

The Call of the Everglades

The Ex-Governor of Florida Gives Facts and Figures That Will Bring the Landless Man to the Manless Land.

By NAPOLEON BONAPARTE BROWARD, Ex-Governor of Florida

IN beginning this article I wish to impress upon the reader the immensity of the area of the Florida Everglades; the colossal work of their reclamation, and the vast territory that will thus be opened up for agricultural utilization.

The territory known as the Everglades contains about 4,000,000 acres, or over 6,000 square miles, is about 100 miles long by sixty miles wide; is as large as the States of Connecticut, Delaware and Rhode Island combined, or as large as the State of Massachusetts, which had a population of nearly 3,000,000 ten years ago. The present population numbers less than a dozen persons.

The land lies between reefs of rock extending in approximately parallel lines north and south for a distance of 100 miles by sixty miles in width. There are many small rivers emptying into the Atlantic ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, but these rivers all have their sources at points

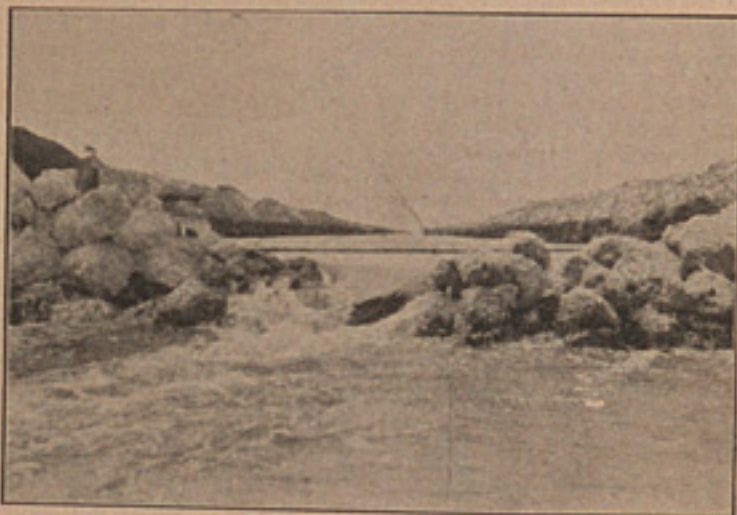
WHY not have your own vine and fig-tree, grapefruit tree, too, and grove of cocoanut palms?

outside the rock rim of the Everglades. There are no rivers or drains of any kind within this reef, and necessarily the rainfall upon the area embracing the Everglades runs over the land, just as the rain on the roof of a house must first run over the surface of the roof before it reaches the gutters which carry it away.

The State of Florida is draining this territory by extending these rivers into the Everglades, at a cost of about \$1 per acre.

The Everglades have an elevation of 25 feet as a maximum, and about 18 feet average, above sea level, which gives ample fall for a successful drainage. Lake Michigan is about 600 feet above the Gulf of Mexico, a distance of 2,000 miles, the fall per mile being three and three-fifths inches. Lincoln, Neb., is about 900 feet above sea level.

I quote the elevation of Lake Michigan and Lincoln, Neb., for the purpose of showing the fall that the water has that flows down the Mississippi river to the Gulf of Mexico, which river drains the territory between the Appalachian range on the east and the Rocky Mountains on the west and the Divide on the north; and a portion of the waters run from this Divide through the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence river to the Atlantic ocean, and on the other side of the Divide it drains into the Mississippi and thence into the Gulf of Mexico.



A Dam in the Everglades Canal. Showing the Fall of the Water

From the center of the Everglades to the Atlantic ocean is about forty miles; to the Gulf of Mexico an average of sixty miles, the fall per mile is four inches to six inches, which insures a rapid run off for the water from the land.

There have been between seven and eight thousand small tracts of the Everglades purchased during the last eight months. It is our expectation that quite large acreages of this land will be ready for cultivation in the next two years.

The lands being reclaimed by the State of Florida offer new soil for agricultural

development. Samples taken from numerous points throughout the drainage district have been analyzed by prominent chemists of Europe and America, and comparison of results shows a remarkable uniformity in component parts of these rich soils.

The planter of Florida can depend upon a much longer season for the maturing and harvesting of his crops of sugar cane than those in other sections of the United States.

By consulting the agricultural reports of the United States for the year 1905 they

show that for the year before was consumed in the United States 2,767,162 tons of sugar.

The report also shows that there was for the year sugar manufactured in the United States as follows: From domestic molasses, 15,000 tons; sugar cane, 223,649 tons; maple, 12,000 tons; beets, 170,135 tons; making a grand total of 521,005 tons produced in the United States. Imported from foreign countries for the same year, 2,246,068 tons. In dollars it showed that our domestic production amounted to \$36,478,640; imported sugar valued at 3¼ cents a pound, \$157,224,700.

