOKE

about ten miles from us, which are lazily curling up from the ground. No need to conjecture whose hands have lighted those fires, as we are well aware that over an hundred miles lie between us and any white man, and that there are no human beings except Indians in this desert waste. Again and again during the day do we make smokes, which are quickly answered in front and to the westward of us by a similar smoke. We talk of nothing else that night when we go into camp except about the prospect of soon meeting Indians, the possibility of their being friendly, and of the different services they could render us in our present condition as guides, etc. The darkies one and all agree that they don't hanker after "Injin," and if it is all the same to us that they would prefer not meeting them, either in a friendly or warlike spirit.

We noticed on the evening before that the water was again getting shallow, and our boats dragged the bottom when we went into camp. So when we start on the morning of the 21st of November, it is in fear and trembling we begin our journey. For several hours we find the saw-grass larger and thicker than usual, about three inches of water, and ground firmer and harder. At 11 o'clock the water increases in depth, until at

12 o'clock we find to our surprise that our boats are floating in eighteen inches of water, that we are making good progress, the sails of the boats being sufficient to carry them along, the men being only required to clear a path and guide the boats. We make a smoke, which is answered almost immediately by similar smokes in our front and to our right. Another smoke springs up suddenly almost in our rear, to the northwest. We are satisfied now that we are being closely

WATCHED BY THE INDIANS,

whether with good or bad intentions we are unable to guess. About 3 o'clock p.m. our foremost boat finds itself floating in a little stream about ten feet wide and fifteen feet deep, the surface covered with water-lilies and flags, running southwest. We conclude to launch our boats on its surface and follow it so long as it runs in a southerly direction, hoping that it will carry us to the open waters of the Glades. It is a relief to the men to find themselves on the decks of their boats poling, instead of in the water and mud, pushing and pulling—the first time they have been able to do so since their departure from Lake Okeechobee.

After following the stream for a few hundred yards, we emerge into

A BEAUTIFUL LITTLE BASIN,

twenty or thirty yards wide, the water clear as crystal, fifteen feet deep, with hundreds of trout swimming in it, and an alligator to every square yard. They (the alligators) seem perfectly fearless of us, swim to within a few feet, and one old fellow actually rubbed his snout against the side of one of the canoes. We do not shoot them, but the men occasionally hit one of them over the head with an oar. We find a dozen little rivulets flowing out of this basin, in every direction. They are all similar to the one by which we entered it. Selecting the one running due south, we continue our journey for a few hundred yards, when our little stream ends as suddenly as it began, and our men returned to their weary work of pushing the boats through the saw grass. It is a bitter disappointment to all of us, but we are getting accustomed to such, and so don't even take the trouble to grumble. We go into camp early on this day, so as to give the men a little rest after their hard day's work; also to catch a few trout for supper.

During the whole of the 22d of November the men have a hard time pulling their boats through the grass, the water being only about three and a half inches in depth, and the bottom hard and firm. The grass is a little thinner, and occasionally we come across a tuft of weeds growing in it. At 12 o'clock we make a smoke, which is answered by similar ones in three different directions, somewhat nearer than they were the day before. We

come to numerous little basins similar to the one of yesterday, with sometimes a rivulet flowing from them in the direction we are travelling, which we take and follow to the end, which is never more than 200 or 300 yards. Our batteau,

THE QUEEN ANNE,

is leaking badly, and the provisions are getting damaged. We are unable to repair her, so determine to divide her load among the other boats and abandon her the next day.

On the 23d of November the sun for the first time in several days rises clear, and we are enabled to take a good observation of the surrounding country through a field glass. We sight for the first time the cypress timber which lines the western border of the Everglades, which is about fifteen miles from us. In our front and to the eastward, nothing meets our gaze but the same unbroken plain of saw grass. The load of the "Queen Anne" is divided among the other boats, which adds considerable to their weight, and after tying a couple of tin buckets to her masthead, we sorrowfully turn our backs and leave her solitary and alone in this vast saw grass marsh, her mast as a roosting place for birds, and her hull a house for alligators and snakes.

Numerous flocks of

DUCKS AND CURLEWS

fly over us on this day, consequently we are enabled to bag a few. The extra load we have put in our canoes compels every man to get overboard and put his shoulder to the boats and push them along. We still continue to find basins of water similar to those of the day before, and once in awhile a rivulet, which helps us on our way. The water still continues shallow, with hard bottom. We make our usual signal smoke, and get answers as on the previous day.

