FLORIDA TRAILS
"The road down Indian River winds always southward toward the sun"
FLORIDA TRAILS

AS SEEN FROM JACKSONVILLE TO KEY WEST
AND FROM NOVEMBER TO APRIL
INCLUSIVE

BY

WINTHROP PACKARD

Author of "Wild Pastures," "Wood Wanderings," etc.

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY
THE AUTHOR AND OTHERS

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TO MY MOTHER
The author wishes to express his thanks to the editors of the “Boston Evening Transcript” for permission to reprint in this volume matter originally contributed to the columns of that paper; to Mr. H. E. Hill of Fort Pierce, Florida, and to Mr. J. D. Rahner of St. Augustine, Florida, for permission to use certain photographs which so ably supplement his own; and to very many Florida people, through whose unfailing hospitality and friendly guidance he was able to see and know many things which otherwise he would have been unable to find or understand. This spirit of courtly hospitality and neighborly good will seems to be as unfailing as the Florida sunshine, and is characteristic alike of the native and the adopted citizen. It adds one more delight to the many to be found in this beautiful region.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Going South with the Warblers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Certain Southern Butterflies</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Along the River Margin</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Birds of a Morning</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V 'Twixt Orange Grove and Swamp</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Jasmine and Cherokee Roses</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII A Frosty Morning in Florida</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII Christmas at St. Augustine</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX In a Florida Freeze</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Down the Indian River</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI Spring in the Savannas</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII Seven Thousand Pelicans</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII Just Fishing</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV Palmettos of the St. Lucie</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV Intruding on Ward's Herons</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI One Road to Palm Beach</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII Moonlight and March Mornings</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII In Grapefruit Groves</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIX Butterflies of the Indian River</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX Alligators and Wild Turkeys</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XXI  EASTER TIME AT PALM BEACH</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXII Into the Miraculous Sea</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIII Down the St. Johns</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIV Holly Blossom Time</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXV In a Turpentine Camp</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The road down Indian River winds always southward toward the sun&quot;</td>
<td>Frontispiece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;They line the paths on either side with the gray columns of their trunks&quot;</td>
<td>Titlepage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Profuse draperies of moss pendant from each branch and twig&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;To march along this water is to promenade a river side and a sea beach in one&quot;</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Lesser scaup ducks are very tame in Florida waters all winter&quot;</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;In the grateful shadow of an orange tree facing sunward in the grove&quot;</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Under the long robes of gray moss at the foot of the ancient cypress trees&quot;</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A wilderness where deer and bear still linger&quot;</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Razor-backs do not think it good to live alone&quot;</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of &quot;The Alcazar&quot; at St. Augustine</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathedral Place, St. Augustine</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The fort that waits in crumbling beauty the obliterating hand of the coming centuries&quot;</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The first frosts turned the upper leaves of the banana trees a light brown&quot;</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The banana tree in bloom</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The southeast trade-winds here pass a long line of the islands which bar off the Indian River from the ocean&quot;</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"This is a country of pineapple plantations"  
"Spring and autumn kissed yesterday in the savannas east of Lake Okeechobee"  
"All must know when spring comes, whether in the Everglades or the New England pastures"  
"The others began nest building and placed some fifteen hundred nests on the three-acre island"  
A little group of half-grown young pelicans on the edge of Pelican Island  
"Up with the full tide come sometimes the tarpon, rolling silvery bodies in the dark water"  
"A manatee, rare indeed nowadays"  
"Sabal palmettos whose cabbage heads tower often as high as the pines"  
"As quick night glooms the river the passing sun, caresses the palmettos last"  
"A superb dignity of pose, statues of frozen alertness"  
A little blue heron and her nest, the commonest Florida heron  
A Seminole village deep in the flat woods of Southern Florida  
The gray of dawn on the Indian River  
"The tree is lavish to its friends and will produce fruit almost beyond belief"  
"Thirty miles across the barrens these have come, from groves out at Fort Drum"  
"A rubber tree twined its roots about a palmetto till it crushed the trunk to a debris of rotten wood"  
"The river is screened from your view by dense growth of palmettos"  
"My first glimpse came at one of these places"
"The heat and steam of the sub-tropical swamp hatches the eggs without further trouble" .................................................. 224

"There, too, is the mingling of a score of wee, wild scents from the jungle" ......................................................................................................................... 232

The "traveler's tree" in a Palm Beach garden ........................................... 234

"It is the cocoanut palms that put the touch of picturesque adventure on the place" ......................................................................................................................... 238

Into the miraculous sea .............................................................................. 244

"By and by the road leaves the embankment and winds totteringly out on piling" ......................................................................................................................... 248

"As one holds his breath in suspense the road comes to a stop at the western tip of Knight's Key" ......................................................................................................................... 250

Gathering turtle's eggs on a Florida beach .................................................. 252
When I left New York, I thought that I had said good-by to the smaller migrating birds for three days. My steamer's keel was to furrow nearly a thousand miles of rough sea before it landed me in Florida, where among live-oak and palmetto, bamboo and sugar cane, I might hope to meet tiny friends that I had loved and lost a while. I rather expected flocks of migrating sea birds, and in this I was disappointed. The usual gulls whirled and cackled in our wake, kittiwakes and herring gulls, brown backs and black backs, a horde that thinned with each steamer we met, taking return tickets to port, seemingly loath to leave the fascinating region of Coney Island.

The hundreds had dwindled to almost a lone specimen before, just off Charleston, the pelicans came out to look us over. Not a duck did I see till the pelicans had approved us. Then we began to drive out scattered flocks. Perhaps the
northwester that had chased us all the way had something to do with it. For it was almost a blizzard out of New York. Up in Central Park the English sparrow, like Keats's St. Agnes' Eve owl, for all his feathers was a-cold. The little children of the rich, parading the walks with bare knees, and nurse maids, were blue with the chill and might well envy the little children of the poor for whom the charitable provide stockings. Even out at sea the wind and cold seemed to chill the water till it was made of blue shivers and goose-flesh combers.

Yet I had reckoned without my host, so far as the little migrants are concerned, for, waking the next morning some two hundred miles or more farther south and far out of sight of any land, the first sound that I heard was the tchip of a myrtle warbler. Verily, thought I, this is some trick of the vibrating rigging, quivering under the thrust of the screw. Then I looked up and saw the bird himself, sitting on the rail, whence he flew serenely to a passenger's hat. Then I was quite convinced that it was high time that I had a change, found fresh woods and pastures new. Too steady a pursuit of a subject is apt to end in hallucination, as many a latter day theosopher ought to be able to testify.

However, this specimen of *Dendroica coronata* was not materialized through concentrated
thought, but was a real myrtle warbler, and there were a dozen, more or less, hopping about the ship. During the next thirty-six hours the number of bird passengers carried, summed up, would, I am sure, far exceed the paying passenger list. We identified pine warblers, robins, song sparrows, chipping sparrows, fox sparrows, Wilson’s warblers, juncos, golden-crowned kinglets, ruby-crowned kinglets, bay-winged buntings and a white-bellied swallow.

With a few exceptions these seemed to be young birds, rather storm-buffeted and weary. Whether they lighted on the ship as a convenient resting-place in the regular course of their migration, or whether they had been blown off to sea by the strong westerly wind, it is impossible to say. I think the former. The wind was blustering but by no means a gale, and they could easily fly against it. They seemed most numerous at daybreak, and I think they were attracted by the ship’s lights during the night, and stopped on it to feed and rest at morning, as they do on land. Possibly, also, the younger generation of birds is finding that it is a good deal easier to go South by steam power than it is to get there by main strength. Why not? In a century or so chimney swallows have learned to build in chimneys rather than in caves and hollow trees. Blue-birds, martins and white-bellied swallows have
learned the uses of bird boxes. Why should n’t they adopt steamships? The wireless operator who pulls all sorts of information out of the circumambient atmosphere tells me that they have; that at this season of the year the ships are apt to swarm with tiny songsters, and the young lady from up the State who sits at the piano in the social hall and coquettishly sings about “the saucy little bird on Nellie’s hat,” is now able to do it with illustrations.

This lighting of the myrtle warbler on the passenger’s hat is not persiflage, either. Several times it happened. Along in the afternoon a negro, sitting in a sunny corner of the steerage deck, held nevertheless the very center of the stage for several minutes with a junco perched on the crown of a well-brushed black soft hat that might have been as old as he was. It made a rather pretty picture and the old man’s eyes shone with delight long after the junco had flown. “Ya-as,” he drawled to his companions after the bird had gone, “dem birds, dey al’ays does laike dat hat. One day down in Souf Ca’lina ah was sitting in de field a long time an’ one of dem cuckoo birds des came along and laid an aig in dat hat. Yessir, it done did.” This may be true. I tell it as I heard it.

All these free passengers seemed far tamer on shipboard than on shore, and manifested it in
other ways than lighting on people's hats. They hopped chirping about the decks almost under foot, to the delight of the ship's cat, which caught one and escaped the wrath to come by dodging to some hole below decks with it. They even invaded the dining-room and picked up crumbs from the carpet, and it was no uncommon thing for one to flutter from under foot as passengers came along the corridors. Now and then one would leave his comfortable perch, flit in a wide circle about the ship, and come back as if loath to leave so firm a foundation and such good fellowship. I missed the white-bellied swallow first. Surely his wings should take him to land without serious effort. One by one the others departed, many remaining until the ship was off the Hatteras Shoals and the land not more than a dozen miles away.

Even then it seemed as if the little warblers and tiny kinglets were taking long chances with the stiff wind and the foam-crested billows. In starting off they flitted down toward these as if they intended to light on them, swerving upward from the very imminent crest of many a wave and dipping into the long hollows again in flight that matched the undulations of the sea. I hope they all reached land. Probably in migrating time the sea takes toll of all flocks and thus helps nature in her ruthless weeding out of the weak-
lings. There were no small migrants remaining by the time the pelicans came out to inspect ship.

I have great respect for the pelican, a respect which increases each time I see him, he is such a venerable gaffer of a bird. Even in the confines of his hen-fenced enclosure at the ostrich farm in Jacksonville, he does not lose this aspect of dignity. The group sitting and flitting about their tiny tank always reminds me of the delineations of the Hebrew prophets in the mural decorations of the Boston Public Library. They (the pelicans) have a faintly straw-colored top to the head which reminds one of a bald and massive dome of thought, and they draw their beaks back against their necks till they are for all the world like long beards. Then there is an intellectual solemnity about them that I am sure their character does not belie. Even when they play at leap-frog, clumsily flopping one over another in the pool, they do it in a way that convinces you that they have it all reasoned out and are not entering into it lightly or without due consideration. They are a clean bird in captivity and are so quaintly awkward in their movements that one loves them at sight.

But the pelicans are best seen as they fly in an orderly line from somewhere shoreward, out to the ship inspection. Several flocks of ten or a dozen came alternately flapping and sailing,
SOUTH WITH THE WARBLERS

their wings all beating time with those of the leader as if in a careful drill movement. They sailed over the ship and then settled upon the water, still in an orderly row, and I thought I saw each flock confer after sitting and wag bald heads and long beards as if in approval. As we steamed up the St. Johns we left them there, for the pelican fishes only at sea and disdains the brackish water of the river which flows miles wide from the interior of Florida.

As a first glimpse of Florida bird life they are satisfying and of unusual interest. I recommend them to any who may sail in my wake.

The cormorants came next. The viking bird of which Longfellow jingled,

"Then as with wings aslant,
Sails the fierce cormorant,
Seeking some rocky haunt,
With his prey laden,"

may have been all that the poet’s fancy painted him, but the Florida cormorant certainly does not fill up to the measure of the poem. Fierce he may be to little fishes, but to the eye of the passer up the river his chief characteristic is purely dolce far niente. Hardly a river buoy or a sand-bar marker post but has a cormorant, looking as much like a black carving at the top of a totem pole as anything else. Usually he is as motionless. He stretches his slim, snake-like neck
as the boat goes by, sometimes even moves it uneasily, but his body keeps up the statuesque pose to perfection. No doubt the cormorant dives and swims, flies and fishes, but so far I have found him only as the topmost carving on the buoys and marker posts. This Florida variety is slightly smaller and otherwise different from the birds of the Northern coast. Chapman describes him as a shy bird. A cursory glance would seem to indicate that the only thing he is shy of is energy.

The first Florida land bird that I saw was the buzzard. If the cormorant is the statue of repose, the buzzard is the poet of motion. I suspect that this bird was the original mental scientist. He moves by thought-power alone. I am always reminded, in watching his progress, of the ancient story of the Chinaman watching his first electric car. The buzzard certainly has no visible "pushee" or any observable "pullee." But how silently and beautifully he goes. Never a flap of the broad black wings and never a quiver of the widespread primary tips. He just thinks himself along, against the wind or with it, up or down. His broad wings are like the prayer rug of the Arabian tale. He adjusts himself upon them, stretches forth his bald red neck and just wishes himself in some place, near or far, and forthwith he sails swiftly to it. In what as yet unexplained principle of progress he finds his power no pres-
ent-day aeroplanist can say. When he finds out, the flying man of the future may do away with the motor which so frequently fails to mote and the propellers which break in mid-air and spill the passenger. Go to the buzzard, thou Bleriot; consider his ways and be wise.

The little river steamer that takes you up the St. Johns from Jacksonville to Orange Park soon leaves the uproar of the city, the skyscrapers and drawbridges, tugs, lighters, and coastwise steamships behind, and puffs onward into placid reaches that to the eye have changed little since the days of De Soto. If plantations and villages exist ashore there is but little indication of them. The banks are lined with verdure, green and gray, — green with the foliage of century-old live-oaks and tall, long-leaved pines, gray with exquisite festoons and dangling draperies of the moss that decorates every tree and fairly smothers some of them. There is a crinkly grace, an elderly virility about it that is most engaging. It takes but little effort of the imagination to see the red cheeks and twinkling eyes of a myriad disciples of Santa Claus peering through it ready to bring gifts to all good children. I have yet to see with what costume they simulate the good saint in this country. If they do not make his beard of this softly beautiful, crinkly, fatherly gray moss I shall feel that they miss an excellent opportunity. Here
and there through the moss and among the big, rough tree-trunks a tiny road winds down through the needle-carpeted sand and leads to a slender long pier, built far out over the shallow reaches of the river to a landing for the river boats. The stream is miles wide in its lower course, but only in its channel is it deep. Shallows stretch far from either bank and fleets of water hyacinths voyaging seaward with the current strand sometimes far from shore. The fifteen-mile trip is thus like one into a sub-tropical wilderness untouched by the chill of approaching winter, little marred by the hand of man. The miracles of gorgeous autumn coloring which we left behind in the Massachusetts woods find no echo here. Now and then a sumac leaf shows dull crimson or the wild grape takes on a somber yellow, yet these tiny dots of color are no more to be noticed in a general survey of the forest than the bright hues of the butterflies that swarm at midday in the bright sun and a temperature of eighty in the shade.

It is a new land, yet it has beauties that are all its own. The full moon was rising over the eastern shore of the river as I climbed its west bank, lighting up the broad central street of the little town with golden radiance. Here for a moment with the soft sand underfoot and the stately live-oaks arching overhead I might have thought my-
"Profuse draperies of moss pendant from each branch and twig"
self in a Cape Cod village. The neat white fences were the same, the sand was the same with sparse grass growing from sidewalk to wheel tracks, and the live-oaks that arched till their limb tips touched and made play of soft shadows and softer light underfoot might well have been the Massachusetts elms. Only the profuse draperies of the moss pendant from every branch and twig were new, informing the place with a golden glamour of grace and mystery.

"Is n't it wonderful!" exclaimed the lady from Boston.

"Ye-es," replied the lady from Philadelphia, doubtfully, "I think it 's nice; all but that ragged moss all over everything. It reminds me of untidy housekeeping." Thus points of view differ.

It was perfectly conventional and exactly proper that the first bird I heard singing here the next morning should be the mocking bird. It is little wonder either, for these beautiful songsters infest the place, as numerous and familiar as robins on a Northern lawn. I have an idea that the mocking bird is just a catbird gone to heaven. He seems a little slenderer and more graceful. His tail is a bit longer and the catbird's earthly color of slate pencil has become a paler, lovelier gray in which the white of celestial robes is fast growing. Already it has touched his wing bars, and his tail feathers, and all his under parts. So
a bit of celestial beauty has been added to his song, which is rounder and more golden, yet holds much of the catbird's phrasing still. People may say what they will about the catbird at home. With all his faults I love him still, and it pleases me to fancy that he becomes a mocking bird as he becomes good and noble.

After the mocking bird's whistle came a second melodious note, the tinkle of passing cow-bells, recalling to mind once more quiet elm-shaded New England streets and rock-walled pasture lanes. Yet in this tinkle was a puzzling note as the cattle passed and the sound faded into the distance, a bubbling change of tone, a liquid drowning altogether new and delightful. I followed its siren call to find myself led, as by the sirens of old, to water. Down the streets of a morning wander the scrub cows of the place, munching live-oak acorns as they pass to their grazing grounds, the shallow waters of the St. Johns. Into this they wade fearlessly, often neck deep and a quarter-mile from the shore, sinking their heads to the bottom to feed on the tender herbage of aquatic plants. The tinkle of the cow-bells catches its bubbling note and its drowning fall in its continual submergence and resurgence. It is as characteristic of a St. Johns River town as the melody of the mocker, different, but perhaps equally delightful in its musical quaintness.
CHAPTER II

CERTAIN SOUTHERN BUTTERFLIES

I had not expected to find a zebra so far north, yet he galloped by the door one torrid day showing his black and yellow stripes most tantalizingly. He was so near that the brilliant red dots which are a part of his color scheme showed plainly and added to his beauty. I have said galloped; I might better perhaps have written loped in describing his flight, for the zebra of this story is not a quadruped, but a butterfly. It was I who did the galloping, net in hand, finding his easy lope hard to rival in speed. Soon, however, he fluttered to a live-oak branch and lighted while I put the net over him, or thought I did. I hauled him in with careful glee only to find a yellow oak leaf as my prize and the butterfly nowhere to be seen. Down here many people call the Heliconius charitonius "the convict." I had thought this because of his stripes. I begin to think it is because of his ability to escape imprisonment.

The zebra came as a sort of climax to two or three days of butterfly hunting extraordinary.
The first came on my first full day at Orange Park. There are years when August lasts well into November in northern Florida, and this is one. For two months, up to and including the tenth of November, there has been no rain, and in cloudless skies the fervent sun has set the mercury in the thermometer toying with the eighty mark. So it was on this first day of mine. The wind blew gently from the south, and by nine o'clock countless swarms of butterflies were flying against it, a vast migration in progress toward the tip of the peninsula.

The principal street of the town runs east and west from the boat landing to the railroad station. It is laid out so wide that the wagon tracks rather get lost in it and wander uncertainly from side to side, so wide that it takes three rows of stately, moss-bearded oaks to shade it, two between the broad sidewalks and the street, a third down the middle. There is room for a trolley line each side of this central row and plenty of space for a city's wagon traffic between that and the sidewalk. The trolley line is not here, however. Only an occasional lazy horse scuffs through the sand. Somebody planned Orange Park for a metropolis, and it may be that yet, but the time has been long in coming.

But if human traffic was scarce in this street the butterfly highway which led across it any-
where east or west was filled with eager motion. Black, yellow, red, silver, and orange and gold little and big, they were in the air all the time.

The only effort necessary to collect specimens in variety was that of standing, net in hand, in any spot and taking what came within reach. Long-tailed skippers shot like buzzing black bullets out of the vivid sunshine to northward, under the flickering shadow of the live-oaks, and over the paling and through the vivid sunshine to southward again. The skipper is really dark brown, lighted with a few yellow spots, his body prettily furred with green, but he looks black on the wing. He is only a little fellow, spreading little more than an inch and a half from tip to tip, the long tails of his after-wings being his most conspicuous mark, but he is as hot footed in his motions as a Northern white-faced hornet.

Why a butterfly whose main colors are dark brown and green evolves from the red-headed yellow worm that feeds upon wistaria, pea vines and various other plants of the pulse family is not for me to say. I think but little of the worm, but I have a great admiration for the skipper. His flight is vivid, if his coloring is not, and he is as full of energy and enthusiasm as a newly arrived Northern real-estate agent. I shall always feel a special friendship for *Eudamus proteus*. He was my first Florida capture. In the cool of dawn I
found one sitting on the pillow of my bed that very first morning and I took him on the spot. It is a good butterfly country where new specimens come to you while you sleep.

To-day the sky is overcast, there is a hint of rain in the air and the temperature is low enough to suggest a sweater. Not a butterfly is in sight. All are under shelter, waiting for the sun and the warmth again.