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The same report shows that we paid more for imported sugar from foreign countries than we received for all of our exports of corn, wheat, wheat flour, beef and naval stores, as these articles combined brought \$144,494,154, which brings vividly to our minds the force of the reasoning of Generals Jessup and Harney sixty years before, when they indicated in their letters concerning the Everglades that we should make ourselves independent of foreign countries by supplying ourselves with land

YES, the Everglades is a swamp; so was Chicago, sixty years ago.

upon which to produce the nation's stock of sugar, and I will say that the total amount imported as above set out could have been produced from sugar cane grown on a half million acres of land in the southern portion of Florida.

A fact which goes to make this land so exceedingly valuable is that it is uniformly rich; that acre by acre it will produce like crops, which makes it attractive to persons expert in the production of sugar, who have investigated and found that it is very important that the acreages planted in sugar cane shall be contiguous or as nearly so as possible, as to economically produce sugar the cane must be near enough to the mill so that it can be placed in cars by machinery, run into a mill on one side as cane and go out at the other as granulated sugar; and the supply of cane must be great enough to furnish not less than 600 tons per day to each mill.

In the Everglades we have millions of acres of land without a tree or root upon it, that is as rich as any in the world, and millions of acres suitable for cane, where it can be grown in solid bodies to meet the requirements of sugar manufacturing. To clear and make fit for cultivation a half million acres of land in any part of the United States would require from \$15,000,000 to \$30,000,000. To drain the Everglades would cost, as per the report of Mr. Wright, special engineer, United States Department of Agriculture, about \$1 per acre.

This has been written about one of the great staple crops that can be grown on Everglade land: "Rice can be grown with equal or even greater profit than can sugar, as the yield per acre would be very great. Tests so far made indicate that the profits would be very great."

One hundred barrels of Irish potatoes to the acre can be raised on Everglades land, for each of two crops in one year, and at a season of the year when they bring the highest prices. I have known of 1,100 crates of tomatoes being produced on one acre of Everglades land. The truck

gardeners who have been able to cultivate small acreages of Everglades land have frequently obtained from \$750 to \$1,500 per acre per annum for their crops of tomatoes, peppers, snap beans, guavas, etc.

The soil of the Everglades is also adapted to the growth of grape fruit, oranges, and all the citrus fruits. I have seen both grapefruit and orange trees, large numbers of them, last year, that were bedded less than three years ago, with from 100 to 200 fruit to the tree. The avocado, or alligator pear, as it is commonly called in our coun-

population as many more as there are in the whole South today and, I will say, the South of today if considered separately is a great country. In 1860 the South was valued at \$4,500,000,000, slaves and all; the remainder of the whole United States was valued at \$9,500,000,000. Today the South alone is valued at \$22,000,000,000, \$6,000,000,000 more than was the whole United States in 1860, and with a population only 4,000,000 less than was the population of the whole United States at that time. We have a great country; we have a great people.



A State Dredge at Work

try, the mango, the guava and other subtropical fruits grow very rapidly and yield very large crops.

It is but necessary to glance at the census reports of the United States and notice how rapidly the population of our country is increasing to be brought to a keen realization of the fact that good farm land is a very important proposition.

We find from consulting the census reports that in 1820 there were but 9,000,000 people in the United States; that in 1860 there were but 31,000,000 of people; that in 1880 our population had increased to 50,000,000; in the year 1900 our population was 76,000,000. The increase from 1880 to 1900 was nearly three times as great as was the population of 1820 and we notice that the increase in twenty years was within 5,000,000 as great as was the total population of the United States in 1860.

When we consider the fact that 15 per cent of our population is engaged in agricultural pursuits it should cause us some concern as to where the 150,000 additional farmers are to find good agricultural lands at reasonable prices.

Let us consider these figures once more as something that shows the increase of population in two decades. In twenty years more we will have added to the nation's

How and where can they best be distributed for their and the country's good?

Florida offers to the people of the world a new acreage of land that will in a short time be reclaimed and ready for cultivation; a land that in fact will be not only new to agriculture, but that will have been

WHERE everlasting spring abides and never-fading flowers.

rescued from an overflow of water that has existed throughout all the past centuries—an area as large as the State of Massachusetts. We can offer you as many acres more, distributed by thousands of acres in every county of Florida.

We ask that before the agriculturist purchase land he make a careful inquiry as to whether it will be suitable for the purposes for which he desires it. Of the 35,000,000 acres of Florida there are many millions of acres that can not today be considered good agricultural lands by any means.

Every community should be interested in selling to the prospective purchaser the best land that can now be had, and as the years roll by continue to offer the best for that

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time. It will not be many years before even that which is now considered poor land will be considered valuable land.

I invite the people of the world—ten millions of them—to come and settle in a State that has 1,200 miles of ocean, gulf and bay coast. Florida's eastern shore line is laved by the cooling waters of the Atlantic ocean for a distance of 400 miles; on the southern and western shore line it is bathed by the warm waters of the Gulf stream and the Gulf of Mexico for a distance of 700 miles, with an atmosphere that is tempered by the breezes from the ocean and the Gulf and the warm waters of the Gulf stream running parallel with the coast for 600 miles; a country where there is no winter, only spring, summer and autumn.