On the morning of Nov. 24 we start at day-dawn, hoping to make a good day's journey. We are very materially assisted on our way by several different creeks that we are lucky enough to strike. At 12 o'clock we enter a basin, and on its banks find about five feet square of

DRY GROUND,

the first we have seen since leaving Lake Okechobee. Several of the canoes are pulled up out of the water and examined. All are worn, some much worse than others. The canoe "Judson," which has had the hardest work to perform, being in front, has worn almost as thin as paper, and is leaking

badly. We are satisfied it can last but a few more days. If the remainder of the country between us and the Gulf continues the same as that we have already passed over, we will arrive without a single boat in condition to float. Knowing this, Capt. Hendry volunteers to take canoe "Judson," and, with the aid of one man, cut his way through to the western border, and from there go across the country to Fort Myers, from which place he will dispatch a larger boat to meet us at the head of Sharks River. The captain's offer is accepted, he being the only one of the party acquainted with the western shore and able to perform so difficult a task. We spend several hours on this night writing letters home for ourselves personally, and also for the colored men to their families.

All are up before daylight on Nov. 25, and preparations are made for an early start. Ten days' rations are placed in the canoe "Judson," and Madison Williams, one of our colored crew, is detailed to accompany Capt. Hendry. As the sun rises we all shake hands with the captain, wish him "bon voyage," and resume our course due south, while he goes west. It needs but the separation of a few yards to lose sight of each other in the tall grass surrounding us. Every hour or two we make a smoke, which is answered by the captain, as well as the Indians around us. We are thus enabled to see that the captain is making good progress. The men are almost entirely broken down, and the loss of our two companions seems to have a very dispiriting effect on the whole party. We go into camp early, having made a good day's journey of a mile and a half.

V.

We do not leave camp until very near 9 o'clock on the morning of Nov. 26. Men, boats and everything else are giving out. The clothing of the men are cut in shreds, their hands are lacerated by coming in contact with the saw-grass, and although each man started with two pairs of shoes, they are almost barefooted now. We are all about as

ROUGH AND RAGGED

a looking lot of men as ever were seen on the American continent, and if present hard work continues, and we should accidentally lose our blankets before we arrive on the sea coast, we will certainly present a very picturesque appearance in a "Georgia uniform," minus the shirt color and spurs, as we emerge from the wilderness. Our artist is the happy possessor of a pair of boots he can't wear, which boots we are now the owner of, having swapped our shoes for them, so we wear a contented smile, feeling satisfied that under

all circumstances, as chief of the expedition, we can always make quite a decent appearance with the aid of our india rubber coat and those boots. For some time after leaving camp, the water is shallow, hardly covering the men's feet, and at almost every step we expect to find what we have been dreading, dry ground over which we will be compelled to carry our boats, and at the same time break and cut our way through the saw-grass. At 10 o'clock we find a creek running south, which we follow for half a mile, and then resume our task of cutting through the saw-grass. The water is deeper, which is one consolation, and we are enabled to make two miles before dark. We kill several curlew and ducks as they fly over us in the evening, and consequently have broiled duck and curlew for supper. As we crawl into our canoes that evening we feel satisfied that our legs won't stand the work many more days, and that we will either have to trade off for a better pair, or mend the holes in the only thing in the shape of pants we have left, a pair of red flannel drawers.

We see every appearance of rain on the morning of Nov. 27, as we leave camp, but as we have water to float our boats we do not bother about the weather. Your correspondent's position in the expedition since the water has become so shallow as to prevent our riding in a canoe, has been walking in front of the boats, compass in hand, keeping our course and making the first opening in the grass. Our clothing has been cut in shreds, and to-day we are suffering so much from the cuts and scratches received that at 4 o'clock we are compelled to put another man in front and direct the course from our canoe, which is behind the lead boat, our provision batteau.