Certainly millions of them must have passed through Orange Park on this day of which I write. There was not a moment from nine until four that I could not count a score crossing the main street. I wandered from the river bank to the railroad station, a matter of a mile, and always it was the same. In the length and breadth of the town a thousand a minute must have moved on across that street, all day long. There were eddies and swirls in the current, but during the day I saw only one butterfly going against it. That was a skipper, and by his rate of movement I fancy he had forgotten something and was just hurrying back after it.

One of the eddies in this current was over a sweet potato field just south of the road. The ancient ditty about the grasshopper sitting on the sweet potato vine is true enough these days. The long drought has bred him in numbers, but that day the golden yellow butterflies rather
crowded him off. The Florida sweet potato is delicious. There is a nice golden yellow taste to its well-cooked pulp that crosses the word "enough" out of a Northerner's gastronomic dictionary. I remember as a boy studying history unwillingly, yet reading with pleasure of the part taken by the Southern troops under Marion, "the swamp fox," in defying the British under Tarleton and thus helping win the war of the Revolution. The legend ran that an embassy of British officers came to Marion's camp to discuss certain matters with them and found them making a meal of sweet potatoes only. Whereupon the embassy went back and told Tarleton that he could never conquer men who could fight so well on so meager a diet. At the time I sympathized with Marion and his men. Now, having tasted the Southern sweet potato in its native wilds, I sympathize with the British who did not know how well fed their enemies were.

The vine is not so delicious as all this, but it is pretty in its way, being much like our Northern morning glory. In fact, they are both ipomeas, and the purple, tubular blossoms are almost identical. The Northern morning glory should take shame to itself that it does not grow a root like that of its Southern sister-in-law. This sweet potato field was dotted with purple blossoms that morning, and above them whirled swarms of
what I think is really the loveliest butterfly of the South, the cloudless sulphur. The little sulphur with the black-bordered wings is common enough at the North, as it is down here, and a very pretty butterfly it is, too, but it pales into insignificance beside this great lemon-yellow fellow with wing expanse of two and a half inches, the whole upper side one rich clear color that flashes in the sun. The under side is almost as rich, having but one or two insignificant eye spots to vary it, and the swarms of these great golden creatures came down on the purple blossoms like a scurrying snow-storm whose great flakes were embodied sunshine.

The caterpillar which is the grub form of this beautiful creature is yellow, too — I cannot think of *Catopsilia eubule* as being born of a grub of any other color — and feeds on the leaves of the wild senna, whose blossoms are also yellow. Thus, for once, anyway, we have a sequence of color culminating in the superlative. The cloudless sulphur is very fond of all flowers, and is said to be especially partial to orange blossoms. I can think of nothing more beautiful than the glossy green leaves of this delightful tree, interspersed with the waxy white fragrant blooms, the whole glorified with the hovering wings of this great golden yellow butterfly.

The cloudless sulphurs did not have the sweet
potato patch all to themselves, though they swirled there most conspicuously. I picked out of it, as I watched, occasional flecks of deep red which I took at first for monarchs, and so many of them were. The monarch is a common butterfly in the North, one of our most conspicuous varieties from early summer until the low swung sun beckons them South, whither they migrate in accumulating swarms from September until frost. In Massachusetts these migrations never contain enough members to make them conspicuous. Farther south the numbers increase until from New Jersey south we hear almost yearly accounts of the swarms. I took one of these monarchs as he sailed by me across the Orange Park boulevard. He was just Anosia plexippus, but such a splendid fellow! Never before had I seen a butterfly of this species quite so large or so richly colored. There was a velvety quality about all his markings and a sumptuousness of outline and development that made him far superior to the Northern monarchs which I have examined closely. Other specimens have confirmed this impression, and I begin to think that the Southern-born Anosia plexippus, developing under stronger sun and from a chrysalis unchilled by frost, excels in beauty his Northern brother. I wonder if other butterfly hunters can confirm or disprove this.
Along with the monarch came now and then the viceroy. This too is a common enough Northern butterfly, so much like the monarch, though of another genus, that in flight neither I nor the insect-eating birds are likely to tell the two apart. The monarch is beautiful but not tasty, and the insect-eaters let him fly by on this account. Something about him does not agree with them. On the other hand, *Basilarchia disippus*, the viceroy, is delectable from the flycatcher's point of taste. But he escapes because he resembles the monarch. Hence many scientists say that the viceroy "imitates" the monarch for protection. In this I take it that they mean that he escapes because he resembles, not that he consciously assumes the colors of, the other insect. The survival of the fittest works inexorably, but without the consciousness of the individual. At any rate, the viceroy resembles the monarch very closely, though as a rule he is not so large.

The magnificence of the Florida monarch I find somewhat reflected in his viceroy, nevertheless, for the Florida viceroys seem to me larger and more richly colored than those of New England. This difference has led one authority on Southern butterflies to adopt a new name for this dissembler, calling the local *Basilarchia disippus, Basilarchia floridensis*. Then another came along and called him *Basilarchia eros*. But why?
The insect is in all respects the same as the disippus except that he is a wee bit bigger and richer in coloration. But so, I believe, is the monarch, down here. It seems to me like classifying Bill Jones as of a different family from his brother Sam Jones, just because Bill has browner whiskers and weighs forty pounds more.

But while I captured and examined monarchs and viceroyis and released them with vain speculations as to what other people thought of them and why, Dione vanillae came along, and away went thoughts of potentates and of hair-splitting classifiers. She soared low as if to alight at my feet, and I saw the rich orange yellow of the upper sides of her aristocratic wings. She hovered and danced up by my eyes, and she seemed robed in shimmering silver, so profusely are the metallic moons scattered over her under wings, and through it all she seemed to blush a vivid red.

This butterfly I had never seen, and though for two or three days she and her bewitching sisters seemed to swarm I have not yet disentangled my soul from her fascinations. No one of the dancing sisterhood passes me but I pursue with the net for the joy of looking closely at so beautiful a creature, though I handle with tenderness and release after gloating. The lovely, fulvous orange which marks the fritillaries seems in Dione to be just a shade richer, but toward the
bases of the wings it blushes into a rich wine red, a pellucid crimson, while beneath, the after wings are as studded with glittering silver spots as a Nautch girl with silver bangles. I do not wonder that Dione soars demurely for only a moment, then seems to have to dance in pure abandonment of joy in her own dainty, beautiful completeness. I have said the cloudless sulphur is the loveliest of Southern butterflies, and in spite of temptation I cling to the statement, but *Dione vanillae* is the most bewitching.

Of the other varieties of demure, delightful, sedate, serene, fascinating or frivolous butterflies that passed within reach of my net as I simply stood and watched them that most wonderful day I might name a dozen. The numbers, of all varieties, were countless, and all were moving south. I do not think it a conscious migration. Yet it has all the effect of that. A butterfly, like a migrating bird, flies best against a gentle wind. It is time now for the first of the wild geese to be on their way down from the Arctic, flying and feeding across the Northern States. You will find them feeding or resting when the wind is out of the north. When it blows in the higher atmosphere from the south the long harrows breast it with ease, high up, and seem to make their way as rapidly and as far as possible while it lasts.
On days when the wind blows from the north down here there is a bit of the northern chill in the air. No more than enough to give a needed stimulus to a Northern man, to make him wish to tramp far and see all things, but to the Southern sun-born butterfly this chill spells no thoroughfare. All traffic is suspended on such days, and though in sunny sheltered corners you may find many or all varieties, only such vigorous fellows as the monarchs fly high or far. In other words, on sunny days with a southern wind there is a steady southward migration of all strong-winged butterflies, a movement that sends literally thousands upon thousands in the course of a day across miles of country. This is not conscious or purposeful migration as is the movement of the birds at this time of year, but the aggregate result is much the same. Nor is the rate of passage of individuals at all slow. I find when I sweep at one of these southbound fellows with the net and then, missing him, attempt to follow his flight, I migrate southward at a jog trot that would mean five or six miles an hour. The butterflies that started out earliest on that sunny November morning were a dozen miles nearer the headwaters of the St. Johns when the chill of late afternoon overtook them.

I have named the, to me, loveliest and most fascinating of these November migrants. So far
I have found two others most interesting. One of these is *Anosia berenice*, which, according to my reading of butterfly authorities, has no business here at all. Berenice, surnamed the queen, is of the same genus as the monarch, the only other species of the genus found in the United States. The color is a livid brown, not differing much from that of the monarch to the casual glance. The white spots on the wings are similarly placed but the black veining is absent on the upper sides.

I had supposed the queen was found only in the southwest, in Arizona and New Mexico, and was greatly delighted to find many specimens floating about, feeding on the same blossoms as the monarch, and in many ways seeming worthy to be a consort. Like *Anosia plexippus* *Anosia berenice* has some quality which makes insect-eating birds shun it. In the southwest *Basilarchia hulsti* mimics the queen as the viceroy mimics the monarch. The two mimics are quite similar in appearance, and I shall look with care at each viceroy which passes in hopes of finding him the imitator of the queen.

The other most interesting variety is the zebra. In shape this insect differs from all the other butterflies found here, or indeed in the eastern United States. His wings are long and narrow, giving him somewhat the appearance of a gaudily
painted dragon fly. But his flight is serene and seemingly slow. It was two days after his disappearance before I saw him again, and then I did not recognize him. The richly contrasting black and gold of his upper side I did not then see, for he floated above me. I only knew that here was a peculiarly shaped brown fellow going easily by. This time he was easily captured. Not till I had him in the net did I see his upper side and recognize my escaped convict.
CHAPTER III

'ALONG THE RIVER MARGIN'

One of the sweetest of Southern trees at this time of the year is the loquat, which is not by right of birth a Southern tree at all, being transplanted from Japan. However the loquats have been here long enough to be naturalized and seem Southern with that extra fillip of fervor which marks, often, the adopted citizen. Their odor was the first to greet me on landing at the long dock at Orange Park, floating on the amorous air with sure suggestion of paradise just beyond. At the time I thought it just the "spicy tropic smell" that always comes off shore to greet one in low latitudes, whether on the road to Mandalay or Trinidad or Honolulu. Usually it is born of Southern pines whose resinous distillation bears on its rough shoulders breath of jasmine, tuberose or such other climber or bulb bearer as happens to be in bloom.

Off shore in the West Indies the froth of the brine seems to play ball with these odors, tossing them on the trade winds leagues to leeward, till
one wonders if Columbus might not have hunted
the new world by scent. Later in the year, say
February or March, this perfume might well be
compounded of orange blossoms, but just now,
when the oranges, hereabouts at least, are wait-
ing for the winter frosts to be over before they
bloom, it is the loquat trees which take up the
burden of scent. The loquat is a handsome tree,
suggesting in its shape and dark green leaves
the horse-chestnut. The blooms are in corymbes,
and their cotton-downy, yellowish-white flowers
are not so very different to the casual glance
from those of the buckeye. With one of those
fairy-like surprises that the South constantly
gives you the tree however does not produce
horse-chestnuts, but an edible, yellow, plum-like
fruit, whence its other, common name of Japa-
nese plum.

All night the loquat blooms send their rich
perfume questing off shore along the banks of
the St. Johns, and the big yellow stars swing so
low that it is hard to tell which is the heavenly
illumination and which the trawl marks of the
fishermen, lanterns hung from poles where the
trawls lie in wait for channel cats. In the gray of
sudden dawn you find these fishermen rowing
home again, black silhouettes against a black
river, and I often wonder if the scent of the lo-
quats, slipping riverward in the lee of the long
dock does not unconsciously guide them, they find port so surely without beacon.

It is very sudden, this gray of dawn. It is as if some one turned a switch, paused for a moment only to see that the first turn had taken effect, then turned another which released the spring beneath the sun, after which it is all over. Daybreak I am convinced is a word coined between the tropics. No man born north of latitude forty would speak of day as breaking. There the dawn comes as leisurely as a matinée girl to breakfast; here it pops like popcorn. With the coming of day on this bank of the St. Johns the pungent odor of wood smoke cuts off the scent of the November blooming loquats. The smoke of a Southern pine fire is an aroma decorated with perfume. To me the smell of wood smoke of any kind is always delightful. It sniffs of campfires and the open road, of blankets beneath boughs and the long peace of the stars. The fire whence it comes may be guiltless of any outdoor hearth. It may be half-smothered among brick chimneys, built to cook porridge for life prisoners in a city jail, for all I know, but the smoke is free. It was born of the woods, where it gathered all spices to its bosom, and though the log crumbles to ashes in durance, the smoke is the spirit of freedom and can mean nothing else to him who has once smelled it in the wild. If I am ever a
life prisoner, I hope they will not let me get scent of wood smoke. If they do, on that day I shall break jail or die in the attempt.

The wood burned here for breakfast fires is the Southern pitch pine, whose smoke seems to carry in its free pungency a finer spiciness than comes with the smoke of other woods. One born to it ought to be sure he is home again by the first whiff. It differs from that of white pine, fir or spruce, this long-leaf pine smoke, and I am sure that if you brought me magically from the Adirondacks or the Aroostook in my sleep and landed me in the barrens I should know my location, however dark the night, the very moment the wind blew the campfire smoke my way.

Every Southern backyard seems to hold the big, black, three-legged iron pot for boiling clothes, and I know not what other incantatory purposes. Beneath this, too, they burn an open fire of pitch wood, so often I may walk all day long with this subtle essence of freedom in my nostrils, a tonic to neutralize the languor that comes down river with the breeze out of the tropic heart of the peninsula. I walked south to meet this breeze this morning, with the morning sun on my left shoulder, the blue sea of the broad river stretching five or six miles beneath it to the haze of the distant bank. On my right was the ten-foot sand bluff of the bank and I waded with
the aquatic cows, now knee-deep in shallows on a sandy bottom, now following their paths through margins of close-cropped water hyacinths, over mangrove roots and through the mud of marsh edges, and again along a dry bank of clean white sand. To know a river takes many expeditions, and one of these should surely be afoot along its shallows.

The brackish tides that swirl up from the sea to the deep water off the Jacksonville wharves speed with little loss of vigor on, many broad miles into the heart of Florida. To march along this water is to promenade a river side and a sea beach in one. Splashing through the shallows I find the water as full of fish life as the woods are of birds, or the air of butterflies. You can look nowhere without seeing one, usually all forms in numbers. The mullet leap sometimes six feet in the air from the river surface, gleaming silver in the sun. A blue crab scuttles, left side foremost, from the margin toward deep water, his blue claws conspicuous and marking the species, which is Southern in its habitat though found in numbers as far north as the Jersey coast. This crab is very plentiful here, the neighbors catching him with ease by the simple expedient of tying a piece of ancient meat to a string which they drop from the wharf and occasionally draw up. The crab will be found feeding on and so
"To march along this water is to promenade a river side and a sea beach in one"
gripping the meat with those blue claws that he may be dropped on the dock or in a pail by shaking him off.

By the river at night may be seen a fine example of the continuance of a trade not taught in schools or in books, but handed down from father to son for countless generations. The fishing for channel cats in the St. Johns is a good business. The fish run from a few pounds in weight up to thirty or thirty-five. They sell in the rough for two and a half cents a pound. Nobody about here will eat cats and they are shipped north, I suspect to become boneless cod. But the cat fishing is not what I mean, it is the shrimping. These curious, bug-like creatures infest the river, and the negro fishermen capture them at night in primitive circular nets which have lead weights about the circumference and are held by a rope from the center. The fishermen cast these upon the surface by a peculiar motion which spreads them out flat. Then they sink and are drawn up by the central rope, looking for all the world like a dangling lace petticoat with shrimps and small fishes entangled in the lace. The water laps in ghostly fashion under the piers and the lantern light makes grotesque creatures out of an elder world of the fishermen.

Here, I suspect, is a fine survival. Were not the nets that Peter and his brethren cast into
Galilee of this fashion? Did not the fishermen of an ancient legend who drew up the bottle which contained an afreet, find its cork entangled in a net like one of these? The slippers of Abu Kas-sim, in the Persian story, desperately thrown away and brought back again always by most untimely rescue—were not these hauled from the Euphrates once by a fisherman with just such a net? I believe so. But our thought, tangled like the shrimp in the net, has traveled a long way.

The name of the water hyacinth is linked for all time with Florida's broad river. Here where the tide flows in the main stream I see but little of it. Now and then a fleet of tiny green boats floats boldly down as if piratically planning to take the open sea, with green halberds pointed bravely over blunt, round bows. I fancy the salt of the real sea is too much for these bold voyageurs, but they line the river bank everywhere, rarely a leaf showing along the main river, so closely are they cropped by the roaming aquatic cattle. These whet appetites of a morning on the hyacinths as they step over the green blanket of them that hides the sand. They breakfast far from shore on the homely waterweed, *Anarcharis canadensis* I take it to be, that grows so plentifullly in water a few feet deep. Then they wade in again and give the hyacinths another crop as
they go by to rest beneath the live-oaks and chew the cud of contentment.

This makes the hyacinths which blanket the shore but squat agglomerations of green-air bulbs that give one little idea of the real plant. These grow persistently, however, and now and then blossom out of season because of this pruning, showing a wonderful blue, hyacinth-like bloom that one might almost take for a translucent blue orchid, the standard petal larger and deeper blue with a mark like a yellow fleur-de-lis on it, a blossom that makes the banks of the St. Johns in spring a blue sheen of dainty color.

But you need to get away from the frequented banks of the river to see the water hyacinth in full growth. There, uncropped by cattle and unmolested, the plants crowd creeks from bank to bank with serried ranks of leaves whose deep green gives a fine color but whose culms effectually stop all navigation.

I was splashing along through the shallows that border this riverbank hyacinth blanket, headed toward a great bed of pied-billed grebes that were resting and feeding in a shallow near the entrance to Doctor's Lake, when I had my first tiny adventure of the day. Right among the hyacinths near my feet I heard a scream of pain and terror. Very human it was, but tiny and with an elfin quality about it. I stepped to the
right and it was at my left. I stepped to the left and it was at my right. I looked down, but it sounded twice before I located it.

Then I saw a small green frog, one with a body an inch and a half long, whose hind leg was caught beneath the water hyacinths. He it was that was giving these most human-like little screeches. Almost I reached to disentangle his foot with my finger. Then I bethought me what country I was in and poked with the handle of a net that I had with me, instead. This was just as well, for the poking disclosed the arrow-shaped head and baleful eyes of a young water moccasin. A blow or two broke his hold on the frog, that stopped his yelling forthwith and hopped eagerly away. The snake was soon despatched. He was only nine inches long, and how he hoped to swallow a frog so big I cannot say. Common report says he could stretch his rubber neck four times its usual size and accomplish his dinner.

Sitting in a clean sandbank, and safe, no doubt, I soon got intent on my birds. Never before had I seen so many grebes. There were easily half a thousand of them swimming about in such close communion that they jostled one another, all pied-bills. I saw no alien among them. Some rocked on the wavelets, their heads down between their shoulders, seeming half asleep. Others fed industriously. The water of the shallows along
"Lesser scaup ducks are very tame in Florida waters all winter"
here is so full of small fish that they had little trouble in getting their fill. Some seemed to succeed by merely dipping the head and picking up what came within reach. Others swam sedately, then of a sudden leapt into the air and curled below in a lightning-like plunge that often brought up a big one.

Before long I began to see that the great community was made up of families or associates, of two to five, oftenest three, as if this year's father and mother kept the young still in charge. Now and then one grebe seemed to rush to another that had just come up and receive something from the resurgent bill, as if the mother had captured a special titbit which was passed over to the young. Sometimes, too, the would-be recipient was chided away with a sharp dab of the bill instead of the reached-for refreshment. Here no doubt was a bunco child, and the parent was too keen to be thus swindled. In that case the dab that rebuffed the impostor was followed by a swallow that settled the matter as far as that particular young mullet was concerned. There was, however, always a strong community spirit. The most of the five hundred courséd the shallows in one direction, swimming all heads one way with something like army discipline. The leader of this company had but to turn and swim back and the whole array turned front and made in the opposite direc-
tion. Yet there were squads under secondary leadership, for now and then a flock of twenty or so would rise and fly swiftly up or down stream without drawing the others. At such times a quaint little croaking cry was exchanged by many birds.

I might have learned more had I not happened to look sharp at the sand not far from my elbow. Something rather indistinct there took shape after a little, and a troubled conscience sent me up in the air, perhaps not so high as the top of the bayberry shrubs, but if not it was not my fault. I certainly had a strong desire to sit on top of them. The nearer grebes squawked and fled, but little did I care for them, for there in the sand at my feet as I came down I saw the ghost of my little moccasin, a stubby little nine-inch gray creature whose curious black mottlings left him still indistinct among his surroundings.

