

says, "Within this limit there is, in the vicinity of Fort Drum, a pine ridge, five miles in length and one-half to three-quarters in width, that might with light drainage be cultivated." There is, he adds, a ridge about Fort Davenport, west of the Kissimmee, T. 29, R. xxvii., four or five miles wide, extending south to Lake Istokpoga, T. 36, R. xxx., said to be barren and uninhabitable. All the rest, according to Mr. Niblack's report, is subject to overflow.

But on an excursion in probably the more favorable season of December, 1882, the writer found pine levels and arable land quite down to the vicinity of Okeechobee. The most singular curiosity of his exploration was a swine-herd brought up in that wild, trackless region, and yet whom no curiosity, or the chance wandering of his herds, had led to the mouth of the Kissimmee, a few miles below. He had "had no 'casion for to go thar," and he never went. I fancy it was a more vigorous race than the swine-herd held these watery fastnesses for forty years against the combined army and navy.

Nothing could appear more queenly and magnificent than Lake Okeechobee as we came upon it. The closing day was drawing the soft veils of dusk over the pinnate and pointed foliage set clear against the dying lights.

The river is one hundred and twenty feet wide at the mouth, flowing with a

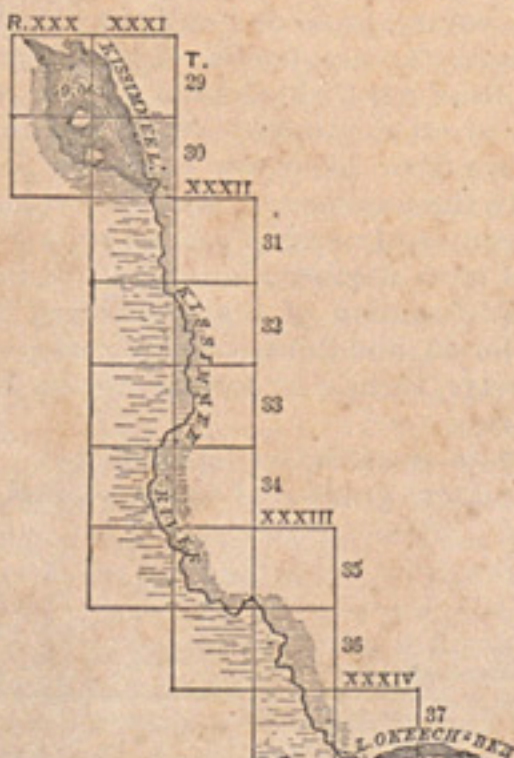


LAKE KISSIMMEE.

mean velocity of two feet per second, ten feet deep, discharging 207,360,000 cubic feet every twenty-four hours. On an estimated evaporation of one-eighth of an inch per day, the exhalation would aggregate 290,400,000 cubic feet, or 83,040,000 in excess of the inflow of the Kissimmee. Hence it is estimated that in only abnormal conditions the great lake overflows its margins. But these estimates do not include the inflow from other terraces, which fill the valley of Fish-eating Creek on the west, and Cow Creek and Taylor's Creek on the north and east, whose combined volume will probably counterbalance the normal evaporation of three-eighths of an inch per day.

To control this, a proposed canal from Cahoney Bay, in Okeechobee, to the St. Lucea, is to be cut one hundred and twenty feet wide and ten feet deep, having a fall of one foot per mile, with a mean velocity of 3.86 lineal feet per second, capable of lowering the estimated thousand square miles of surface four feet in a season.

It would require too much space to distinguish the botanical characters of vegetation in this virgin area; but the economy of nature is exhibited in the increase of leaf surface by atmospheric nutrition, displayed in gigantic ferns, palms, and the massing of delicate pinnate foliage in the bay, cypress, and their congeners, like the refinement of art in nature. These, shining, pointed, or darkly varnished in the willow and custard-apple, show a thousand tones and shades of green, which catch the lights and shadows in innumerable angles and surfaces, developing an extraordinary brilliance and softness. The great basin is a shallow pool on the oolitic limestone, in a frame of saw-grass,



VALLEY OF THE KISSIMMEE.