In sounding,

WE STRIKE ROCK

at a depth of seven feet from surface, which is the first we have struck since our journey began. This is a sure sign that we are approaching the Islands of the Everglades. We stop before sun-down, climb one of the masts of our boats, and with a field-glass discover an island lying about five miles southeast of our present course. We announce the fact to the men, who for almost three weeks have been watching, waiting and hoping for such good news, and when at last the glad tidings are told, no shipwrecked mariners coming for the first time in sight of land could have shown more joy than did the T.-D. expedition when the

FIRST ISLAND OF EVERGLADES

looms in sight. It is everything to us. It means rest for our broken-down crew, the opportunity of repairing and saving the boats, dry land to walk

We had intended remaining in camp during the whole of the 30th instant, but we all feel rested and have done all we can to repair our boats. The men are anxious to continue, so at 12 o'clock we bid farewell to T.-D. Island, shove off from shore, and for the first time in many days are able to use our oars. Many times during the day we come to the end of the water-course we are following, but by pulling the boats through the saw-grass a few yards we are able to go into another, the whole face of the country being a perfect network of such courses, the saw-grass between them being only a few yards through. We pass a number of islands, none over two acres in extent, and if any high land is upon them, not more than a few yards in the centre. Just before dark we reach a small island, on which we hope to find dry land and camp for the night. Find none, and so sleep in our canoes.

On Dec. 1 we have but little difficulty in getting along — water about three feet, with rocky bottom. Our course lies between numerous islands, all of which are under water. We see a number of ducks, but kill none. By sundown we reach Cabbage Island, on which we camp all night. We find the remains of several old camps on the island, it being a regular stopping place for the Indians on their journeys from their settlements in the Big Cyprus Swamp to Miami on the Atlantic coast. We find the island infested with snakes, so sleep in our canoes.

On Dec. 2 resume our journey. Find plenty of water for boats, so are enabled to row all day. At 11 o'clock we make a signal smoke and receive half a dozen answers from different directions, none nearer than about five miles. The Indians are all around us, and why some of them do not put in an appearance is a problem we are unable to solve, nor do we take time to make the attempt, as we are in a hurry to get out of that country, and in our hearts are perfectly willing to promise the Indians, or anybody else concerned, that if they will let us alone this time, like the little boy "we won't do so no more," so help us Bob. We reach an island that night, but we don't reach any dry land so camp in our boats.

On Dec. 3 start at day-dawn. The islands get thicker and timber on them larger. All are small, and every one we examine covered with water. By 12 o'clock we have made fifteen miles, burning the grass whenever we are able, hoping to get an answering smoke from the head of Sharks River, where we expect to find a boat and men awaiting us. We get answers from every direction except the right one. At 2 o'clock the rocks begin to crop out above the surface of the water, and we have to get out of the boats and

on, and wood to cook with. Tired as we are we sit up until a late hour that night, and for the first time in many days, we hear our crew singing their usual songs, and from canoe to canoe jokes are passed, anecdotes told, and all are merry and happy as a parcel of school boys.

No need to wake up the men on the morning of the 28th of November. Everybody gets up before daylight eager and anxious to get off. As soon as we are able to see the hands of our compass, we give the command "all overboard," and the men fairly lift the boats out of water in their anxiety to get to our haven of rest. We do not go more than half a mile before we find ourselves in a species of grassy waters, bounded on each side by a thick wall of saw grass. In other words a water course an hundred yards wide, with a thin species of marsh-grass covering it, the water about eighteen inches deep. It goes in the direction of our island, we have no trouble in propelling our boats so we get along rapidly, and soon are in plain sight of not only this particular island but many others beyond and on each side of it.

At 4 o'clock we find ourselves on the borders of the island which is about three acres in extent, covered with a growth of wild fig and custard-apple trees. The men soon cut away through the brush and trees until they reach the dry ground, which is about twenty feet square, covered with maiden cane. Temporary shelters are erected for the provisions, boats are unloaded, and each pulled out of the water. By dark the camp is pitched, supper is soon prepared, and shortly our tired party is getting such sleep as is possible under the circumstances.

On the morning of the 29th of November we have the canoes turned over and begin the work of cementing the cracks and putting on a coat of asphalt on their bottoms while the men sun the provisions. By 12 o'clock the main work is done, and all amuse themselves washing and mending their clothes, while others clean their guns and load cartridges for killing the game which in our imagination we are on the eve of finding in abundance. We climb to the top of the highest tree on the island, and get a good view of the surrounding country. We find that we are on the borders of the islands of the Glades, and the one on which we are now encamped is the most northern. To the east, west and south, as far as the eye can reach, we see hundreds of little islands, divided from each other by the grassy water already described, and saw-grass marsh.

lift them carefully a few feet at a time. Our canoes are thin, the rocks sharp and pointed, and the least carelessness on our part will put a hole through their bottom, without any means at our command of repairing damage. All the different water courses seem to have come together, or at least the saw-grass has disappeared to a great extent, and our course lies between innumerable islands as far as the eye can reach. We find dry land on one of the islands we reach at sundown, and camp all night.