After all, it was but a ghost of a little gray snake, probably dead, for he did not move. Grown bold I turned him over with the toe of my big boot. He lay motionless. Then I gave him an extra poke and suddenly moved away some yards, for he turned back upon his belly, raised a threatening head and began to grow. All the cobras in India, concentrated, could not have looked more venomous. His markings became distinct and glowed. Two black loops far down
on his neck became like great eyes, and the whole snake became so big of head that I looked for legs, thinking he must be some sort of lizard after all. Never have I seen a nine-inch creature look so portentous, and when I whacked him on the head with my net pole and stretched him out, undoubtedly dead, I had vague feelings that I was dealing with a magical creature that might at the next move become a dragon like those of King Arthur’s time and take me down at one fiery gulp.

It was my first encounter with a harmless inhabitant of the sandy barrens, the hog-nosed snake. The reptile may grow to a length of three feet. He has neither fangs nor venom, but he does not need them. When cornered he simply swells up to thrice his usual size, hisses, and acts generally as if built out of mowing machines and loaded with cyanide of potassium. I am still congratulating myself that this sand baby was not full-grown. If he had been, and terror can kill, the tiny frog-chaser of the water hyacinths would surely have been avenged.
CHAPTER IV

BIRDS OF A MORNING

An early December bird student in northern Florida suffers from embarrassment of riches. Never elsewhere have I seen so many varieties of birds in such numbers. Never elsewhere have I seen such abundant opportunities for watched birds to hide themselves. The live-oaks range from shrubs to huge trees, their dense, glossy leaves reflecting the sunlight and making the spaces behind them vague with shadows. These may be full of birds; except for a twitter or the flirt of a wing you would never know it. One after another draws away the drapery of Spanish moss from an entrance and slips in, or a flock may whirl out and into another tree, portières of gray lace opening to let them out, and closing behind them as they enter.

I have spent many mornings trying to determine which bird is the first up. During the hot spell of two weeks ago, when the thermometer danced in the shade with the eighties all day and
sank to sweet slumber with the sixties at night. I was quite convinced that it must be the mocking-bird, just because I heard him first. Then quite a few mockers used to greet the coming of the sun with melody, rolling golden notes of delightful song over the dew-wet sands from some topmost twig. Just in front of the house on the river bank is a group of yuccas, fifteen feet tall or so, stabbing the soft air in all directions with their needle-pointed Spanish bayonets.

I fancy every Northerner has to learn the full stabbing power of these bayonets by experience. A thicket of them is beautiful in its dark green setting of slim-pointed rosettes and is impassable to a white man as the outer rim of a British square. It would take a Fuzzy-wuzzy of the Soudanese tribes to break through in the one case as in the other. I once read in a novel of a lover who followed the desire of his heart to Florida, and at the critical moment forced his way to her “penetrating a thicket of Spanish bayonet.” I now realize that this lover was a man of steel, else the thicket had penetrated him. Inadvertently I leaned a little closer to one of these yucca groups the other day, and went to the repair shop with nineteen punctures, being fortunate that I did not permanently remain “hung” in the larder of the butcher bird — of whom more anon.

The top of a yucca is crowned each summer
with a most beautiful pyramid of waxy, pale yellow flowers, a spike several feet tall with drooping blooms most delightful to behold, followed by pods that are now approaching maturity, looking much like stubby green bananas ripening to a glossy brownish red. On the top of one of these pod-pyramids a mocking bird used to sit during the warm spell, greeting the dawn with golden uproar. He and his fellows were most lively then, filling the thickets with harsh chirps when not singing. The songs of different mockers vary much, but their chirps are alike and are certainly most unmusical. They are loud, harsh and guttural. The "mia-u-w" of a catbird is a burst of melody in comparison.

But that singing was all for the hot weather. Suddenly the other night the wind came up out of the north, the mercury fell in the thermometer to the late forties, and we all froze to death—not as to our bodies, which simply grew goose-flesh, but in our minds. Singular thing, the Northern mind. It comes down to Florida from a country where the winter mercury dandles the zero mark on its knee mornings. It finds the jasmine in bloom and butterflies flitting from flower to flower. A few mornings later it finds the mercury at thirty-eight and frost on the jasmine. This does not specially trouble the jasmine, but it so freezes the Northern mind that the Northern
body has to sit over roaring fires and rub its goose-flesh until the temperature rises again. But that is Florida.

After a second or third forty-degrees-above cold snap the visitor from frozen climes gets his balance and forgets to shiver, finding the chill a tonic and the mid-day warmth delightful. So I fancy it is with the mocking birds. They seem livelier now that cool weather has come, they chirp and flutter about with much more energy, but not one of them has opened his mouth in song since the mercury hit fifty. My front-door friend still sits on his yucca pod part of the day, however, and still I am puzzled to know when he leaves it and his double comes on duty.

He is a rather interesting fellow, this double, whom I need not have mistaken for the mocker at all, he is so different a bird. Yet he is about the same size, white beneath and with a good deal of gray in his upper works. Bill and tail differ from those of the mocker; still, at a distance of a hundred feet a casual glance did not enlighten me. I am still wondering if there is method in this quiet substitution. The double is a loggerhead shrike, the Southern butcher-bird. He feeds upon small birds, and he might well choose the perch which the mocker had just vacated as a most desirable hunting stand. Small birds flitting back and forth in the early morning would
hear the mocker singing and know that he would never harm them. Then an hour or two later, flying by in perfect confidence, they would find themselves in the crooked beak of the loggerhead, to be impaled on one of the thorns of the yucca beneath the perch and there dissected at leisure, or left to wait while the loggerhead takes his ease, "hung" as we say of ducks and snipe.

Does the loggerhead take the mocking bird's perch with forethought, bearing the opportunity in mind and trusting to the resemblance, or is it just a case of a convenient perch with both birds? He who can read the loggerhead's mind may be able to tell me. So far I have failed to catch the butcher bird at his butchery, and though I look doubtfully at those convenient Spanish bayonet tips as I pass, I find I am the only innocent thus far impaled on them.

Of these small birds that the loggerhead might capture the very name is legion. All warblers seem to be here, and if they are difficult to keep track of in the North, here they are well nigh impossible. I find a live-oak tree full of uncountable flocks. I get the glass on one bird, and before I can begin to note his characteristics he has flitted like a shadow and another with far different markings is in his place. Birds that one knows at a glance may thus be noted at a glance,
but the rarer varieties crowd in upon these until the mind in trying to distinguish and remember becomes inextricably confused and finally gives up in despair. I am beginning to believe that every small bird in Chapman’s “Birds of Eastern North America” is in convention on the west bank of the St. Johns. Some wiser and more far-sighted man than I will have to tell how many varieties of warblers, finches, sparrows, and flycatchers may be seen on one good day in early December on the lower banks of the big river of Florida.

It is a relief to cross the trails of some more easily seen songsters. Take the Florida crows, for instance. These are a relaxation rather than a study. They lack the sardonic virility of their Northern cousins, these fish crows. They are smaller, not so strong of flight, and their call has none of the deep “caw, caw, caw” of our bird of canny humor. Their flight is flappy and less certain, and their cries have a humorous gurgle in them that seems hardly grown up. They seem like boys that have just reached the age when the voice breaks with a queer croak in it that makes you laugh. *Corvus americana* seems most of the time to be on definite business. In Massachusetts I have found him in the main forceful, dignified, and seemingly doing something worth while. *Corvus ossifragus* just straggles along
with his fellows, having a mighty good time, and croaking hysterically about it.

It is a poor half-hour for birds when I do not find one of these flaming fellows the cardinals setting the thicket on fire. In the warm weather the cardinals were accustomed to whistle to me. The call, loud and clear, has a round cheeriness in it that should drive away all melancholy. The cardinal does not seem in the least afraid of me. If I approach him he may fly away at the last moment, but more often he simply sidles around the tree in a stiff, wooden sort of way that he has, remaining quiet if just a few strands of moss are between us. He seems to do this with deprecatory awkwardness, as if he knew he dazzled and tried to be humble about it. I do not think it can be to get out of sight altogether. If so it is a mistaken caution, for his flame will burn through quite a bit of gray moss, and where it is shielded by the deep, shiny green of live-oak leaves it flares only the brighter by the contrast.

His wife is even more beautifully clad, and though her olive green and ashy gray ought to make her less conspicuous the telltale cardinal blazes on crest, wings and tail, and I am likely to see her about as far as her flaming consort. I have not heard the female sing, though in defiance to the usual custom among song birds she is said to, a softer and even prettier song than that
of her vivid mate. But even the male cardinal does not sing when it is cold, and I have not heard a note from any of them since the mercury got down to the forty neighborhood.

Passing from the puzzling opacity of live-oak groves and palmetto scrub I found myself later in a country far better fitted for hunting birds by sight. That was one of the interminable stretches of long-leaved pine forest of which this part of Florida is largely made. Here are trees that shoot up straight as arrows, sixty to a hundred feet high. Rarely is there a limb in the first fifty feet and the plumed tops seem to intercept the vivid sunlight but little. Under foot the carpet of twelve to fifteen inch needles is well called pine straw. It is a place of singular silence and a bewildering sameness. Along interminable levels you may look for what seem endless miles between these straight trunks till they draw together in the gray distance and, in kindness, shut off the view. One needs a compass and provisions to plunge, a wandering submarine, beneath this sea of similarity, and I skirted its edge only, lest I get lost and spend my days in an unending circuit.

Slipping along this polishing carpet of needles I heard what I at first took to be the familiar note of chickadees. Yet it was not that either. It was too throaty and lacked the gleeful definiteness of the chickadee. In fact it was a poor attempt.
Soon I saw the birds, gleaning in a gray group, hanging this way and that just as chickadees do. They had decided crests and I quite readily recognized them for the tufted titmouse which in this country takes the place of the chickadee.

The flock passed busily on and for a moment the silence of the place was impressive. A gentle wind was slightly swaying the tops of these tall trees, but there was no song of the pines to be heard. Underfoot partridge berry and pipsissewa, pyrola and club moss, which by right should always grow under pines, were not to be seen. Only the rich brown of the pine straw and the dark mould of decaying fallen trunks was there. Here and there a tiny shrub, usually a scrub live-oak, put out a feeble green, but it was not enough to break the monotony of melancholy that seemed to pervade the place. It was broken, though, in another moment. There was a whirr of wings and half-a-dozen birds dived, seemingly out of heaven, each on his own route, whirled with a whirrup of wings and lighted lightly as an athlete each on his chosen tree trunk.

It was like a circus act. For a moment each bird remained motionless, his stiff tail feathers jammed into the trunk below him, his head drawn back as if awaiting a signal, and through the melancholy silence came a creaking "k-r-r-k,
kr-r-r-k.” It might have been a weather-vane swaying in the wind or it might have been tree toads. But it was neither. It was simply the voice of a flock of red-headed woodpeckers. These birds are rare in my locality North, but they seem here to be familiar spirits of the wood. Smaller and less beautiful than partridge woodpeckers, they seem much like them in their antics, which are always clown-like and amusing. They tap wood and pull grubs as if they knew I was looking at them and wanted to make the little farce as funny as possible.

The circus clown might well take the spirit of his antics from the actions of red-headed woodpeckers in a Southern pine forest. After scrambling in a jerky ludicrousness up a stub one would pause on the top of it motionless for a time, reminding me of an awkward boy trying to pose as Ajax defying the lightning. Then another would dive at him in full flight, driving him from his perch at the last moment, only to take it and assume the exact pose of the former, the whole thing done with the alert precision of a pair of good circus performers. Then the substitute, still motionless, would give his little treetoad-like creak, as if saying in humorous humility, “How’s that for an act?” Taine, the historian, has written of the immense loneliness of the pine barrens. But it is to be supposed
that Taine was never entertained there by a flock
of red-headed woodpeckers. But then, there are
people whom vaudeville makes lonely.

I have not named the half of the birds I can
identify of a morning in this great aviary, nor
have I named the two that pleased me most.
One was just plain bluebird, a young bird of a
silent flock that slipped through the trees of the
town. This young bird had not yet his mature
plumage, and he hung behind and peered about
in an uncertain way as if much impressed with
the wonders of this new place to which mother
had brought him, but still a bit lonesome and
unsettled. I was right glad to see bluebirds.
I have looked in vain so far for robins. The
other is a bird that came with the cold snap and
hangs about the tip of the Orange Park dock
almost a quarter of a mile out in the river, with-
out visible means of support. He hides under
the stringers when I approach him, but I have
had several good views, and if I know a snow
bunting when I see one, this is he. What busi-
ness he has so far South is more than I can tell,
and he seems to feel an alien by the way he
clings to the seclusion of the dock. Perhaps he
came on the wrong boat and is only waiting for
a return ticket. At any rate I was glad to see
him and I wish him a safe return.
CHAPTER V

'TWIXT ORANGE GROVE AND SWAMP

The old Greek myth-makers sang with poetic fervor of the golden apples of the Hesperides, which no doubt were oranges, nor do I blame them for their fervor. Apples they knew, and knew, too, that nothing could be more beautiful than an apple tree, holding its dappled fruit bravely up to the pale October sun. But oranges came to them out of the misty west, a region that the setting sun set glowing with romance each night, and then swathed in the purple evanescent of darkness. Something of this delight of mystery has flavored the fruit ever since, and we taste it with mental palate before its pulp passes the lips.

I had thought all the orange trees of northern Florida killed by the great cold of a decade ago, and so in the main they were. But there are spots on the east bank of the lower St. Johns where the miles of warm water tempered the cold somewhat, so that though the trees were cut to the ground the life in the roots remained and
has since burgeoned in reborn groves. The trees sprouted from the stump as oaks and chestnuts do in a Northern woodland, and now the sprouts bear fruit. At Mandarin, a dozen miles from Jacksonville, are such groves through one of which I delight to take my way to "the branch." It is literally a branch of the level river into which it so smoothly glides with never a ripple on its black surface or a clot of foam to cloud its mirror.

Swamp and grove meet but do not mingle, the dividing line being firmly drawn by the teeth of the harrow that all summer long vexes the sand beneath the orange trees. With all its persistence this harrow barely keeps down the scutch and dog fennel and a score or two of other weeds that under soaking shower and fervid sun continually rise rampant. Even now that the almanac has decreed winter rosettes of seedlings of a score of nascent annuals spangle the gray with green that softens its glare to the eye and tempts the knight-errant grasshoppers. These zip from glare to glare, and seem to creak a bit as the tiny coolness of the northern breeze touches the joints of their machinery.

Sitting in the grateful shadow of an orange tree, facing sunward in the grove, the world becomes an expanse of glistening white sand, blotched with the deep green masses of foliage,
"In the grateful shadow of an orange tree facing sunward in the grove"
'TWIXT GROVE AND SWAMP 51
dappled with the gold of as yet unpicked fruit. Over yonder a short ladder spires above a tree and I can hear the snip-snip of the picker’s shears and the soft thud of fruit dropped into big bags. The noise fits in with the rampant listlessness of the creaking grasshopper machinery, a busy, drowsy blurring of staccato sounds that has a sleepy insistence. It fits the gray glitter of the sand and the shining sun. I note an orange sulphur butterfly, just the color of the fruit on which he seems to linger, where in the sun he may match his own shade. I have a fancy that he does this consciously, the dark tips of his wings contrasting harmoniously, as the black-green, glossy foliage does, with the golden fruit.

Something of this semi-conscious matching up of colors seems to exist in other insect life of the grove. The “orange puppy” that feeds on the young leaves is black with the same quality of blackness and curiously mottled with a cool gray of lichens and gray moss. When he rests quietly on a twig he is part of its growth, simply a gnarled excrescence, but no caterpillar. When by and by he tucks himself up for slumber in silk homespun and later, joyous, emerges, he has still the colors of the orange grove, the pale yellow of ripening fruit, barred with the dark shadows that are set by linear leaves on all that flits beneath them. One finds many happy insects
among the oranges, too many perhaps for the joy of the grower, the perfection of whose product they mar. None should be happier than this Papilio cresphontes butterfly that is hatched on an orange twig, fattened on the crisp green leaves, falls asleep in their shadow and finally wakes, a spike-tailed fairy with shimmering black and gold wings, to drink deep of the honeyed dew in the gold hearts of odorous orange blossoms.

On the edge of the grove, at the very mark of the harrow, rises the tangle of the swamp margin. On the higher ground is the sumac, the leaves still green, though ripening in the margins to a dull red, holding none of the vivid flame that burns the Northern sumac leaves to ashes before October is over. It is December, indeed, and the wind out of the north has sometimes a wire edge of northern ice on it, but the first margin of dense trees that lines the river bank takes off this edge and the sun floods all the sheltered places with warmth that bids one seek the shade for shelter. There still he finds a sniff of tonic ozone in the air, expanding the exultant spirit while yet the body revels in a genial glow. The day seems a child of June, with October for its father. Elder crowds the sumac and blackberry canes tangle the two. The scuppernong grape twines supple vines all about and hangs its crinkly pale green leaves in festoons to the tops of the
'TWIXT GROVE AND SWAMP

sweet-gum trees in the swamp behind. The pale amber wine of the scuppernong grape seems to hold in its depths something of the golden delight of this December sun, and just a tang of the vigor of the north wind.

The sweetgum tree fills the swampy ground along the St. Johns "branches" and sheds its maple-like leaves in December. Sailing up the broad river you may trace the swampy spots now by the soft gray of bare twigs of the sweet gum, in beautiful contrast to the glossy dark green of live-oak and the paler silkiness of plumy tops of the long-leaved pines of the barrens. Its roots dispute the very black depths of the flowing waters with those of the cypress, and its purpling autumn leaves seem like those of a Massachusetts swamp maple that have by some mischance ripened without vividness. The sour-gum tree, which is nothing more than the tupelo which grows on the swamp edges at home, thrives as well in Florida and is true to its colors. The rich red of its leaves makes the most vivid blotches of autumn coloring I have yet found here. Along with the scuppernong grows its cousin vine, the Virginia creeper. This too holds much of its Northern red in the passing leaves. The homesick Northerner in Florida at this time of year will do well to take to the swamps. The pinky gray of baring sweet-gum twigs, the rich red of
the bordering tupelos and the festooning ampe-
lopsis will do much to make him feel at home.

Just beyond the mark of the harrow tooth the
goldenrod has bloomed and the fluffy plumes of
brown seed pappus mound into obese, inverted
cornucopias for the seed-eating birds that flock
along the swamp margin. The grapes and the
Virginia creepers have been high-minded and
have not rested without topping the tallest trees,
but the greenbrier seems to have had less ambi-
tion. It has been content to help the blackberries
toulsle the close-set margin of the field, and its
glossy green leaves and purple berries add their
colors to the rest. The greenbrier here is gentler
in its ways than our Northern representative.
That well merits the name of horsebrier which is
often given it. It is as strong as a horse and the
kick-back of its stretched sinews will drive its
numerous thorns to the hilt in your obtruding
flesh. This vine has hardly thorns enough to be
felt, and its leaves instead of ovate are hastate or
halberd-shaped, whence I take the plant to be the
Smilax auriculata.

I doubt if I would change Northern thickets in
any particular, but if I would it should be to
suggest gently to the horsebrier that its Southern
cousin’s ways are most admirable and might be
imitated to advantage. The auriculata does grip
you valiantly and even scratch your legs when you
would penetrate it with undue haste, but it is such a polite and lady-like scratch in comparison with some that might be mentioned that you feel like saying "thank you" rather than other things. In the wetter spots big purple asters which I take to be *Aster elliottii*, out of all the maze of scores of varieties of Southern asters, toss their corymbed heads in the breeze and still invite the passing butterfly. Cool weather has thinned out the butterflies, only the strongest remaining. About the asters flit a big and little sulphur and a lone zebra. But there are a half-dozen monarchs coming and going. These seem to be the strongest and most able to withstand cool weather of all butterflies. I see them out earliest in the morning and latest at night, often soaring in shade on days when the December wind has a Northern nip in it and when no other varieties are visible.

Loveliest of all old friends that help to make this thicket-borderland homelike is the Andropogon, the purple wood-grass, that holds the dryer corners with its brave wine-red culms and its gray mist of bearded blooms. The pampas grass is cultivated in gardens here in Florida for its feathery plumes. These are beautiful, no doubt, but their beauty cannot compare with that of the clumps of purple wood-grass that grow in the neglected border between this dark orange grove
with its glistening white sands and the black depths of the swamp that borders the little branch. The *Andropogon scoparius* of our sandy fields north is less robust than this buxom beauty of the barrens. It grows but a scant knee high and seems to me now but slender and rather pale. This, which is I think the *Andropogon arctatus*, grows to my chin, and its culms seem as red as the skin of a ripening baldwin apple, a rich wine red that intoxicates the eye and makes it see in the misty beard of the tips a frothing as of bubbles rising to the top of a glass but now filled. With this the Florida fields seem to have as much of the joy of autumn as they can hold, and in it to drink deep to the passing of the purple year.