We can offer you a greater number of sunny days than can any other State in

the Union; we can offer you as hospitable a people for neighbors as can be found on the face of the globe; and in my humble judgment, after a careful inspection by the people of the world, by travel over the surface of Florida, and investigating it—the lands, climate, health-giving atmospheric conditions and locality—after enjoying the health-giving breezes, sunshine, atmosphere perfumed by the odor of flowers, of tropical plants and orange blossoms, while the rest of the country is locked in the arms of Winter, all will agree that any person with any degree of intelligence who does not feel grateful to the Creator of all things for this piece of his handiwork can not claim any higher place in the scale of animated being than can the brute that with unconscious gaze wanders among the works of God.

Soil That is Worth Six Dollars a Ton

By S. MAYE BALL

SO far, more than thirty miles of canals have been opened in the Everglades, and hundreds, yes, thousands, of acres of land are being reclaimed and crops are now growing profusely on them.

There is no question as to the wonderful productivity of the reclaimed soil. There is a peculiar thing about this soil—the element of nitrogen in it is nearly two and a half per cent, and this element has a value in the fertilizer markets of fifteen cents a pound. In other words, the soil of the Everglades is actually worth, if dug up, carted away and sold in the open market, more than \$6 per ton.

But the soil is not to be dug up and sold; on the contrary the lands are now being sold on two-year installment contracts in tracts of ten acres at \$24 per acre.

The Bolles lands organization will sell immediately 12,000 of these contracts, and it is stated that there has been such a demand for them that it is more than probable the whole of them will be taken before the end of 1910, meaning a great tide of immigration into Florida. The people of the northwest portion of the United States have been much interested in these reclaimed lands; much of the property has been sold to them through representatives who visited and inspected the lands before buying.

The base of operations now on the Everglades is at Miami; two of the great dredges are working from New River and one is heading from the Miami River, while the other is on the west side of the lake in the Caloosahatchee River.

The cutting of the first canal in the Everglades drained a very considerable acreage. The character of the land is rich in quality and very valuable. In the opinion of those living in the vicinity, the land after being reclaimed will be worth much more than \$30 per acre.

Along the banks of the first constructed canal there are many truck farms, upon which there is growing a crop of tomatoes on land which was from twelve to sixteen inches under water before the canal was built. One of the plots of ground used for a truck farm, just mentioned, was about an acre in area; the crop in character was finer in quality than anything theretofore grown in Florida and of an estimated value of \$750.

Where the great canals have cut their way for miles through the saw-grass, the water has run off, the grass has been cut and burnt, the soil heaped up in beds—just as in planting cotton—and along many of these beds run as luxuriant truck farms as one can ever see. All that is necessary to break this soil is the use of the hoe, therefore the labor cost for preparing this land is very slight indeed. With a scythe blade the grass is cut like standing grain; then with a hoe a narrow seed bed is made and the seed planted. The middle is worked

THE possibilities of reclamation by drainage in this country, are not inferior to those of reclamation by irrigation; and the land that will be gained by drainage is decayed vegetable matter enriched by the deposits of ages.—James J. Hill, in *World's Work*.

out from time to time as the bed is widened and the crop is cultivated.

Avenues of thirty feet straight to the canal are being left open for the use of the back-lot purchasers.

A Mr. Griffin, one of the farmers of this reclaimed land, when asked what his land was now worth, replied, "\$100 per acre." As his land is producing per acre \$300 to \$850 worth of tomatoes annually, his estimate seems low enough, surely!

(For the rest of this excellent article, see *Putnam's Magazine* for April.)

A VISIT TO THE DREDGES

By Dr. John Gifford.

WE ascended the New River, in the Everglades, a beautiful, winding stream that is very deep in places, one spot having a depth of 85 feet. The banks were quite low and sandy, and lined with moss-draped cypress, oak, maple, magnolia, cocoa-plum, pond-apple, etc., and after a short ride we reached the beginning of the drainage work.

One long canal ran northwestward, with the dredge Everglade at its head, hard at work. Another ran due west, with the dredge Okeechobee at work. These canals will run about 20 miles out into the 'Glade, and will be met by a canal running north and south from Lake Okeechobee to a point about 20 miles west of Miami. The dredge Miami is now at work at the head of the Miami river, and another dredge is at work on the West Coast, opening the old Disston canal.

As these canals are finished, dams are made to hold back the water to facilitate dredging, showing rather a surprising amount of fall and how effective these canals will prove in discharging the floods of water from this big area.

There were no mosquitoes in the Everglades during our visit, and crops were already growing on the land, owned by eager settlers, showing what can be done on land only partially drained.

Western capitalists mainly have bought this land. The money from the sale is doing the work, and the further it progresses the more the land will bring, and the more eager people will be to get hold of it.

There are agents at work selling this land in every State in the Union. Men of wealth and influence are behind this project, and if anyone doubts its feasibility, he should come to Florida and see with his own eyes.

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