On Dec. 4 we resume our journey. We still have to wade beside our boats, and all our strength is called for every ten or fifteen yards to lift the boats over the ledges of rock. At 11 o'clock we make a smoke and watch anxiously in our front for an answer. For awhile we look in vain, but suddenly to our joy

A THIN COLUMN OF SMOKE

shoots up above the tops of the intervening trees about six miles in our front, which from our maps and the course we have kept must be in the neighborhood of the mouth of Sharks River. Again and again it rises from the same place during the day, which convinces us plainer than words that it is our own men making signals to us. Dark comes on and against our will we are compelled to go into camp. We look for no island or dry ground, but where night overtakes us there we stop, and tired as we are, spend most of the night looking at our watch and wishing for daylight to resume our journey.

Before it is daylight on the morning of the 5th of December we are on our way. We have not more than four inches of water between our boats and the jagged rocks. Careful as we are, our boats are badly cut. At 11 o'clock we fire the grass, and immediately an answering smoke comes from the same spot in our front as on the previous day. This smoke we judge to be about five miles from us. All that men can do is done by our party on that day to reach our friends awaiting us, but at 4 o'clock we are still almost three miles from it. We are all worn out as the sun begins to go down, when we see approaching us through the marsh a man in a canoe, and in a second all fatigue is forgotten, as we hasten to meet him. When he gets near enough we recognize Mr. Christian, the one in whom we intrusted the task of going around the Gulf shore as far as

SHARKS RIVER,

to ascend that river to its source, and then encamp until our arrival, making signal smokes by day, and sending up rockets at night. When he gets in

speaking distance the first question we ask is, Where are we? He answers, "In two miles of the head-waters of Sharks River." All other things are of but minor importance to us then. Our programme has been carried out to the letter, and our task accomplished. Three cheers are given for Christian, who has so faithfully performed his part of the work, and never was a man's hand shaken with more fervor than was his, as all crowd around him answering and asking questions. We camped in our boats in the marsh that night.

We have killed all the snakes in sight, a good fire is burning, and, by the number of ducks and curlew which are roasting, broiling and frying, a person with a vivid imagination would not hesitate to say somebody intended having a good supper. We all unanimously agreed on landing to call this island T.-D., take possession of it in the name of the T.-D., and after taking a good look at our possessions, we are satisfied our right to ownership will never be questioned for at least a thousand years to come by any living being. Before it is dark the trees around us are covered with

THOUSANDS OF BIRDS,

consisting of curlews, cranes, water turkeys, buzzards, blackbirds and numerous others we never saw before. We shoot and shoot among them, killing hundreds, but they will return and punish us by keeping up a most terrible noise until daylight.

At daylight we are off; reach the head of Sharks River at 8 o'clock, descend that river for ten miles, take one of its numerous mouths and reach

WHITE WATER BAY

after dark, making thirty-five miles that day.

When we reached White Water Bay we had accomplished all we promised to do, and more than any man or men ever were able to do before. We are the first party of white men who ever penetrated the Northern Glades and the first who ever started from the southern shore of Lake Okeechobee and came out at the Gulf of Mexico without diverging a mile to the east or west from their due south course.

VI.

In conclusion I sum up my observations of the Everglades in a few words:

It is a vast marsh, interspersed with thousands of islands small in extent, and with few exceptions completely inundated, even at the time we explored

them, which was during a very dry season. On the islands that were out of water, there was but a few inches of soil covering the rocks. In my opinion their drainage is utterly impracticable, and even if it were practicable the reward for such an undertaking would be lands that could be utilized for no other purpose than as a grazing ground for stock. They are nothing more nor less than a vast and useless marsh, and such they will remain for all time to come, in all probability.

It would not be possible to build, or maintain if built, a telegraph line along the route traversed by us, which statement is made in reply to numerous inquiries as to the feasibility of such an enterprise.

A. P. Williams.