Through this border tangle one goes to enter the solemn silence of the swamp where the black water seems to listen as it glides breathlessly by to the river. In the steaming warmth of mid-summer the place must drip with purple shadows. Now, because the sweet gums and swamp maples are losing their leaves it holds only a sun-flecked twilight that soothes after the black shadows beneath the orange trees and the glare of the sand. Here one may draw a long breath and let the bustle of a busy world slip from him. I have the same feeling on entering a church of a week day and hearing the heavy ticking of the clock. The silence broods. The maples are already bare, the
gum trees partly, and the feathery fronds of cypress have grown brown on the trees and in part fallen, slipping one by one to the placid surface where they add their color to the purple of the other thick-strewn leaves.

In these fleets of dead and gone one gets the nearest approach to a Northern autumn that I have found as yet in all the woods. The small birds that frequent the groves do not seem to enter here and there is no sound of their twitter. Only the leaves are noisy within the place. Those which touch limp margins on the water have found a quiet that is finality. But their fellows, saying a final good-by to the twig, do it with little glad chirps as if the spirit within each joyed at its release. Nor is this the last cry. Many chuckle at each touch of limb and trunk on the way down and reach the water with an audible pat. Poets to the contrary notwithstanding, autumn is a joyous time with the leaves, at least those of deciduous trees. The maples, the sycamores, and the sweet gums all seem to give the laugh to the evergreens as they pass. The bare limbs stretch skyward with a relieved resurgence as of those who have done good work and welcome rest. Compared with them now the live-oaks seem over-tasked. They are as somber as Northern pines in winter, burdened with a never-ending routine of business.
I cannot say that the swamp cypresses seem glad. They are so weighted and surpliced with vestments of gray moss, priestly robes that sweep from upraised arms to the very water, that they are like weird priests of a lonely world mumbling perpetual incantations deep in their swaying gray beards.

The only bird of the swamp to-day was a great heron that looked white as he stood facing me, his chin in somber meditation on his breast, as if he might be a carving in stone, that suddenly took flight on tremendous wings, flapping solemnly out into the river sunshine and taking a post far out on an ancient, decaying dock. I might better have said becoming a post, for had I not seen him light I might have sworn he was part of the structure. He hunched himself up there till he had no more form than a decaying timber and his big beak, crossed at a wooden right angle to the rest of him, was exactly as if it had been nailed on. Only with the bird glass did I make sure that he was not a post after all. Then I discovered that instead of being the great blue heron, as I at first supposed, it was the Florida form, known as Ward's heron, a bird much like the great blue but even greater, the lower part lighter and the legs olive instead of black.

I think Ward's heron more lonesome and preternaturally solemn than any other, and he seems
"Under the long robes of gray moss at the foot of the ancient cypress trees"
to belong under the long robes of gray moss at the foot of the ancient cypress trees. He is as grotesque and wooden in his make-up as they.

The passing sun dropped the cool garment of December night lightly down through the bare limbs. The heron came flapping noiselessly back to his perch, to sway away like a gray ghost when he saw me still there. The low latitudes have summer and winter in each twenty-four hours, midsummer in the fervid warmth of the afternoon sun, midwinter in the black chill that comes between midnight and dawn. I passed reluctantly from the swamp while yet the level rays shone in long shafts of light through the mystic aisles. The heron was waiting to come back. It was time to be gone, yet I lingered lovingly where in one spot on the very margin of the black swamp water grew a single plant of *Andropogon arctatus*. It stood ankle deep in the water, a perfect plume of misty softness that had none of the wine-red radiance of its brothers of the open border. In the gray twilight it was a slender spirit of wood-grass, pale and sweet, the dearest creature of the day.

As I came along the western border of the orange grove with the placid river reflecting the crimson of the sunset between the great live-oak boles and the dripping streamers of gray moss,
the full moon walked with me over the eastern border, seeming to stand a moment on tree after tree, a rounder and more perfect orange than any tree has yet borne, a symbol, let us believe, of a golden total of crops yet to come.
CHAPTER VI
JASMINE AND CHEROKEE ROSES

Almost a half century ago Harriet Beecher Stowe lived on the banks of the St. Johns River and wrought for noble ideals in her own brave, cheery way. In "Palmetto Leaves" she tells of the beautiful country round about her home, of the three great live-oaks that sheltered it, and of a caged cardinal grosbeak that used to sit on his perch by her door and sing enthusiastically, "What cheer! What cheer!" The slaves for whom she wrote and wrought are now but a memory, and the State of Florida itself forbids the caging of wild birds, however sweetly they sing or however cheerily they bear their captivity. The fine old house that nestled beneath the live-oaks so confidingly that its broad veranda partly clasped one of them has long since been torn down; and its very foundations obliterated by the tangle of wild verdure that rises here so soon from the unvexed earth; but the live-oaks remain, towering with rounded heads still
higher and stretching noble arms in still wider benediction.

From the very tip of one of them this morning a tiny crimson flame burned in the sun as if a spirit of clear fire had grown up from the earth her feet had pressed, traversing all the arteries of the noble oak and finally lingering a moment poised for celestial flight, and from the flame fell the voice of a cardinal grosbeak shouting in clear mellow notes, "What cheer! What cheer!" A half-century is but a breath carved out of time, yet in it both birds and men have found freedom, and still spirits of clear flame poise upon the heights and bravely call, "What cheer!" For all I know this cardinal may be a lineal descendant of that other and have caught a voice of joyous prophecy from the place.

I have yet to see nobler specimens of the live-oak than these trees that still hold their ground where the old-time battle was so bravely and cheerily fought. To the cardinal as he swam into the morning glow and vanished they must have seemed three mighty domes of dense green. To me standing below they were the pillars and arches of a cool cathedral in whose dim upper recesses the mystic mistletoe hangs its strange, yellowish-green leaves and its pearl-white berries. More is born of thought than we are yet willing to acknowledge. Who knows what exaltation
JASMINE AND CHEROKEE ROSES

has come down the ages wrapped within the fiber of these druidical plants, to be subtly distilled on all beneath?

As the oaks are green above, so are they ghostly gray below with the long swaying draperies of Spanish moss that drip deep from every limb. These make prophets of eld of the great trees, and one stands beneath as in the inner council of the Sanhedrim. Great ideals could have found no braver setting than this, and the cool north wind that sings across the river seems to make one feel here the very breath of Puritanical austerity, of renunciation of self for the sake of others, and perhaps too of the Puritan's scorn for any other method than his own. The sweetly surgent life of blossoming vines that climb in friendly embrace over all wild things here at Mandarin caresses and woos with perfume all the spot and dares the rugged trunks of the great oaks themselves, yet it may not touch the cathedral mystery and majesty of their shadowy arches a half-hundred feet up. The high, clear spirit of the place is still regnant.

Round about Mandarin sweeps Florida, which has been touched and in tiny spots remodeled by alien hands ever since the days of De Soto, yet remains Florida still, wayward, lavish, wild and loving all things with sunny, sensuous profusion. It has been the scene of one experiment after
another, and has obliterated the remains. Its tangle of vivid growth sweeps over many a ruin, from Fernandino to Biscayne Bay, the very building of which has been forgotten save perhaps in musty archives of some distant and less sunny clime in which the scheme originated. Just at this corner of the State, a quarter-century ago, the sweep of the river on one side and of untrammeled Florida on the other, inclosed a bit of Old England in a tiny colony of English people who had settled here, cleared the jungle and the level stretches of tall, long-leaved pine, and planted orange groves.

They brought with them sturdy English thrift and unchanging English ways, and soon the orange groves were everywhere, filling the spring air with the rich scent of their waxy white blooms and making the autumn days yellow with golden fruit. Docks sprang in narrow white lines far over the shallows to the deep waters where ships might load with the precious cargo for Northern ports, and English lanes and hedgerows divided and connected the groves. In English gardens bloomed roses and lilies and violets, and English ivy climbed over wide porches and set a somber background for all the odorous tropic and semi-tropic wild vines that loving hands planted with it. I can fancy the jungle leaning in wild gorgeousness over the
outermost hedgerows and biding its time. For fifty years, since 1835, no harmful cold had reached this portion of Florida, but the jungle knew. Fifty years was but as a day in its experience.

It was on a February day in 1886 that it came. That noon the mercury stood at eighty degrees and all the gorgeous profusion of semi-tropical spring growth filled the air about with perfume of flowers that spangled all things. The kind sun steeped the land in content and the negroes sang at their work, knowing and loving its fervor on their bent backs. By mid-afternoon clouds had come up out of the southwest and much rain fell bringing a chill in the air such as may often be felt here in February, or indeed at any time between November and April. But this chill instead of passing with the clouds grew with the setting sun and when his last red light came across the river the rain had turned to icicles that hung in alien glory from all the trees. There they swayed and clashed in the keen northwest wind all night, and before morning the astonished glass had registered the temperature of a Northern winter night, fifteen above or thereabouts.

The very jungle itself must have been black in the face with dismay and a thousand acres of orange groves that were bearing five to fifteen
boxes of noble fruit to the tree were frozen to the very roots. It was a black day for the little English colony, a day from which it has never recovered. The trees sprang from the roots, were rebudded by the more courageous only to be cut to the ground again about ten years later. A second time the more tenacious spirits began their work over again, but the courage of the colony was gone and though there are still groves of five hundred to a thousand trees here that for a third time are beginning to bear well, all faith in the prosperity of orange growing so far north in the peninsula is gone.

New prosperity is growing up in the little town and another type of people are making good here, but the fine houses of the orange growers stand for the most part tenantless, some for almost a score of years. The ancient gardens have taken pattern from the jungle and grown with all its lawless luxuriance, and the once trim hedgerows riot in a profusion that is as bewildering as it is beautiful.

Sometimes at night I think the tenants have come back. In the slender light of the new moon I seem to see white hands reaching out to refasten blinds that swing drunkenly from one hinge, and desisting in despair as the rude wind snatches them away and slams them. Sometimes in the full glare of day, peering through
a broken pane I seem to see an old-time owner moving about in a room that a second later holds but long-forgotten furniture and a transparent form that dissolves in dancing motes of sun-smitten dust.

I find the ghosts nearest and friendliest, however, in the tangled growth of the old gardens. One that I love best lies far from the present town and I like to come to it from the jungle side, lured by the spicy breath of oleander blossoms. The north wind loses the salt breath of the river tides as he passes the house and draws deep on these rosy blooms, taking such store that he spills it through the foot-long needles of every pine that he passes. Coming from the swamp tangle beneath the sweet-gums and cypress, pushing through chin-high purple wood-grass, I let it lead me to-day straight to a huge ridge of wild cherokee rose plants that had once, no doubt, been an orderly hedge. It is winter now and sometimes the night brings frost, but the wild cherokee roses do not seem to mind that. The life vigor in them is such that it pushes out pointed white buds even now, and these open into five broad petals of pure white with a golden heart of close-pressed stamens.

The plant is so rough with its stubborn, hooked thorns set shoulder to shoulder along its stout interlacing stems that no finer hedge plant could
be imagined. Not the deepest-flanked wild bull could push through this tangle were it devoid of thorns. Not the toughest-hided one could attempt those thorns without being torn and repulsed. And out of these stout stems, from among the defiant thorns spring these dainty white blooms bearing in their gold hearts a faint, fine perfume that is too modest to sail forth as does that of the oleanders on the errant wind. You must put your face close to the bloom and dare the thorns as you sniff deep before you know its fineness; but it is worth the trouble.

In and out among the cherokee thorns the wanton jasmine climbs. There is no place that it does not caress. Along the sand, amid brown leaves of deciduous trees, it creeps. It slips under porches and puts bud noses up through the cracked floors of long-disused buildings. It climbs trees and swings boldly from their topmost boughs, and later it blows yellow trumpets of invitation to the whole world and sends a sensuous perfume far and wide that all who pass may breathe their fill. The jasmine is common to all of the Florida world, yet withal it is so friendly sweet to each that none may have the heart to disapprove. The cherokee rose is different. He who would win the perfume of its heart of gold must bleed a bit, perchance, and wear an individual bloom very close before he gets it.
Coasting the thorn hedge, swinging the ancient gate on rusty hinge, a roadway leads me beneath sweet-gum and live-oak to the tennis court. Its level rectangle is still bare and close turfed with flat-bladed grass and a tiny, stemless plant whose reniform leaves are no bigger than my little finger nail, and help hold the even level of close green. Only in one spot has this turf been invaded. There a lawless honeysuckle has made a patch of its own glossy with green leaves. All else is as it stood when the last tennis ball bounded freely from its elastic surface. The sun steeps all this rectangle till it is one deep pool of golden light where silence and forgetfulness bathe.

The wilderness noises which come to the edge of this space but emphasize its silence and forgetfulness. In the trees that rim the court about ever-changing flocks of birds flit and chatter. Blue jays clang tintinnabulations, woodpeckers tap and croak tree-toad notes, warblers and sparrows and titmice and fly-catchers twinkle and chirp, and often try a half song of almost forgotten melody. Cardinals cry "tut, tut" much as uneasy robins do, but in softer and more cooing tones. A Carolina wren grows nervously curious in the cedar beneath which I sit, and flirts and quivers and scolds as only a wren can, coming nearer and nearer till I might almost put up
my hand and touch his vibrating brown body. Then he withdraws a little and whistles till the cardinals lift their crested heads and listen and a tufted titmouse answers. "Teakettle, teakettle, teakettle," he cries, and the very spirit of an English garden descends into the golden air. Gossamer threads of spider-web float silverly from tree to tree, argent ghosts of the old-time net, till I hear in the bird notes the chatter of laughing voices, and for a moment the place is peopled with gay young folk in flannels and the game goes merrily on.

It may have been that the lady of the house served the tea for which the wren called so lustily in the shade of the garden tangle which now rises twenty feet on the house side and completely hides it, though it is but a stone-toss away. Here cedar, spice bush, bayberry and oleander crowd one another in a struggle for upward supremacy in which the oleanders win, their trunks, as large as a man's thigh at the base, dividing into long, aspiring branches that are pin-nacled with pointed leaves and sprays of fragrant bloom. The jasmine climbs here, too, twining and straggling, loving and leaving, but the garden cherokees shoot upward in clean, noble sweeps that carry their brave stems almost to the oleander tops, whence they bound in long exultation, arching to the ground again.
I do not find these in bloom out of season, but the roses that crowd the crumbling arbor within toss up sprays of pink whose scent intertwines with that of the oleanders. It is a sad garden now, for all its riot of growth, for the ground beneath is dank with shade and decay and its once prim palings fall this way and that in a snarl of rough weeds where the sesbania opens its two-beaned pods and rattles in every passing breeze. The old house itself, once so prim and erect, seems to droop wearily, in round-shouldered senility, to the ground which already claims corners of the wide verandas. The pinnate-leaved stems of a twining vine, starred with white blooms, reach up to it lovingly and climb wistfully, only to drag it down with the tiny weight which it once held up so unconsciously. Within, the wind which sighs through broken panes carries light footfalls from room to room and as it sways long unlatched doors these grumble one to another, mumbling like uneasy sleepers who wait long for the cockcrow of dawn.

Down on the waterfront an ancient cement breakwater still guards smooth sands and the waves lap patiently at this, wearing it away infinitesimally and talking to one another in liquid undertones. They alone of all the voices of the place are oblivious of tenants past and present, of growth or decay, telling in changeless tones the
tales the waters have told since long before man began, a primordial cell in their unending depths. The waterfront of the old place seems most melancholy of all, for there nature has failed most to hide the swift decay of man's work. Yet there I notice with satisfaction one thing. That is the defiant erectness and primness of the English ivy that climbs one side of the house. This neither straggles nor retreats, but goes squarely upward as it was long ago set to do. It seems to hold the house up rather than to drag it down, an epitome of that British sturdiness from which it was transplanted but from which it may not swerve.

The low swinging sun faded into dun clouds to westward, letting a winter chill fall upon the place and bringing thoughts of the open fire at home with the big pitch logs shooting crimson flames up the wide chimney. Yet through all the chill air the oleanders held their rosy blooms proudly aloft and the pink roses sent their perfume too, following me along the sandy, hedge-bordered road on the homeward way. After all, the memory of the old place which always follows farthest is that of perfume and golden sunshine and the ghosts of merry voices echoing through the garden tangle and down the golden depths of the forgotten tennis court. Dearest of all is the heart of the wild cherokee rose, holding its faint, elusive perfume for those only who
care enough to dare the stab of its keen, defensive thorns.

Dark clouds gloomed the west as I passed the Stowe place. It seemed inexpressibly gloomy and lonesome under the great arching oaks where the wild tangle of grape and jasmine, greenbrier, and I know not what other vines and shrubs cloaks the crumbling foundations and makes a thorny and impenetrable jungle of the walks the gracious lady’s feet once trod, and crowds and smothers the plants and shrubs she once tended. The sheltering oaks seemed to brood a silence of sorrow, failure, and forgetfulness. Of the chapel, the school, and the work she nobly tried to do among the poor and ignorant, what traces here remained? And then the sun shone low under the western clouds and sent red beams in beneath the brooding live-oak limbs and touched all the swaying moss with fire, lighting up the cathedral arches with a golden warmth and radiance that glorified the place and all thoughts connected with it. Over on the darkening lane a negro boy, born free, whistled on his way home, a little cadenced fragment of a tune without beginning or end—a whistle like that of the cardinal that had flown, a crimson flame, into the morning air. I knew then that whatever crumbles, the spirit of cheer and devotion and self-sacrifice lives on unquenched. The jungle
may ride over and obliterate the Stowe place and the lovely English gardens, but the spirit of devotion that burned in the one and of homemaking hospitality that glowed in the other can never be quenched.
CHAPTER VII.

'A FROSTY MORNING IN FLORIDA

It was out of a moonless night that the frost came—a night whose sky was velvety black and seemed to hold no stars. Instead they had slipped moorings and on slender cables, I do not know how many thousand million miles long, were swung down toward the earth, quivering with friendly yellow fires as if to warm as well as light it. In a Northern December night the stars are diamond dust, splintered in keen glints from a matrix of black onyx. Their shine is that of scintillant spears of electricity. Here they are radiant golden globes swung just above the treetops. The wind out of the north was hushed and in the stillness the frost sprites that had soared gleefully upon it far beyond their usual habitat fell to earth, motionless. They were very young and adventurous frost sprites, and the sudden dawn found only their feathery white garments resting on exposed surfaces; the sprites themselves had already evaporated into invisible mists in terror of the coming fervid sun.

The first rays of the sun licked up these gray,
feathery frost garments and only in the shadows did you still feel the chill the night had brought. Only the sweet potato vines seem to have been harmed by this wee frost. Down on the river's brink the tangle of convolvulus still shows great white blooms as large as the palm of the hand. The river radiates warmth all night and it is a bitter cold that reaches the blossoms on its brim. In the gardens the roses, red and white and yellow, did not seem to mind. Dense walls of thick foliage had kept the cold from them and the jasmine whose yellow blooms seem to glow with their own warmth. The slim, pointed buds of the jasmine are to the open flowers now as a million to one, and not a bud even had been harmed. The sweet potato vines, however, were not so fortunate. Their heart-shaped leaves turned black and shriveled when the sun struck them.

Out of the sudden gray of dawn came the sun, a glowing ruby in a sky of clear gold. To look at this sky was to forget the chill and bathe in a rich warmth which seemed to distill from it invisible gold dust as the day advanced. By nine o'clock summer had come back, and all the open spaces in the wood were wells of this sky-distilled gold, through which you saw all things in a subtle haze of romance, as if the frost sprites had brought in their train all the joyous people out of fairyland. To walk through narrow forest
roads where the sand made all footfalls noiseless was to glide forward without seeming effort, and in this rich atmosphere of vaporous gold surprise Oberon and Titania kissing beneath the mistle-toe, to note the quiver of oak leaves as elves frolicked along their mossy boughs, and to see Puck starting forth to put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes.

To be sure, if I watch Oberon and Titania long enough with the glass I shall perchance find them but a pair of redbirds, beauteous in crimson and olive green. The elfin train may become a flock of kinglets and warblers quivering in and out along the limbs in search of breakfast, and Puck be but a roguish red-headed woodpecker. These December birds are as elusive and as full of vanishings and roguish tricks as any fairy train in Christendom.

Florida roads have the same elusive quality. They part and bow to one another, meet and touch hands and glide away again as if dancing a minuet, leading you in a mazy dance hither and thither to the most delightful surprises. Here a tree has fallen before the wind or under the ax of a careless woodman, and blocks the way. Little does the road care for that. It leaves itself with an airy flourish of sandy ruts for good-bye as if just to avoid the obstruction. Then it may wander a dozen rods among slim trunks
or along catbrier tangle, quietly seeking stray blue gentians or golden tufts of St. Peter's wort, and saunter gently back to itself, or it may swing a wide corner and leave you at some man's front gate, to admire his cherokee roses and negotiate with his dogs as best you may. To the traveler eager for some definite destination this quality may have its vexations. To the wood wanderer seeking but to find the true heart of a golden haze, conscious most of the mystic quality of all untrammeled nature and unexplored places, it is but an added delight.

If on such a day the birds of the bush have their elfin quality most strongly evident, those always fay-like creatures the short-horned grasshoppers are not to be forgotten. In the still haze of the yellow pine forest their shrill voices seem to make the stillness audible, to give it pitch and quality. Here on a leaf sits one, catching the full heat of the sun twice, once direct and again as it is reflected from the leaf's gloss. His antennæ are short and brown, arched most delicately from a straight brow that seems to denote dignity of thought. His long, brown wings fit neatly to his brown abdomen and his legs have the same shade. He seems cloaked in the soft, delicate color from head to foot, yet you can but suspect that this is a domino, which he will later cast aside and appear a glittering sprite.
"A wilderness where deer and bear still linger"
A FROSTY MORNING IN FLORIDA

Of those fairy creatures which attended Prospero on his island of shipwreck this well might be one in a fitting disguise. None of the flitting bird-fays is more beautifully cloaked than he in this exquisite brown. As I watch him the sun glints in a lenticular eye, and I know by this that he is full of laughter at my ignorance. Not one of the airy sprites that plagued Prospero's guests could be more demure or more full of roguery than he. From the bushes beside the path as I pass, other fays of the true locust clan flip into the air on long, shimmering, silver wings and vanish after flying along in level flight for a hundred yards. And here in the grass at my feet is Caliban.

He is a clumsy and stupid lout, this Caliban whom some people call the lubber grasshopper; the very dolt of his class. He is huge, longer than a man's finger and bigger than his thumb, and he has ridiculous short wings that I am sure he cannot use. They are beautifully mottled and gauzy with pinkish shadows, these wings, and seem as much out of place as those of the loveliest tiny fairy of the Christmas pantomime would on a pig. He moves his greenish-yellow body as slowly as Caliban did his when going sulkily to his heaviest task and Trinculo and his fellow must needs be very drunk indeed before they would sleep beneath the same cloak with him.
On first seeing the lubber grasshopper I wondered that anything so fat and clumsy should continue to exist in a country swarming with insect-eating birds, but even the barnyard fowls will have none of him.

At the start on this morning of gold born of white frost my path led me down the river bank under arching live-oaks. All to northward the pearl river was of glass that softened and melted into a blue haze where, miles beyond, the farther bank hung as indistinct and unreal as a dream, an illusion through which glided a white phantom of a turpentine steamer, kicking up frothing hills of water behind it, a sea-serpentlike line of humps whose head was the great stern wheel. There is a quiet and solemnity in these high-vaulted paths beneath the river oaks that seems to withdraw on the one hand from the witchery of the pine forest and the glamour of the river on the other.

Something of the England of the middle ages seems to have drifted over seas and down the years to this spot. A monastery should be just beyond, and, though perhaps he does not know it, Jones, the postmaster, traversed monastic aisles as he walked his mile this morning to the tiny post office. Far beyond in the open beneath the big pines I hear blue jays blowing clarion calls of challenge to the lists and the tramp of hoofs as
knights in armor ride the winding paths to be present at the tourney. There are days down here when I know the charging hoofs to be those of razorbacks scuttling through the underbrush and the amble of palfreys is but that of half wild cattle going down to feed in the river flats, but not on a morning like this. The gold haze of stillness after frost has put a spell upon all things.

The great Florida heron that frequents my favorite swamp and with whom I am beginning to feel neighborly intimate takes on goblin traits with the rest of the witchery. Out in the shallows of the pearl river was a new stump, gray and waterworn, with a long branch sticking straight upward. Something uncanny about this stump made me watch it long. It was the deadest gray stump I ever saw, evidently a swollen cypress root with the bark long worn off. By and by this stump grew a head and the wood changed to gray-blue feathers in the twinkling of an eye. Thus goblins arrive from underground and dryads step from trees; but what should a rotten cypress stump produce? Here was a chimera of a bird with a neck three feet long, a bob of a head and a body like that of a gray goose that did not sit on the water but was suspended just above it as a mirage sits on the desert horizon, separated from everything by a gray mist of nothing. Then the bob of a head wiggled, turned, I sup-
pose, and a big, sharp beak came into view, and my heron who was simply standing to the very top of his high, waterproof boots in water began to wade along.

Then I laughed, and I suppose that broke the spell, but it was enough to make anyone laugh, for the Florida heron, wading leg deep in the St. Johns River, has the same self-conscious dignity, the same absurd rhythmic hesitancy of motion as a wedding procession going up the aisle. I have seen a great many grooms wade in and I never saw anything a bit different.

The high road and high noon and I met in the heart of a pine wood where all things had forgotten the frost in a midsummer temperature, and short-horned grasshoppers made merry all about. In the thin treetops was no motion, not even the quiver of a bird’s wing. The long wood swooned in the golden haze that seemed impaled and held motionless on a thousand million spears of palmetto leaf points standing chin high, a motionless sea of deep green. The tall palmetto is a beautiful tree with the columnar trunk of a palm. It aspires and has sturdy dignity. The scrub palmetto crawls on its belly like a snake, its trunk strangely and horridly like one, though when you observe it closely enough you see that it roots all along this boa-constrictor trunk, as if it had changed its mind after all and decided to be an
A FROSTY MORNING IN FLORIDA

elephantine thousand-legged-worm. Then as if ashamed of its fallen and misshapen appearance it rears its head and spreads a great rosette of long-stalked, stiff green leaves to hide it all.

You can find no more distinctive Florida scene than this; the endless procession of rough-barked columnar trunks, topped with sparse limbs and tufted with needles a foot and more long, and beneath the lake of deep green, scrub palmetto with a surface infinitely diversified with the spatter of the split leaves. The three-foot stems of these leaves are so woody and the leaves themselves are so stiff that to ford the lake is difficult and your progress through the palmetto is accompanied by a wooden clatter that is like a parlor imitation of stage thunder.

Breathing deep the aroma of the pines, resting in the golden warmth and quiet of the place I saw little of wild life moving. All nature seems to take a mid-day siesta, even in winter, here. The place seemed to lend itself to dreams for which all the mystic witchery of the morning had prepared me. How deep into these I sank I cannot say, but I was aroused from them by the approach of a beast.

"The Jabberwock with eyes of flame
Came whiffling through the tulgy wood
And burbled as he came."

I think it was his burbling that I first noticed, a grumbling undertone as of something with a
deep throat and very large teeth that talks to itself. Even here within twenty miles of Jacksonville, Florida, is yet a wilderness, criss-crossed with roads and spattered here and there with clearings, but yet a wilderness where deer and bear still linger. This sounded like a very large bear; one with a toothache and a morose disposition. I noticed for the first time a sort of path that crossed mine, an enlarged rabbit-run under the palmettos. Perhaps he was coming down that. I could hear the palmettos clatter in crescendo and the morose voice come rapidly nearer, and still I sat motionless. It is hard to believe in bears, until you have met a few. But I sat too long. Suddenly out of the path burst a black bulk, and I sprang to my feet with a shout of dismay. A big, black creature with a shambling gait, a long snout and little fierce eyes, was right upon me.

But my shout of dismay was nothing to the "woof" of terror and astonishment the jabberwock let out. He almost turned a somersault and, ignoring his path, went straight through the palmettos which waved about him, down the distance, with a noise like an anvil chorus played on many xylophones. It was really the biggest and fiercest razorback I have yet met. Razorbacks do not think it good to live alone. When they miss their fellows they gallop, mumbling and
"Razor-backs do not think it good to live alone"
grumbling till they find them. I do not blame myself for thinking this the jabberwock, however. Seen from his own level, head on, the razorback has a weird and ferocious aspect that can out-countenance most of the wild animals I have met. Incidentally one can give a very good account of himself in the prize ring with any opponent whatever, from a rattlesnake up. What this one thought me I do not know. If he is familiar with jabberwocks perhaps he, too, thought he suddenly saw one.
CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTMAS AT ST. AUGUSTINE

Whoever has since discovered the North Pole, we know that Santa Claus was the original settler and, to whatever land he may come, we think of him as cheering his reindeer on over new fallen snow. Nor was frost to be denied him here in St. Augustine where many people believe perpetual summer reigns. The red-nosed morning sun looked forth in some indignation on fields white with it, palm trees crisp, and broad banana leaves wilted black under its keen touch. The gentle breeze that drifted in from the north had ice in its touch and I do not know how the roses that held up pink petals bravely and tossed their soft, tea scent over the garden fences stood it without wilting. Most of them are planted near shelter, which may account for it. But the tea roses are essentially the ladies of their kind. They seem to have the feminine trait of exposing pink and white beauty to the inclement winds without growing goose flesh upon it. They stand brave and unconcerned in an atmosphere where mere
CHRISTMAS AT ST. AUGUSTINE

men and vegetables wilt, frostbitten. The day after Christmas brought a stiff wind from the northwest, a wind that fainted from its own rage during the night and left us for a few morning hours a temperature of twenty-six degrees. This is somewhat disconcerting to muslin-clad migrants.

Christmas came flying overseas to the quaint old town by way of the long levels of Anastasia Island, which bars off the real ocean to the eastward. Here I fancy Santa Claus landing for a moment to re-arrange his pack before getting down chimney to business, and here he might well feel at home on South Beach. Nowhere has nature more closely simulated snowdrifts. The dazzling white sand is as fine grained as any blown snow of a Canadian winter, and the north wind sent it drifting down leagues of coast where it piled in hillocks that grow with one shift of wind and shrink with the next. I had but to shut my eyes and listen to the silky susurrs of these tiny crystals one upon another to hear the same song that the New England pastures sing of a bright day in January when the snow is deep and a zero wind steals from the top of one drift to build bastions and frost fortifications on another.

With closed eyes the sibilant song was the fairy tenor to the bass of the surf which was a memory of the roar of white pines, tossing in
the gale. I had but to open my eyes and see these white, scurrying films of sandsnow to think myself really once more in Massachusetts. Inland the pale drifts whelm red cedar and bayberry outposts of the forests that are as flat-topped and wind-crippled as any shrubs that hold the outer defenses of zero-bitten, northern hilltops, moated, portcullised, with barbican and glacis in snow-mounded simulation of fortresses built by man. Surely nature had hung Christmas decorations on the forefront of St. Augustine in lavish profusion. I thought at one glance that Santa Claus himself had arrived on all this make-believe snow landscape and was resting his reindeer a moment behind the white drifts inland. I heard stamping hoofs and saw shaggy brown coats that might well be those of Prancer and Dancer, of Dunder and Blitzen. But a second look showed long ears instead of caribou antlers, and a band of the curious little half wild donkeys that roam the island trotted forth.

Getting back from the roar of the surf, I began to find the Christmas decorations mingled with the warmer phase of Florida. There the sun warmed all things in sheltered hollows till it seemed as if the almanac had repented and Easter was trailing soft garments of spring through the place to soothe all winter's ailments. Scrub palmettos lifted their heads from the sand
Court of "The Alcazar" at St. Augustine
to wave palms, and in meadowy places the St. Andrew’s cross spread yellow petals beneath holly berries. In December you find corners of this land in Florida that are most perplexing. Out on the hard beach ran by twos and threes the semi-palmated plover, which are birds of Labrador and the Arctic coast, and just beyond them the great, gray pelicans sailed in military ranks between the combers. Here were birds of the arctic and birds of the tropic seas passing one another between a wind of winter and a sun of summer. Ashore it was the same. Hermit thrushes, born under cool hemlocks in the New Hampshire hills while yet the snow lingered in the northern gullies, peered beneath the palmettos and touched wing tips with fluttering mocking birds hatched while the June sun scorched the temperature up along the nineties.

At nightfall on this cool Christmas Eve the round moon stood in the eastern sky and shone as if all the Spanish doubloons and pieces of eight that sank in wrecked treasure ships in this Spanish main had been fused to one great, silver orb to make it. The keen wind must have blown most of the tropic mists out of the sky, so plainly visible on its surface was the man, his dog, and his bush which Shakespeare was wont to see there. Thus both Spain and England, both fitfully lords of the soil on which I stood, renewed their hold on it,
for the moon made a broad pathway of silver light across the Matanzas River to the walls of the old coquina fort which for two hundred years was all St. Augustine, and for the matter of that, all Florida, so far as white man's dominion went.

It was easy to fancy Santa Claus pricking his coursers from the old coquina quarry on the island, along this silver road, bringing Christmas cheer to the St. Augustine of to-day. In the shadows along either side of the coruscating pathway it was easy to see other shades, the dark forms of boats loaded with stone from the quarries, with motley crews toiling at the oars, sinking beneath the tide with the painful years, and others coming to take their places; convicts from Spain and Mexico, political prisoners, Seminoles and slaves, all prodded by the relentless steel of Spain to the building of the great fort that stands almost unscarred to-day, an acme of mediaeval fort building. All night it stood in gray dignity, but the moonlight touched it lovingly and drew silver from the pathway of toil and tipped the bastions with white fire and drew gleaming edges all along the ramparts till it seemed as if the haughty inquisitions of Spain, the bluff greed of ancient England, and even the pagan myth of the good old saint of gifts were but gray memories out of which glowed a clearer light, that of that star in the east which the wise men followed.
CHRISTMAS AT ST. AUGUSTINE

We do not know which star it is, out of the incomputable number, but every Christmas Eve it swings the blue arc of the sky and sends its white light down upon the things for which men have toiled, master and slave alike, and glorifies them.

Before midnight the northern chill left the place, the wind ceased, and a sweet-aired calm fell upon all things. The rustics of old England long ago brought to New England a tale which I love to believe, that at midnight before Christmas the cattle kneel in adoration in their stalls. So in this town of strange contrasts, which is so old and so new, it seemed to me as if at midnight all nature knelt in adoration. Of what went on within palace or hovel I know little, but without the air renewed its kindly warmth and from every garden rose upon the air a gentle incense of flowers. Here poinsettias flaunted red involucres that were brave with the color of the season and there the dark green of English ivy fretted the walls with close-set leaves. Chrysanthemums held up pink and yellow and white blooms to the silver light and sent out the medicinal smell of their leaves as you brushed by them.

You could not see the blue of the English violets in their dark green beds and borders, but the odor of them subtended the scent of the tea roses and the Marechal Neils climbing high on their
trellises lost their yellow tint and were as white as the light that shone on them.

Tiny ferns, the southern polypodys, which you shall hardly know from those of the north by their appearance, seem to have little of the rock-climbing proclivities of their northern prototypes. These love a tree. Often you will find the level limbs of live-oaks made into ribbon borders with them and they nestle in the crevices between the criss-crossed stubs of palmetto leaves along the trunks whence the leaves themselves have fallen. Here in St. Augustine they seem to love the roofs of old houses, garlanding them with a most delicate beauty. If the northern polypody grew here I should expect to find the crevices between the stones of the old fort green with it and the bluff old sergeant custodian would have trouble in keeping it from making a fairy greensward of all slopes and levels on the parapets.

The southern polypody barely touches the fort. It seems to demand wood for its rooting surface and it makes the old-time roofs lovely with its tiny pinnate fronds. I dare say every moonlit night these soft aërial gardens entangle the light and are silvered by it, but it seemed as if on this night of nights the radiance was softer and glowed with a clearer fire. Over in the new part of the town where wealth has built huge domes and pinnacled minarets and fretted the walls and
CHRISTMAS AT ST. AUGUSTINE

arches of great stone buildings with every cunning device of the builder’s art, the gentle feet of this home-loving fern refuse to climb and walls and towers and copings and minarets seemed bare and garish in all their architectural beauty, by contrast.

It was by way of such scenes as these under the round moon of midnight that Christmas day first touched St. Augustine. And yet, for all the wonder beauty of the town in this white radiance it seems to me the wonder of all lay that night within the bare walls of a northerly, long-neglected casemate of the old gray fort. The open court of the place is not unlike that of an Eastern khan. The casemate is a high-walled, bare room which opens from it, its barred window letting in a narrow rectangle of the midday sun. What gentle-souled soldier dwelt within this room in the days of Spanish domination no one can tell me, nor what lover of shady English lanes, babbling brooks and cool, mossy retreats succeeded him with the coming of the English flag to wave its St. George and St. Andrew’s crosses proudly above the ramparts. Only it seems as if some lover of ferny woodlands must have dwelt there and thought long of such places, for out of the rough rock wall itself grows to-day the finest specimen of Venus’ hair fern I have ever seen, its cool, translucent, beautifully lobed pinnules drip-
ping from fronds of rich beauty that form a soft green cradle on the floor and pillow their pure sweetness against the wall itself.

It may be that some conscripted Spanish peasant brought with his aching heart to the far distant American garrison a fertile spore from some shady glen that he loved in Andalusia, or perhaps the seed ripened in a Devonshire lane and came thence with the besieging and conquering English, or yet again it may have been Florida born and carried thither on some soft wind of winter or in the blanket of an imprisoned Seminole. Centuries go by and bring a thousand accidents caught in the trailing garments of the years. I know only that the plant is there, wondrously beautiful by day, and that as the first hour of Christmas glided over the old fort the full light of the moon poured in at the barred window and built its exquisite texture into a mystic cradle veiled in the velvety purple darkness of the ancient cell.

Without was the open court flooded with the full radiance of the great Southern moon, the same that looked down upon the miracle of birth in Bethlehem more than nineteen hundred years ago. Within was the still darkness of the manger-like place, and this cradle of a texture such as no human hands might make, all strangely lighted and glorified by the beams from high
"The fort that waits in crumbling beauty the obliterating hand of the coming centuries"
CHRISTMAS AT ST. AUGUSTINE

heaven. Not millions in money nor trained architects nor the most skilled artisans of the day, all of which have been lavished upon the building of the new St. Augustine, have produced one spot so mystically beautiful as was at that hour the angle of that dark cell in the casement of the fort that was once the whole of the old town, the fort that waits in crumbling beauty, neglected but dignified still, the obliterating hand of the coming centuries.

Dawn brought out of the white stillness of the night a cloud from the southeast, and soon the tepid air of the Gulf of Mexico was spilling rain upon all things and hushing the barbaric greeting of guns and firecrackers with which the Southern negro delights to hail Christmas morn. Then as April had driven December from the sky, so came October with a westerly wind and golden sunshine that merged in a nightfall whose sky was of amber with a green gold moon rounding up once more in it. Over in the west hung a yellow, shining star of evening, and as the lights flashed out one by one in the great hotels and their careful shrubbery glowed with fairy lamps, it seemed as if this star shed upon them some of the kindly light that led Balthazar and his companions of old, a star hanging in the west, for a sign that the day, now grown old with us, was dawning with new people in new lands.
CHAPTER IX

IN A FLORIDA FREEZE

In St. Augustine there is a very genial, old colored man who, in spite of his weatherworn tatters, is a philanthropist and has an eye for good dressers. His favorite stampede is the sea wall and the open region about old fort Marion where he watches with wary eye for the tourist.

"Heah you are, suh," he says to such, "heah 's yo' lucky beans. Take a han'ful suh an' be lucky all de res' ob your bawn days. I gives dem to yuh. I ain't charge nuffin for dese I ain't, kase you is de born image ob my ol' massah. Yaas you is, suh. Mons'ous fine lookin' man he, yass suh. Dem ladies dey jes' nachully follow my ol' massa roun' kase he such fine man. Hey? Yaas, tank you kindly suh. You sure is like ol' massah."

It is astonishing how many visions of his old master rise in this gray old man's sight as tourists pass. Long or short, fat or lean, it makes no difference to him, so be they are well dressed and have an air of prosperity. If it is a group of
ladies it is the same. They simply, one and all, are images of his ol' missus who was the smartest dressed and handsomest woman in the State. It may be that the people who have small stores on St. George street and sell far less valuable things than lucky beans to good-looking tourists make more money, though I doubt it. Dimes come rapidly to the old chap, and though with many rents he has none to pay.

To-day is January of a new year, and all Florida is once more steeped in golden sunshine. Soft airs out of Eden, or some place just as good, breathe over the landscape, and the genial warmth is that of a fine, June day at home. But so far I have failed to hear the familiar salutation of the old bean man. I fancy he is not yet thawed out. I hope no harm has come to him, for I have bought my beans and I like to stand smiling by and see the other fellows get theirs. Perhaps he is still a little distrustful, for this is the first comfortable day since Christmas, and that was something of an oasis in a raw desert of chill. There had been several frosty mornings before that, somewhat to the disturbance of the purveyors to tourists, though they had said, grudgingly, "Oh, well, we do have a light frost some winters."

The morning after Christmas saw the thermometer at twenty-six, and the purveyors of sum-
mer, unlimited, in time of winter, were properly horrified. "Oh, but we assure you that this is quite extraordinary," they vociferated. "The weather is always warm in Florida."

The morning after that the wind came roaring down from the northwest, full of needles. The temperature was below freezing and it kept steadily going lower. The water front, steeped in the midday sun and sheltered from the keen wind, was the warmest place in town, and there my old colored man lingered, shivering beneath an old overcoat that, I trow, belonged to that grand, old master whom we all resemble. Beneath it he still clung to his lucky beans, but he found small comfort in the dimes that he took in from overcoated and shivering tourists.

"Uncle," I asked, "what makes it so cold?"

"Huh," he replied, and his usually beaming, shiny black face was ashy gray and twisted into a tragic discontent with the chill, "Hit's dese Nordern people. We ain't had nothin' like dis ontwel dey began to come down here, so much. Pears like dey brought it in dere cloes."

I fancy that is as good an explanation of the freeze as any, though if the Northern people brought it thus they did it against their will. Out on the water front the first severe morning I found an old man from Missouri. When they had told him about the perpetual summer that
reigns in Florida during the winter time he had said, "show me," and started for the peninsular State with his big overcoat under his arm. Wrapped to the eyes in his big coat he sat, this morning that the thermometer registered at only seventeen above in St. Augustine, on a bench that faced the morning sun. I thought he must be warm, for his face was flushed, but it was only the warmth of his indignation.

"They told me to leave my overcoat at home," he said, "but I would n’t do that. But I did leave my sweater, and now look at me! Had to go out this morning and buy a new one. There’s no heat in the house I ’m living in and I had to come out here and sit in the sun like a sage hen, and durn me if I’m warm now. Next time I take an excursion in winter, young man, I ’ll go North. I know a stove up in Chicago that I ’ll bet you is red-hot this minute, and I wish I was sitting side of it, durned if I don’t."

The plaint of this man from Missouri is a song of different words, perhaps, but it is the same tune which all Northern people sing who happen to hit a Southern winter during one of the freezing spells which are so likely to reach the northern third of Florida. The most severe of these kill the orange trees and are felt to the very southern limits of the peninsula. Fortunately, there are periods of several years’ duration in which
these do not touch the State. This one is exceptional enough both in severity and duration, to make the Northern visitor, who comes to escape that sort of thing, unhappy, severe enough in some cases to make him unpleasantly ill from colds contracted in draughty houses, often unheated. At home we install elaborate apparatus for taking care of a temperature that gets below fifty degrees. Down here they scorn such a thing. Yet sections far enough advanced in civilization to have water pipes and plumbing arrangements awoke to find them frozen all over northern Florida the other morning.

Now that my own memory, somewhat iced up by these alleged unprecedented conditions, is thawed out, the week seems quite grotesquely impossible. It is like asking me to tell how, during a week in midsummer, we had icy weather and mornings on which the temperature was only seventeen above, Fahrenheit. But that is just what happened, and the only thing to prove it as you walk about town now is the black wreckage of all tender herbage that a little over a week ago flourished so greenly and put forth sweet-scented flowers. There is visible from my window the roof of one of the old-time houses on quaint old St. George street. On this grew, before the freeze, tiny, beautiful clumps of the Southern polypody fern. These are represented
now by crumpled remnants of gray leaves from which the life has been frozen—and it takes a good deal to kill a polypody. The gardens in the town were full of vivid-colored foliage plants, coleus and the like, handsome poinsettias graced many places and climbing vines scattered white and scarlet bloom. All these are dead, killed to the ground, and with them went the taller and more picturesque shrubs. The palmettos stood it, though their leaves have since curled a bit, showing that the cold penetrated their tough fiber.

The first frosts turned the upper leaves of the banana trees a light brown like that of elm leaves after they fall in the autumn. The two nights at seventeen killed the plants to the ground, and not even the thick coats that I saw hung over green bunches of bananas here and there sufficed to keep the fruit from freezing, any more than similar protection helped the flower beds any; the cold was too severe to be staved off in that way. I think the most striking sight was a big field of sugar cane out at Hastings. This had been green and luxuriant, though ripe for the knife, the grinding having begun in many sections. After the second morning of severe cold this field was all of a lovely soft, tan brown, the exact color of the shooks in a Northern cornfield where they are allowed to stand out in the field until this time of year. The Southern cornstalks still standing in
the field do not take that color, nor are they so massed. The whole looked as striking and out of place as the weather in which I saw it. In this same town of Hastings is a big orange grove from which the fruit had been but half picked, the rest hanging, waiting for the holiday rush to be over, the market cleaned up, and the prices better. There the orange leaves were curled and crisp with the frost and a thousand boxes or more of splendid, golden fruit was still hanging, yellow, beautiful in the chill sun — and solid blocks of ice, from kumquats which are as big as one's thumb to grapefruit almost as big as one's head.

There is an alligator friend of mine out by the city gates for whose safety on that first cold morning I was much concerned. For free alligators one need have but little worry. Safe under water in the warm corners of the swamps they were sleepy and happy and would not come out till the sun called them with sufficient vigor to assure them a warm day. Nor need I worry much for the city alligator who is put into the little pond beneath a fountain in the plaza on the first of January, to be removed no doubt when the tourists go. The steady outflow of warm artesian water would make him comfortable. The East Coast railroad people have two that they put into similar tanks in their station grounds. These, too, seem to be a part of the decoration in honor
"The first frosts turned the upper leaves of the banana trees a light brown"
of the tourists. So, not to be outdone in friendly welcome, a photographer friend of mine has been keeping "George" in a pen in a shallow, cement tank on his grounds down by the city gate.

This photographer is an enterprising chap; indeed, the photographers of the city gates neighborhood are all enterprising. If you get by them without having your picture taken in many poses it is not their fault. They know the weakness of vain, human nature almost as well as does the ancient bean man. One has a jungle, a wild and most realistic wilderness in which you may be pictured in the very den of alligators, sitting on pa, fondling ma, and holding the babies on your knee. Who would not send one of these home to the shivering sufferers in the frozen North? Another will take your likeness sitting at a tiny table with a most gorgeously-gowned young lady, sipping bubbles from a tall glass. Few gay sports can resist sending that up to jealous admirers who have doubted that they would be received in Southern society. To be sure, the young lady is of pasteboard, but how are the neighbors to know that? You can have your picture taken in the ox cart, just coming in through the ancient city gates, and a real live ox is kept for the purpose — that is, he was alive until he got pneumonia standing out there, waiting for customers in the freeze.

Of all these I think the owner of "George"
does it best. He takes your picture in a real orange grove, picking oranges. He is the fortunate possessor of five trees, and some of the five have real oranges growing on them—a few. But who wants to be picking oranges in a skimpy grove? The owner of "George" fixed that. He wired golden fruit and leafy twigs on his trees by the bushel and then, because nature has made it difficult to photograph oranges in their native color, he whitewashed the fruit. As a result you may send home from the ancient Spanish city a picture of yourself, supremely happy, standing beneath trees loaded with real fruit, picking them as nonchalantly as if it was your constant occupation. No wonder people come to St. Augustine by thousands each winter and go away charmed with the place.

But about "George." The first morning that the thermometer stood at seventeen I went out early, wearing a sweater and a big overcoat, besides one's usual garments, and still shivering, so penetrating is this Southern cold. At the gates I found the owner of "George" inside the pen, chopping vigorously. He was removing an ice blanket from the top of the shallow tank in which the alligator was securely frozen. This ice blanket had kept the 'gator secure in a temperature above thirty-two, whereas he would have been frozen stiff if he had not had the wit to get
IN A FLORIDA FREEZE

under water. "George" was lethargic. Even when prodded severely to see if he was really alive, he moved but slowly and positively refused to blow off steam with that high-pressure hiss which is the alligator's chief warning note. But he came through it unharmed. Still, he was fortunate in his tank. There were many Northern people in quaint old St. Augustine that night who had no such reliable heater.

For all the blackened gardens, the icicled oranges and the banana trees cut down in their prime, the whitened sugar cane and the ice-blanketed alligators, I think the really extraordinary sight of that first morning of severe cold was a fountain in the plaza. This shoots a few tiny streams into the air and they fall upon greensward beneath it. The brisk, northwest wind that blew all that cold night blew the thin stream askew, and the morning sun showed a circle of ice hummocks beneath this fountain, such hummocks as suggested the bad roads which Arctic explorers negotiate, and a pyramid of icicles that was built up from the ground into the urn of the fountain and above that into a sort of statuette of ice on which the artesian stream sprinkled still. The sun of Florida, even in the dead of winter, is a hot one, but the pyramid of icicles stood unmoved during the greater part of that forenoon, indeed they would have been there
all day and the temperature of the night which followed would have augmented them, only that people began to take them away for souvenirs.

Now the point of this story is not that the climate of Florida is not beautiful during the winter. I know that it is, most of the time. But to say that Florida is a land of perpetual warmth is not to tell the truth. In northern Florida the winters often show days when the morning temperature is below freezing. A temperature which freezes the oranges is likely to come any winter, and though such cold lasts but a few days at the most, it is very trying to people dressed for July. Florida women buy furs for the winter, and wear them, too. Remember that if you are coming down for even a short stay. This freezing weather comes oftenest in late December or early January, but it may come as late as early March. Remember that and wear the overcoat down, also put the sweater in the trunk, else you may be like my friend from Missouri and vow to take your next winter vacation beside a Chicago red-hot stove. Florida is indeed a land of perpetual summer, with certain exceptions that prove the rule. One of these certainly came, this year, between Christmas and New Year’s.
The banana tree in bloom
CHAPTER X

DOWN THE INDIAN RIVER

The bobolinks, bound for South America and perpetual summer, go by a route which most birds, strange to say, shun. They pass down through Florida and over the Caribbean Sea, touching at Cuba, Jamaica and Yucatan. Why this is not the popular route with all birds it is difficult to say. It offers the most land surface for food and the shortest sea flights on the way, being in its comfort and elegance a sort of Pullman train route which the Florida East Coast pleasure seekers imitate. Yet there seem to be only about ten of the migrating birds which follow it. The yellow-billed cuckoo is one of these, and last night I heard him spring his musical rain-call in the guava bushes while the wind in the palm trees overhead beat a zyphonic accompaniment. It is now mid-January, and I am a little in doubt whether this cuckoo has paused on his southward way and winter is yet to come, or whether he is one of the first of the spring migrants to turn his flight northward, so gently does one summer fade
into the next as one gets well down the Florida peninsula on "the bobolink route." The bank swallows are of the ten that take up this route, and the air is often full of their whirring flocks.

Here at White City we are about two-thirds the way down the Florida peninsula, about east of the northern end of Lake Okeechobee, which sits at the northern end of the Everglades. The southeast trade winds, blowing across the Gulf Stream and over the Bahamas, bringing fresh sea odors to Florida, here pass a long line of the islands which bar off the Indian River from the ocean. Then they cross the river, and top another wave of the sea of billowy sand. The Indian River is the first hollow between these long north and south extending billows. Over the ridge to westward you come to a shallow lagoon in which all kinds of marsh life flourish, from alligators to the lovely yellow blooms of Utricularia inflata and the heart-shaped leaves of Limnanthemum lacunosum, both these last Northern friends whom it is cheery to find so far south.

Here, rather more than two hundred miles south of St. Augustine, north and south meet and merge most curiously and at this time of year one has reminders of winter or of summer according to the direction of the wind. Ten days ago this came out of the north and froze oranges
"The southeast trade-winds here pass a long line of the islands which bar off the Indian River from the ocean"
on the trees well down into the middle of the State. Here the cold was not severe enough to do that, but the cocoanut palms over on the Indian River bore frosted cocoanuts one morning and all tender vegetables such as beans, eggplants and tomatoes were killed outright. The result gives the eye some key to those trees and shrubs which are truly tropical and have wandered north over their really proper boundary line, and those which hold northern pith and do not mind some cold weather. The oranges have not minded the temperature of twenty-six degrees which came to them. The yellow fruit hangs like golden blobs of sunshine all about. The green leaves are untouched, even those of the little thumbling kumquats which are the least of oranges.

Lemons as well, though they are far tenderer than the oranges, hold up their pointed ovals in the midst of green leaves. But the guavas were badly nipped and their foliage everywhere is brown, a color something like the soft tans in their sycamore-like trunks. Though the guava leaf is like that of a chestnut, its trunk makes one think it a young sycamore. By rights its fruit should be a button or a bur, according to Northern landmarks. As a matter of fact it begins an orange blossom, most spicily sweet scented, grows a green apple to a lemon-looking maturity,
and its seeded pulp is peach-like, and spiced with a faint off-color flavor which seems but to add to its delectability. In Northern minds there is well rooted a belief that the orange tree holds ripe fruit, green fruit and new blooms at the same time. This is hardly borne out by the facts. The orange is a cropper, just as the apple is, and just now the trees hold no color save that of the ripe fruit, no odor but that of its spicy, oily rind. The guavas, however, have everything in motion from bloom to ripe fruit.

Cocoanut palms and royal palms are both to be found in south Florida, though neither is indigenous, both having been planted by accident or design. The palmetto is on the other hand native to the State. In the northern third of the State, however, it never seems to me to feel at home. Palmettos there are set out along fine walks and in yards and formal gardens where for the most part they stand primly and seem a bit self-conscious. Rarely there in my woodland walks, either in swamp or upland, did I find the cabbage palmetto, which is the only tall growing kind, wild. As you come south you begin to find along in the Palatka neighborhood sudden accesses of tropical picturesquesness in the swampy lands. The jungle grows stateliness and becomes peopled with possibilities of all romance, a condition less common to the lonely, flat woods and
the impenetrable tangle of jasmine and greenbrier and gray moss of the swamps in the northern counties of the State.

All this I think due to the presence all about you of the tall palmettos. There is an interminable regularity about the pines. From Palatka south, the palmettos stray in groups all about the landscape, never standing prim and solemn as they do about Jacksonville and St. Augustine. Here they seem to prance in toward town like plumed Seminole chieftains of the early days. They lean together in groups and make the landscape cozy and beautiful, while yet it loses nothing of dignity. There is something of the feather duster model about the palmetto, but it suggests only dignity and beauty for all that. Along the banks of streams they lean plumed heads far over the water and make the muddiest "branch" a place of enchantment thereby. There is a graciousness about the simple act that makes you take off your hat and say "thank you" in all reverence. Of all the trees of the South the palmetto has most personality and you learn to love it far beyond the others.

I think it is the presence all about of the picturesque and sociable palmettos that softens the aspect of the flat lands as you go back from the Indian River in this latitude, and makes the barrens lovable and kindly. Yet other things
I am sure contribute. The cold snap, which may have been the end of the tiny winter that comes even to this far Southern clime seems to have sent many Northern birds awing once more. All about flock the robins in countless numbers, their winter plumage seeming just a little duller than it will be when they hasten North in April. I have not heard one of them sing, but the air is full of unmistakable robin cries and they run over grassy spots with the same self-confident grace. A favorite food with them seems to be the gallberries which exactly resemble low-bush black huckleberries and grow in vast profusion all over the ground through the flat woods. These are most bitter and nauseous to my taste, in fact I know of only one thing worse and that is the buckthorn berry which is plentiful all the early winter at home and of which also the wintering robins seem very fond. Blue birds are plentiful.

The crow blackbirds that are wintering here seem to be, if anything, just a little more familiar and fearless than those which nest yearly in the Boston Public Gardens. They may very well be the same birds, though. At Fort Pierce I saw them walking gravely about the yards and in the public streets, picking up food with the pigeons and hardly getting out of the way of the slow-moving wagons. At White City they fly up
from the road at my feet and barely wait for me to go by before they are back again. With them I find redwing blackbirds, the males in full epaulette, almost as fearless as their larger brethren. There is another flock of black birds, whose presence I hailed with delight, making the woods vocal over on the shores of the St. Lucie River. That is a dozen or so of unmistakable black crows, *Corvus americana*; not the big-billed, big-footed Florida representative of the race whom I have seen occasionally sneaking silently off among the pine tops; not the cracked-voiced fish crows with their childish hilarity; but good old Northern crows, making the woods ring with their full-throated haw, haw, haws. These sounded good to me. I think the cold snap must have sent them down a little below their usual parallel, for they are the first I have seen in over two months spent in the Florida woodlands.

The garden in which the house is embowered is full of myrtle warblers in full winter plumage. These flit from one rose bush full of bloom to another, then in among oleander and hibiscus blossoms and the scarlet clusters of the begonia. Here again is a touch of Northern winter that has come to the land of flowers. Often of a winter’s day in Massachusetts have I seen myrtle warblers lingering among the bayberry bushes, feeding on the waxy berries.
There is far more brown in the landscape than is wont to meet the eye and this tells the tale, not only of a temperature that has been below freezing, but just what plants are on the northern edge of their limit, just as the yellow-rump warblers are on the southern edge of theirs. The brown guava leaves whisper the story; the banana plants, killed to the stalk, shout it aloud. So do the fields of pineapples. This is a country of pineapple plantations. They cover that ridge next the Indian River, clothing it in prickly green lances from the river banks to the savanna behind it, for miles on miles, running north and south. In places these are under sheds, acres in extent. In others the wide lagoon of water on the west protected them and they are but little harmed. In others the full blight of the cold has worked in them and their green lances have turned a sickly, straw yellow. On such fields the crop for this year is ruined, and many acres of newly set young plants are killed to the root. Thus does winter set his mark occasionally even on this semi-tropic land.

But if it has been winter, I am quite convinced that it is now spring. I have surprised a suspicious tone of young green along the river edge, such a color as in Massachusetts I would know meant mid-April. It is the tender green of young willow leaves just opening out of gray
"This is a country of pineapple plantations."
buds, all yellowed with the pollen from drooping catkins. The swamp willows that had lost their leaves are beginning to put them out again. So on oak trees I find the straggly catkins hanging in tassels where the limbs are gray with new leaf buds that are pushing off last year's leaves. And still the blue jays are searching among these catkins for acorns of last year, not altogether unsuccess fully, so close does spring tread on the heels of the old year and its fruits. All about in the fields I hear a springlike twittering among the myriad birds, a preliminary tuning of instruments. I hear the friendly "cochituate" of a goldfinch as he scallops his way along the sky. The Florida blue jays, even noisier than our Northern ones and vastly more familiar, clang and scream all about and red birds whistle musically. Through all this I hear another note, or rather a succession of notes, that make me smile. I have been stalking this puzzling, strange song, if one can call it that, for a day or two, as opportunity offered, and only this morning made sure. After all, it was only the crow blackbird trying to sing a spring song. As a song it is hardly a success. It begins with a shrill, hardly musical, call note, long repeated. Then the bird essays something like the trill of a canary, though not very much like it in result. Then he gives a little deprecatory chirp as if he were as much
surprised as I am at the result of all this, almost tumbles off his perch, recovers, and flies over to another tree to begin the performance all over again. The whole is as grotesquely awkward and humorously meeching as the motions of the crow blackbird usually are.

Not only in bird voices, in willow and oak catkins, are these signs of spring. The ground underfoot is beginning to teem with them. Under pines it is starred with tiny, white blossoms while the ditch bottoms and the moister places everywhere are purple and white. Most spring-like of all is the violet among the wild grasses in the flat woods. From its tiny, white flowers with their purplish veining I took it at first glance to be *Viola blanda*, our sweet, white violet of early May in all meadowy places. A closer examination, however, showed it to have beardless petals and instead of the round, heart-shaped leaves of our Northern variety lanceolate ones, tapering into long petioles. Therefore it is *Viola lanceolata*. But except for these minor differences it is the same flower, as delicately beautiful and enticing as when it grows fifteen hundred miles nearer the pole. Yet if one thinks a New England spring is at hand he has but to look up. On bare limbs in all swampy places, hang the solemn beards of Tillandsia, the Spanish moss, while on others grow grotesque pine-
apple-like plants that are indeed of the pineapple family though they bear no pineapples. Instead they shoot upward a scarlet, gladiolus-like spike from which appear long tubes of blue petals, holding out yellow anthers. The whole looks as if some vivid, tropic bird had lighted on this pineapple-top and was poising there a moment before farther flight. Underneath springs the rank growth of Florida's largest fern, the *Achrosticum aureum*. Its fronds rise as high as my head and spread like a trunkless palm in a circle sometimes ten feet in diameter.

Out of all this confusion of Northern and Southern spring signs, rises always one clear note, that of the southeast trade wind in the palm trees. Rarely is it absent from the ear. It brings fresh, sea-born smells of perpetual spring to the nostrils, sometimes weary of the too rich perfume of spicy pines and odorous gardens, and its rustle sings you to sleep all night long with the song of the Southern sea. So as the palmetto grows dearest to the eye of all these Southern trees, it becomes also dearest to the ear. It is the harp on which this loneliest, yet most alluring of all Southern tunes is soothingly played.
CHAPTER XI

SPRING IN THE SAVANNAS

Spring and autumn kissed yesterday in the savannas east of Lake Okeechobee, and autumn died of it. Autumn was lucky thus to be raptured out of existence, for he was but a weakling, lingering along inertly, showing little of that brown tan in which, farther north, he glories. In all the woodland hardly a fallen leaf rustled under his footstep and on the open savanna only the dull olive wild grasses paid homage to him. On the day he died I thought I saw tribute to him in the red of a swamp maple's passing leaves, but I was wrong. It was the blush of spring blossoms instead, so little does the world of the twenty-seventh parallel care for autumn, so potent is the aura of spring as the lusty hussy sweeps in on the wings of the southeast trades. I suspect spring of being born on the tropic edge of the Sargasso Sea whence these winds blow, mothered by the cool brine of its vast depths, fathered by the most vivid sun and bringing in her amorous heart the alchemic vigor of both, whereby she trans-
Spring and autumn kissed yesterday in the savannas east of Lake Okeechobee.
SPRING IN THE SAVANNAS

mutes all things into golden bloom. The long surges of this sea following her, leap in adoration and desire. A dozen miles inland from the Atlantic I yet hear the roar of their plunge on the beach, a roar softened and made into a sleepy lullaby, an undertone droning in soothing cadences when the breeze is hushed for a moment. They may not follow her farther, these devoted waves, but they send the cooling scent of the brine far beyond the sound of their voices, sometimes to the very heart of the peninsula.

Yet it is not altogether the scent of the brine which gives the amorous softness to the winds that brought spring, yesterday. The garments of the goddess, trailing over the Bahamas, have caught the scent of all wild flowers in their folds and there wooed and welded them into a fond sweetness which no man may describe yet by which all must know when spring comes, whether in the Everglades or the New England pastures. On nights when the wind blew gently I have caught whiffs of these odors of spring before, breaths to make one fill the lungs to their very depths in long-drawn inspirations, to reach one’s arms towards the stars in sudden joy of yearning, but now the air of day as well as night is full of it.

The savannas are the pine barrens of the northern part of the State, made, somehow, more
open hearted, lovable and kindly instead of lonely and aloof. The pines are here still, but they no longer grow in close-set ranks that shut off the view in the near distance with a wooden wall of brown trunks. Instead they grow far apart and the glance trots merrily along for miles among their trunks before it finds its way barred. There are enough of the long-leaved variety to give stateliness to the view, but in the main the pine of the savannas is a shorter-leaved, less straight and dignified tree, smaller, though a good-sized tree, and one that is enough like our Northern pitch pine to be a friend at sight. These and the palmettos that sway in picturesque groups along on their way, no one knows whither, are all the trees one finds for miles on miles.

It is rather odd, this matter of the palmettos being on their way. It is not so with the pines. They stand. But the palmettos stroll on. I do not know what gives them this semblance of groups in motion, but they surely have it. I fancy it is their erect trunks which are never quite erect. They seem to lean forward just poised for a step. Under foot is the scrub palmetto, brown grasses that fatten the range cattle, and the gallberry bushes now black with fruit. At first glance this seems all and you have to live with the savannas for a little before they give up more. At rare intervals you may find a tiny streamlet that in flood
time has dug its course down through the sand to a hard bottom where its clear water slips gently along. This will be bordered by myrtles a dozen feet tall, making a wall of foliage that you may see a mile ahead of you barring your way beneath the pines. But this is only an incident and does not affect the general tenor of the landscape.

But, though streams are rare, there is water in abundance in the saucer-like pools which make the savanna so lovable. Just when your way is becoming weary and the place the abode of monotony and loneliness, one of them bars your path and fills you with sudden admiration of its wild beauty. You may count them, little and big, by the score sometimes within a mile, you may find a mile without one, or you may find a single pool which takes up the mile. However long your walk in the level plain, it can never be lonely because of the comradeship of these. Here is one that is rimmed with prim, green rushes, standing close-set and bristly pointed as if guarding the clear, unvexed surface. Here is another so shallow that the wild grasses grow up through the water all about, spiring in tender points that are olive brown with the touch of autumn. Yesterday in such pools olive brown was the only color above the water which reflected the blue of the sky. To-day, under the touch of this amorous spring that swooped down upon them, these
somber spires stand guard over prickings of tender green that sprang up in a night to meet the call of the passing goddess.

Here is another pool, deeper, this one, whose borders are halberded with the leaves of the pickerel weed, already flying blue banners here and there, starred with the white of the water plantain. In spots in these clear, deeper pools the tape grass stripes the surface and the crow blackbirds ride dry-footed on the round, floating leaves of the yellow pond lily. Many of the smaller pools are fairer yet, their clear, black water all rich with gold ornaments, curiously and beautifully carved and shining yellow in the sunlight which seems tangled in embossings and fret work. Not till I wade knee deep into the middle may I find out whence comes this curious and delightful ornamentation. After all, it is but the tangled blooms of *Utricularia vulgaris*, riding free and floating on the bladder-bearing whorl of leaves till gentle winds push them close and the spurred, bilabiate flowers tangle golden heads in nugget-like masses. Nowhere in the world, I fancy, can you find utricularias so large flowered and massed in such profusion as in the little, quiet pools that star the savannas from the Indian River westward to the northernmost beginnings of the Everglades.

The pools do not have a monopoly of the beau-
tiful yellow blooms of the utricularia. Along one tiny path or another which I follow along level miles, made by the range cattle and kept open as highways for all the wild creatures of the place, tiny motes of richest sunshine dance aside for my passing feet. Scarce larger than a pinhead are these blooms of *Utricularia subulata*, most elflike blooms, that seem to have no connection with earth. If you try to pluck them they shake all over with mirth which they cannot contain at your clumsiness. Leaves they have none, and the stem which bears them up is of such a neutral tint and of such gossamer fineness that it is almost impossible to see it. And that is all there is to it; a stem like a spider's thread, springing from moist sand or mud in the path, bearing on its invisible support this tiny scale of sunshine, making the most elusive and fairylike plant that one might find on a continent. In Northern swamps and on the borders of still lakes the utricularias have given me pleasure, but never have they supplied such an amazement of delight as they spread before my feet in these wild savannas of southern Florida.

Along with the path-haunting utricularias is another tiny plant whose Northern prototype is familiar. This is the sundew. I take the one that carpets portions of these moist, wild ways with rich red to be the *Drosera brevifolia* from
its shorter, wedge-shaped leaves. The nap of fine glands that clothes these holds diamond glints of infinitesimal dewdrops that flash finely in the sun and catch my attention and hold it, even as they do the tiny insects for whom the snare is spread. In favored locations these round mats of the sundew half carpet the gray-black soil along the path edges with a diamond-frosted, cerise velvet and should pleasantly pad the footfall of all small, wild creatures that pass that way.

The sundew grows only on the moist places. In the dryer spots, now that spring has come wooing with warmth and with showers, troops of sunbonneted beauties show up, these seeming to have sprung magically forth in a night. It may be that there were golden yellow sunbonnets nodding coquettishly in the wind all along the savannas ten days ago. I can only say that I tramped them back and forth and did not see any. It may be that the smaller, more modest blue sunbonnets were there too. I can only say that I did not see them. There is a freemasonry of the wild that keeps secrets from you till you are found worthy. Hence to know a wood or a plain you must visit it often. Often in coming back along a path which I have scanned in going I find flowers, nodding by the very path brim, that I did not see in going out. It is not to be believed that these opened in the interval; rather we must
“All must know when spring comes, whether in the Everglades or the New England pastures”
think that like children they lose their fear of strangers after a little.

So with these butterwort girls that wear the yellow and blue sunbonnets. I fancy there were a few of them along the path on my first day, but they did not care to be seen. Now they have taken heart at the boldness with which spring scatters love tokens all about and are trooping forth on the level sands. *Pinguicula pumila* I actually found first, though she is the more modest. Her blue bonnet is smaller and she herself is shorter of stature, nestling down among the wild grasses in a snugly confiding way which makes them love her. They cling close and it is difficult to pluck *Pinguicula pumila* without getting a half handful of defending grass stems with her.

*Pinguicula lutea* is a bolder creature. In her yellow sunbonnet she is a flaunting blonde and the gold of her flaring ribbons is visible far under pine and palm. When the full warmth of the sun is on the savannas she flips back the rim of this big, yellow bonnet till it flares in salver form and shows her buxom face and the gold of her hair to all who will look. I do not think it possible that *Pinguicula lutea* let me go down the path on the very first day without noticing her and I am therefore confident that her season begins here in mid-January. She and her shyer
sister have given a sudden joy to the wide spaces that was not there before and I welcome them as near relatives of the utricularias.

Over them all on the day that spring came, over the sandy levels, the round-eyed, flower-bedecked pools, rang the tinkling, joyous songs of I do not know how many million meadow larks. A day or two before I had seen but a scattering one or two and not one had sung for me. On that day they appeared everywhere, not in flocks like the robins and blackbirds, but singly and by twos and threes well distributed over all the landscape. They sing from lowly stations, a short, dead stub in the lonely reaches, a fence post near the farm, or the low ridgepole of the farmer's shack. Nothing could be more springlike than their music and they are the first Northern birds that I have found singing freely so far South. The robins and the redwings are songless, the bluebird carols shyly as he flies but so gently that he is rarely heard. The crow blackbird works hard but it is hardly a song that he produces, and so the mellow tinkle of these myriads of meadow larks is a delight to the Northern ear.

It is a joy also to see one of them after his song flutter forth from his perch, spread his wings in mid-flight and sail sweetly down, lighting in among the wild grasses as if he loved them. The meadow lark's breast wears a rich yellow that
pretty nearly matches that of the sunbonnet of Miss Pinguicula Lutea. I am wondering if there is anything in it. That might account for her persistent strolling along the sunny reaches of the interminable savannas. It might account for his melodious outbursts from low observation points and the quivering set of his wings as he soars down into the grass at her side. This spring that came sailing up over the Bahamas brought many a yearning along with the tropic odors in her train.

As out of the lark-filled air the spring has brought melodies, so out of the yellow-flecked pools she has brought two sounds which are in vocal adoration of her. One is a queer little rap of a sound that is like the hitting of dry sticks together in a rub-a-dub-dub. If fairy frogs march the borders of the pools to drumbeat, this is the drumbeat.

The other is a frog sound, too, the love call of the tree frog. The hyla’s voice with us, North, is the first sure call of spring. When we hear that we know that the ice is gone from the marshes and the tiny fellows have come out of their winter’s sleep and are down in the open water, piping, Panlike, their love songs among the reeds. Neither amorous scent of stephanotis bloom borne from islands of the Southern seas on the soft air, nor amorous tinkle of lark love
songs could so mark to my Northern trained ear the presence of spring. There is no chorus as yet; just an occasional shrill peeping, such as I have heard in April out of the moist ruck of last year’s grasses in a cold meadow, while yet there is a touch of frost in the air and the low sun scarcely gives color in his slanting beams. Here it comes in warmth as of June out of pools where bewildered flowers bloom the year round, not knowing of a certainty where one summer ends and another begins. Yet the sound and its meaning are unmistakable, the final evidence whereby I know that spring came to the savannas yesterday.
CHAPTER XII

SEVEN THOUSAND PELICANS

"Plumpskin, buffskin, pelican, gee!
We think no bird so happy as we.
Plumpskin, buffskin, pelican jill!
We thought so then and we think so still."

So runs an ancient and foolish ditty. There is something about it which makes one think of pelicans as doing a little dance and thus happily singing, wing in wing, so to speak. Observing the pelicans that meet the steamers at Jacksonville and some others later in captivity, I had thought them of a grave and reverend dignity which belied the ditty and its suggestions. Now I know better. It is a bachelor pelican that first gave me an inkling of "how happy the life of a bird must be." He has no home, this bachelor pelican, just a habitat which is a tiny cove in the long island which bars the Indian River from the sea five or six miles below Fort Pierce. So deep does this cove dent the island that the roaring surf of the east side is but a stone throw from its tip, yet the wind which blows almost always from the sea leaves its surface unruffled. Here my bachelor pelican lives to sail and soar and cut
capers all day long in a snug harbor which is untenanted save by a winter fisherman’s houseboat.

No more than he minded this houseboat did he seem to mind me as I watched his antics. At times he seemed severe and dignified enough. That was when he sat erect and motionless on the surface, his noble, white head and reverend beard of a bill having all the repose of a prophet. But that did not last long with him. With a shrug the dignity vanished and his whole attitude was positively humorous. The change would come suddenly, a sort of wink of the whole body. Nor was this for me. He just seemed to wink to himself and say, “Humph, but wasn’t that a solemn pose!” It is singular how dignity can become grotesque humor with a shrug, with this bachelor pelican. After his shrug began a little whirling motion as he sat on the water, spinning softly to the right and left, ogling the surface as if for fish. Then suddenly he sprang into the air. The pelican has hardly any tail. His huge beak ludicrously overweights him forward. By all laws of physics he ought to tumble head first into the waves every time he springs from them. Instead, his seven-foot spread of wings catches the air with vigorous grace and he is absolute master of the art of flight. So my bachelor friend held himself on level wings, then of a sudden pitched downward and drove that huge, misshapen beak
into the water, about half of the bird going with it. I know by the way he smacked his mandibles that he took in a good-sized fish, probably a mullet, while beneath the surface.

The general color of this bird was a slaty brown, except for his head and whole neck, which was white, not showing even a tinge of any other color. Crossing the narrow strip of island and looking forth upon the sea I saw other pelicans flying in slant-lined flocks just within the breakers. These pelicans wasted no time in humorous antics. They flew in business-like fashion, skimming so low in the hollows of the waves that they sometimes disappeared. They took fish on the dive much as my bachelor friend had; but, whereas he seemed to do it with a schottische movement, there was no antic dance in their motions. They were in dead earnest. They were marked differently from my young friend, too, for these sea hunters were in full breeding plumage, their hind heads and necks being a rich, seal brown. They were hunting menhaden more than a score of miles from the young, being brooded in the grass nests in the big rookery on Pelican Island, and they had no time for humorous antics.

There is no accounting for what birds do. It is the custom, almost universal, in birddom to mate and breed in the spring of the year. Even in the tropics this holds good. The pelicans of
the Gulf of Mexico breed in April, yet those of the East Coast begin their mating and flock to the single rookery, which is the nesting place of all East Coast pelicans, in November. Just below the twenty-eighth parallel of latitude there is in a sheltered bay in the Indian River a low, sandy island about three acres in extent. Here all East Coast pelicans breed, and have done so since man has known the Indian River. The pioneer birds who first chose this island chose wisely. The place is as far north as they dare breed for fear of cold, which would kill the young birds. These are born naked and for the first few weeks of their existence die of cold even under ordinary temperature, if left unbrooded over fifteen minutes. Hence one or the other of the parent birds keeps the nest during that time. On the other hand, they wish to be as far north as they can for two reasons. One is that excessive heat kills the unprotected young as well as cold. Another is that the menhaden fishing is better up the coast than down. Any fish is good enough for the palate of the adult pelican, but for some reason the birds prefer to feed their young almost entirely on menhaden.

In October the breeding impulse comes to these East Coast birds and the stubby, brown mane grows along the backs of their long necks. Then they collect together in flocks of hundreds, up and down the coast, and begin to draw in toward the
SEVEN THOUSAND PELICANS

old home spot. Not, however, until all the clan has gathered do they bear down upon the island and take possession, coming in a multitude in the night as our Northern migrants come to their breeding places. Thus the night herons which winter in this region come to their rookeries in the Massachusetts cedar swamps. On a day early last November there were no pelicans on Pelican Island. On another day the warden whose ceaseless vigilance protects these birds during the nesting season from the depredations of mankind estimated that there were seven thousand there. But not all these pelicans were in breeding plumage or were there to breed. At the close of old home week the white-necked birds seem in the main to have departed, probably to take up the lightsome joys of bachelor existence like my friend in the cove. The others began nest building and placed some fifteen hundred nests on the three acre island. Then indeed began a carnival of Pelican growing which lasts each year until late June has brought the longest days, before the last young bird is full grown and the island is once more deserted. In fact, last year, though the breeding was finished by the usual time, the birds did not wholly leave the island and its vicinity the year through, but hung about in considerable numbers.

Pelican Island lies so low that an extra high tide works havoc among the nests, which are of
necessity placed on the ground. There is one mangrove tree on all the island now, though it once was covered. The weight of nests and roosting birds seem to have combined, perhaps with other causes, to kill them out. The former habit of the pelicans was to build entirely in trees. Now, rather than leave their beloved island, they have become ground builders. Seen in the distance as the boat draws rapidly nearer, this island seems to be covered with a vast collection of gray driftwood, so close together are the brooding birds. I have seen driftwood-covered low islets on the Alaskan coast of Bering Sea which looked very like it. Again as you come nearer the semblance changes, fifteen hundred white pelican polls lifted high on long necks to see what is coming give it the appearance of a field of daisies.

The time was when these pelicans that brood three thousand young birds in all stages from fresh-laid eggs to youngsters that can fly and are as big as their parents, could gauge exactly the distance at which a shotgun will kill. In those days, before the Department of Agriculture made this tiny islet a Government reservation, and through the efforts of the Audubon Society Warden Kroegel had been made its guardian, twelve thousand feet spread of pelican wings were in the air at shooting distance every time a boat approached. But pelicans are canny birds and they
"The others began nest building and placed some fifteen hundred nests on the three-acre island"
have now learned to sit tight. They simply lift their heads high, draw their feet up under them so as to be ready for a spring if need be, and look at you with all the vast dignity of which the bird is capable. The lightsome frivolity of my white-necked pelican down in the little cove is not for this place. Nor is there any look of real alarm in their wise and solemn old faces as I step out of the boat and walk slowly up among them.

A sudden motion will startle them into flight, but moving slowly enough one may approach almost within poking distance of the birds before they lift into the air and sail away. Truly it is an astonishing sight. On the higher parts of the little island, one great grass nest almost touches the next and there is hardly room for the brooding birds to take flight at the same time without rapping one another with their great wings. After a moment the general current of the life of the island goes on undisturbed by the presence of an undemonstrative visitor. Birds come and go, lifting their great, overbalanced bodies into the air with incredible ease and flapping away, sailing in from the distance and dropping with lifted wings to the desired spot.

The two birds alternate in seeking food and sitting upon the nest and seem to share equally in all care of the young. The ceremony of nest relief is sometimes a most curious thing. The ap-
proaching bird lights near the nest, points his bill high in air and draws nearer, wagging his head most comically from side to side. Thereupon the sitting bird sticks a long bill down into the nest, twitches half-raised wings nervously and croaks a hoarse word or two which might well be a complaint of weariness and cramps from long waiting. Then the two pause for a second and the sitting bird steps down off the nest in most unconcerned fashion, waddles a step or two, lifts into the air and is gone, probably to get a much needed menhaden dinner. The other bird then climbs up on the nest and takes up the labor of incubation or brooding. It is only after the chicks have grown the white down which precedes the real feathers that they are left alone by the parents. There are many reasons for this. If the weather is cool they die of exposure to the cold; if it is hot the sun is equally fatal. But there is more to fear than this. Young pelicans after a certain stage of growth step down out of the nest and prowl about a bit between meals. Full-grown young have a way of gobbling up the newborn if unprotected by the presence of the mother.

In fact, the infant mortality on Pelican Island, even under its present halcyon condition of Government protection, is high. The pelican must be an awkward sitter. Addled eggs are to be found on the ground among the nests in considerable
numbers. When the island was clothed with the low mangrove trees nesting conditions were much safer. Then the young birds did not leave the nest until about to fly, and the newly hatched were therefore better protected from being devoured by the neighbors’ children. Moreover, the habit of wandering from the nest on the ground makes it difficult for parents to surely find their own offspring when they come back with food. Any mother with a neck full of fish is good enough for the youngsters, hence when a cargo arrives they all rush for it indiscriminately and the real offspring is lucky if he gets the luncheon. But the worst thing about the ground nesting is an occasional high tide which comes, driven by northeast winds, and floods the low portion of the island, sweeping large numbers of eggs and helpless young to disaster.

The pelican mother lays three eggs, pure white, about three inches by two in diameter, being thus slightly smaller than those of the Canadian goose. If for any reason the eggs of the young birds are destroyed another litter is laid. Perhaps the frequent destruction of eggs or nestlings in the crowded communal life of the island accounts for the prolongation of the breeding season here. The eggs hatch in about four weeks, and it takes about ten weeks more for the young to acquire full flight plumage. Three and a half months
should normally be all the time one pelican family would stay on the island. After that the young birds would roam freely to fish with their elders. But as a matter of fact, from the laying of the first egg on the island to the departure of the last young bird is nearer seven months than three and a half. Of the seven thousand pelicans which come to the island at the beginning of the season, but three thousand actually have young there at any one time. What becomes of the other four thousand? Do they not breed that year? These are interesting questions for the ornithologists to answer by further careful observation. It seems to me that it is likely that those birds which do not find a breeding place on the island in November return after the first brood of the more fortunate is off and occupy their places. The day that I was there, in the latter half of January, I saw a pelican carrying grass in his beak, evidently for nest building.

With the exception of that croak of recognition with which the sitting bird greets its relieving mate, the adult pelican is as silent as the severe dignity of the bird in repose would seem to warrant. With the young it is another matter. Pelican Island is anything but a silent place during the breeding season. Croaks, cries and squawks come from the young birds, at times rising to a considerable din. The young bird just pushing
A little group of half-grown young pelicans on the edge of Pelican Island
his beak through the shell does it with a grunt. The black, blind nestlings croak and the larger the bird the shriller his voice and the louder. To approach a nest when the old bird is off is to be immediately greeted by harsh cries on the part of the young birds there. Pointing my finger closely at one of these youngsters, a downy chick of some weeks’ growth, with a growing bill and a pouch already showing beneath it, I was somewhat surprised to be greeted with a peace offering of a six-inch menhaden which the bird produced from some unfathomed depth of his anatomy, held for a lingering moment lothly in his beak and then laid at my feet. Probably he thought me an overgrown youngster of ravening tendencies and he preferred to give his fish rather than himself.

At nightfall soft winds from the sea blow the crimson sunset up over the little island and hang it in gorgeous tapestry all along a pearl-blue, western sky. Through this gorgeous glow the last pelicans sail silently home. The hoarse cries of the feeding young sound through the rapidly growing dusk, the old birds bathe in the river still crimson with reflections of the passing sunset glory, and then silence broods over the brooding thousands. The young are warm and snug between the mother bird and the nest, and the old birds sleep with head tucked under wing.
CHAPTER XIII

JUST FISHING

I have now decided that I will not live for the remainder of my days in the country between Okeechobee and the sea. I had thought it a place peculiarly fitted for the abode of mankind, but I have learned better. It is lacking in one product very necessary to the welfare of humanity; that is, a proper growth for fishing poles. Think of it! Hundreds of square miles of wilderness and not a fishing pole fit to be cut in the whole of it; and this with rivers that teem with fish that easily put the Maine lakes to the blush. The tree growth of the barrens and the savannas is pitch pine and palmetto. By the time the pitch pine is nine feet tall it has a trunk three inches in diameter, more or less. Even by cutting this and shaving it down you could not make a fishing pole.

The palmetto is even more absurd. When a palmetto tree really starts from the ground its trunk is of its greatest diameter, say almost a foot. As the tree grows taller this remains about
the same except that the "boots," which are the bases of the clasping leaf stems, remain for a time, bracketing the tree all about with a sort of network trellis, which is ideal for all climbing things. After years these fall off and leave a clean, barkless trunk eight or ten inches in diameter and perhaps fifty feet tall. Where the growth is close some run much higher than this, and I have seen smooth, round, gray boles seventy or eighty feet from roots to feather-duster tops. As the tree grows older this trunk instead of enlarging grows thinner, wearing away with wind and weather, till the oldest trunks are but thin, gray bones that sometime get too frail to support the superstructure. Then comes a wind in the forest and the palmetto's life work is finished.

Fancy hunting in groves like that for a proper fishing pole! Bamboo, which makes—I acknowledge it grudgingly—about as good a pole as birch, may be planted here and will thrive, but few people have so far had the wisdom to set out bamboo groves. Lacking the culture of fishing poles by thus setting out bamboo the "Cracker" may indeed cut something which will serve in the hardwood swamps along the river banks. Here the maple will give him a heavy, stubby pole, which is better than none, or he may cut one from the soft, white growth of swamp ash. This is better. But the swamp ash seems to have a poor
memory for direction. It starts out growing nobly toward the zenith, but by the second or third year it gets a new slant, say southwest. Next year this is changed, to southeast, then northeast, then west, all this while pushing diligently upward from the root. The result is that by the time a swamp ash is big enough to cut for a fishing pole, it turns at so many angles that it takes a very capable man to tell which side of the river he is on when he fishes with it.

However, there is almost always someone in a Florida community who has a real bamboo pole, and as Florida people along the little rivers are the most kindly and generous of any I have ever met, it is not difficult to arrange the matter of the pole.

The man who can find an angleworm in all Florida is an abler man than I am. The angleworm lives in loam. In Florida the soil is made up of two ingredients, sharp sand and a peaty black substance which is decayed vegetable matter. Of just plain, honest loam there seems to be a sad lack. Hence the lack also of angleworms. Any such, trying to bore through the soil here, would be actually sandpapered out of existence. So the fisherman must turn to other sources for bait, and fortunately there is no lack.

The straw bass, otherwise known as the large-mouthed black bass, is an inhabitant of North
America. In the wilds of northern Canada, clear up on the sources of the Red River of the North, you will find him, and he occupies the fresh water stretches of the little rivers of southern Florida, as well. North or South he is most pleasantly edible, and most wonderfully prolific. In this region he grows to an ultimate weight of fifteen pounds, though that size is rare. Here, too, the straw bass provide both bait and fish. In the high waters of June they spawn in all the little sandy-bottomed "branches" that lead off the river, and by Christmas the young from a half inch to three inches in length fairly swarm in the shallow places near where they were spawned. More than this, the high water of September has carried their schools in countless millions high upon the savanna and when the winter brings drought these are stranded, collected in tiny pools everywhere. A scoop net and a pail are all you need. The cracker gets them with a piece of bagging roughly sewed on a barrel hoop. With this he scoops up the bottom of the pool, fish, mud, leaves, lizards and all else, sorting his needs from the agglomeration at his leisure by the pool side. After all with a pail full of such good bait, with a bamboo pole cheerfully borrowed, one is but a prig to regret angleworms and birch woods.

To a man from the New England pastures, brought up on the good old pole and bait system
of fishing, the dark pools of the lagoons that border the upper reaches of the St. Lucie are full of mystery. When he drops the wriggling bait into their depths he little knows what he may pull up. The river itself has two currents even almost up to its source, one upstream, the other down. One comes from the reserve of rainfall in a thousand pools of the inland savanna, the other from the sea. Up with the full tide come sometimes the tarpon, rolling silvery bodies in the dark water till it gleams with moonlight reflections. Now and then a manatee, rare indeed nowadays, lifts a human-like face above its surface, then sinks again to browse on the weeds of the bottom. Here swims the black jewfish, never found under a hundred pounds in weight and running from that to five hundred. Up the river runs the cavalla, a mighty fighter that reaches a hundred pounds in weight and makes the most marvelous leaps when trying to escape the hook. Here in the depths or on the surface the alligator hunts, not at all particular as to what he gets to eat, provided he gets it. The alligator's habit seems to be to masticate first and investigate at leisure.

All these things one may catch at one time or another when fishing in Florida rivers. Down on the Indian River the other day mullet fishermen found a manatee securely entangled in their net, hauled it ashore and photographed it, then
“Up with the full tide come sometimes the tarpon, rolling silvery bodies in the dark water”
released the frightened creature as the law requires. A cracker neighbor of mine down river who sets trawls gets all sorts of pleasant surprises when he goes to draw in his lines. The other morning he found the river full of a most extraordinary commotion, a veritable dragon hissing and roaring and lashing its brown water into foam. Several shots with a rifle quieted the beast, which turned out to be a six-foot alligator. A fish had swallowed the hook, then the alligator had swallowed the fish, sometime during the night, and had been keeping the river in uproar ever since, not because he had a hook in his stomach—an alligator will swallow hardware, stove wood, or anything else—but because he could not get away to meet an engagement elsewhere.

Somewhat mindful of these things I sought for my first fishing spot a secluded bayou. Here I should be safe from dragons and here in the deep pools the bass congregate in the cool weather of late January. Here where the black water moves sedately along under the tender green of new willow leaves I drop my bait and watch my bob. In just such a spot fifteen hundred miles to the northward I have caught many a fish. Even the green of the willow is the same, nor is the willow itself of a strange variety. It is, I am confident, *Salix nigra*, the black willow or the brittle willow,
easily recognized by various characteristics, one being the exceeding brittleness of its small twigs. The light sweep of a hand will bare a branch. Beyond the willow is the deep carnelian red of maple keys and there are young leaves on the soft-wooded swamp ash trees all about. Yet there is this difference. In the North the leaves on an ash tree come forward in stately march, in full company front, one twig no whit behind another. Here they are out of step, some twigs having just broken bud, others being clothed with half-grown leaves. Perpetual sunshine has made the ash unpunctual.

With these things, however, all semblance to a Northern fishing pool ceases. I look past my floating bob into the depths and find there reflected the palms that top the wood with gray trunks and spreading frond-like leaves. The crooked ash shrubs hold air plants at every angle, each now sending up a stiff, rose-purple spike of bloom. On the opposite bank from the green willow grows a clump of the huge *Achrostichum aureum*, a Florida fern taller than myself, its tropic effect entirely dwarfing the *Osmunda regalis* and *Osmunda cinnamomea*, both of which line fishing pools North and seek the same locations down here. With these grow the linear leaves and white odorous blooms of the crinum, which is of the amaryllis family but whose blos-
soms have all the effect of a stalk of Easter lilies. These are springing into bloom all about, now, and soon the river will be lined with them.

But what is this? The bob is most placidly and gently bobbing. Here is a bite almost like that of a Massachusetts eel. Something is taking the bait with an almost painful solemnity. It goes down a little and then a little more and finally I lift, inquiringly, and find a fish on the hook. It is a lively fish, too, once he feels the bite of the barb and struggles gamely but vainly as I lift him out. A bass! Only a little fellow, half to three-quarters of a pound, but who ever heard of a bass taking bait thus placidly? Up in a Massachusetts lake that I know the large-mouthed bass take a bait with a rush that carries everything before it. They whirl beneath the water and leap above it, shaking their heads to throw from the mouth the thing that hurts them. Surely Southern languor has gotten into the bones of the bass. Another comes to the hook in the same peaceful way and I land him. Then there is a lull. A wind out of the south blows up river and brings me the odor of palmetto blooms. I always think of loquats when I first smell this. It seems to be the same odor only not so strong, thinned out seemingly by distance. The palmetto blossom is not obtrusive. Its flower stalk springs from among the leaves and does not lift above them. The blooms are
tiny and yellowish white. I speak of the loquat as having the same odor, but Southern people always say it reminds them of the Madeira vine.

Following the odor of the palmetto blooms come two butterflies, both common to the North and the South, one a monarch, the other the tiger swallowtail, *Papilio turnus*. The turnus circles the pool and finally lights on the willow blooms across the stream. I watch him with some eagerness, for the blue of his after wings, instead of being confined to a single spot, is spread out into a cerulean border which is of singular beauty. All other markings are those of the turnus, but this is new to me, and while I am wondering whether this is merely an aberrant form or a variety of *Papilio* unknown to me, I feel a lively tugging at my line. I look down at the bob and laugh in glee. Here is an old friend I am confident. Only a sunfish bites thus with a bold bobbing that will not be denied. I pull him out and find I am right.

"But when Hiawatha saw him
Slowly rising through the water,
Lifting up his disk refulgent,
Loud he shouted in derision,
'Esá! esá! shame upon you,
You are Ugudwash the sunfish;
You are not the fish I wanted,
You are not the king of fishes.'"

True indeed; the sunfish is no king of fishes, but his bite, compared with that of the Florida
"A manatee, rare indeed nowadays."
straw bass, is kingly indeed. And, as a matter of fact, properly pan broiled the sunfish of the Florida lagoons is the equal if not the superior to the lazy bass.

The bass seem to occupy the depths of the pool, the sunfishes the shallower edges. These I soon fish out, but while I am doing it I happen to look at the center of the pool and see rise from below a fine big fish. My! but he must weigh five pounds. He sticks his nose just above the surface and scuttles below again. Him surely I must have. I sink deep and drop the bait low in the middle of the pool. Something bobs the float gently once or twice, then it sinks steadily and when I stop it I am sure the big fellow is on. I pull valiantly and so does he, but my muscle prevails and soon I swing him in onto the ground. This is a new fish to me, a well-built, fine-looking chap with a long back fin that nearly includes his tail. He certainly weighs several pounds and I am proud of him. I speculate as to his proper name, and finally conclude he must be a sea trout. Another bite in the deep hole and I swing to a good weight again. This time it is a three-pound catfish. Then there comes another lull.

Nightfall comes rapidly when you are fishing. Before I know it the sky is crimsoning for the sunset and up and down the river the wood ducks begin to fly in flocks of three to ten crying plain-
tively, "Oo—eek, oo—eek." My pool seems fished out and I begin to move on restlessly, trying new spots. In one of these I get a sudden rush of a bite, such as should come from a husky Northern bass and pull out a pickerel-like fish with scales like those of a snake and a long pointed snout set with bristling teeth. That is the last. I put him on the slender string with the others and plod along toward home in the crimson glory. Out of a drainage ditch I startle a half dozen killdeer plover and they dash madly away, screaming their lonely, querulous note. Every ditch has its killdeers and I suspect them of feeding on the young bass which I use for bait. By and by I am on the road again and as I pass a house set among pineapple and orange groves with its little patch of ladyfinger bananas behind it, some lively urchins cease their play to gaze rather critically at my string of fish.

"What do you call this one?" I ask, exhibiting my several pound "sea trout," with carefully concealed pride.

"That one?" comes the reply with undisguised scorn, "that's no good. That's a mudfish. Some folks eat 'em."

They all looked at me to see if I was of the "some folks" sort that would eat a mudfish and I hastened to disclaim any such intention.
“Nobody eats catfish, either,” went on my informant.

“And this one; what’s this?” I hazarded, exhibiting the long-snouted, piratical, pickerel-like one.

“That’s a garfish,” they replied in chorus, “that’s no good either.”

As I went on up the road I heard them snickering among themselves, though they had been politely solemn to my face.

“Huh!” said one. “He didn’t even know what a garfish was.”

But then, like all the local fishermen they called the wide-mouthed bass “trout.” Knowledge is no one person’s monopoly, anyway.
CHAPTER XIV

PALMETTOS OF THE ST. LUCIE

The cattle men, whose wealth is in range cattle, roaming at will, take advantage of the dry weather of winter to set the world afire. Hence a soft, blue haze all about that makes the wide spaces between trees misty and uncertain and puts vague touches of romance on all distances. By day a cloudy pillar shows where this fire has got into thick, young growths of pines and is towering heavenward in pitchy smoke. By night the level distance is weird with flickering light, and the wanderer is guided by a moving column of flame as were the Israelites of old.

After these moving lines of fire have passed, the flame often lingers for days in stumps of the pine, eating away at the fat wood which is solid and green with resin. A chip off a dead stump of a Florida pine will burn at the touch of a match. All over the flatwoods are these stumps, often standing fifty feet high and a foot or two in diameter. The bark has fallen, leaving them to personate thin ghosts in the vivid light of moon-
flooded nights. The sap wood of these trees softens with decay after a while, but the heart stands firm for unlimited years. The Florida farmers, who must fence their farms from the range cattle if they wish to keep them, use this heartwood for fence posts and it is fabled to last in the ground a century. When the fires of the cattle men have burned over the ground, leaving nothing behind but ashes and the blackened trunks of scrub palmettos which look like scaly dragons, charred and writhing because of the fire, the sap wood of the standing pine trunks holds the flame and it winds spirally about the hard center night after night, till it flutters like a bird from the topmost pinnacle and vanishes toward the stars. Of windy nights you may see these crimson flocks fluttering and taking wing. By day the black heart wood of the stub still stands, charred, but erect and firm as ever.

Very different is it with the sabal palmettos whose cabbage heads tower often as high as the pines, but whose roots are in the moister soil. The fire may run up these if they have not lost the "boots" as the clasping petioles of their great leaves are called, but it does nothing more than slightly blacken the real trunk. The palmetto decays differently from the pine. When it lies rotting in the forest it is the outer husk which is solid after years; the inner part decays and leaves
a hollow which is an easy refuge for wild things. In the palmetto trunk the coon finds safety and the opossum curls up by day, waiting for his nightly raiding time to come. The cotton-tailed rabbit, however, does not affect the interior of the palmetto stub. For a siesta after foraging he tramps out a little grassy apartment among the scrub palmettos. Usually this is entered by the top, the rabbit hopping down into it when arriving and hopping out with nervous haste and white tail high in air when I happen upon him.

When he comes to hollow palmetto logs, I suspect br'er rabbit of passing with a shudder, not because of opossums or raccoons, or foxes or polecats, all of which might rush out on him from such places, and all of which eat him. But the rabbit has little real fear of these. He can escape from them too readily. There is another occasional occupant of the hollow palmetto, however, for whom br'er rabbit has much horror, and I confess to similar feelings when I chance upon him suddenly. That is the gopher snake. Not that I have any real excuse for this feeling, for the gopher snake is not only perfectly harmless to all creatures except those that he swallows whole, but he is one of the handsomest snakes known. His main color is an intense indigo blue, so deep that it is a blue black, whence another common name, the indigo snake. His entire scalation is as
“Sabal palmettos whose cabbage heads tower often as high as the pines”
polished as glass and his length reaches sometimes nine feet.

One that I know lives by the roadside down near the river and I can find him there almost any sunny day that I go along. He cast his skin some days ago and came out the most striking snake I have ever seen. His blue-black back shone like glass, his under parts showed all the prismatic colors on the plates of the abdomen, where he looked like burnished metal, while his chin, throat and two streaks on each side of the head were a rich red. The road near his favorite sunning spot has been corduroyed with palmetto trunks, and when I approach too near, say within two or three feet, he slips forward with an easy, gliding motion and goes into a hollow trunk, usually turning round within and putting a foot or two of his head and neck out again to see what is going on. He is not at all afraid and shows neither nervousness nor anger as he glides away. In fact, I am the one that is nervous. I am convinced that Adam was my ancestor. It was Eve that hobnobbed with the serpent. I can see Adam having cold chills and stepping lively for a big stick.

The gopher is really in a limited way a household pet of the region. He is a mighty hunter of rats, and in consequence is welcomed about barns and outbuildings and even sometimes invades the loosely built houses in his vocation. He yields
readily to friendly advances and in captivity is a gentle pet.

To really see palmettos you will do well to explore the St. Lucie River. Incidentally you will see a river whose tropical beauty exceeds that of the famed Tomoka, and, I believe, any other river in Florida. I think the St. Lucie originally intended to be straightforward, but it does it by a most amazing series of windings and crooks. Within a half-mile you will face all points of the compass on this bewildering, bewitching river, nor may you be sure by the current which way you are going. So slight is the fall between source and mouth that the salt sea which floods in through the Indian River gets tangled in the crooks of the St. Lucie and goes on and on to within a few miles of the source before its force is entirely spent. Then only does it allow the water from the savanna springs to go downward to the sea.

Twenty miles up come the mangroves, their seeds floating on the brimming tides and germinating within the husk, to find root eventually along the shores and grow new shrubs with ovate, shiny leaves. At high tide the mangroves remind me of the alders which fringe the ponds and streams at home. At low tide to see them from the river is to be astonished at their forests of inch-thick waterpipe roots, dropping in parallel lines, perpendicularly from their butts into the
brackish water. Higher than the mangroves grow the soft, swamp ash trees, holding the ground in the river-carved swamps sometimes to the seclusion of other trees. The wood of these trees is very soft, white and brittle and the trunks are never large, six inches being a good diameter. Soon, too, they become hollow and the crooked, leaning trees rot and fall to the ground bringing with them great stores of air plants that grow, pineapple-like, along their trunks from base to tip. With the tender green of the young ash leaves come the blossoms of these air plants, giving the angular, awkward trees the appearance of putting out tropic spikes of purple-stemmed, blue-flowered beauty.

Here and there the live-oaks, never very numerous in this region, show dark green on the higher banks. The live-oak is the symbol of stability and even virility, if you please, but it is at the best somber and glum. It drops its leaves grudgingly, one by one, putting out its new ones in the same way, thus always retaining its cloth of dark green. In October it was hard to distinguish the difference between the live-oaks and the water-oaks. Both seemed somber and dour. Not long ago the water-oaks went bare in evidence that winter was here. But now you should see them! First they showed a misty, sage green with tender lights in it. The sun of another day
lighted this up with a nascent bronze that was full of soft withdrawals and tender shynesses, and the wee leaves grew hourly broader with a surge of gentle green through the short petioles, suffusing the whole tree with a tender, translucent beauty, as endearing as that of a Massachusetts May. Here in southern Florida winter is but a word that is not quite spoken, but spring comes very really, though not as it does in the North. There it rises like an all-pervading tide. Here it wells forth in spots as if the fountain Ponce de Leon sought bubbled at intervals, here and there. Spring in the North is a symphony; here it is a fugue.

Along the St. Lucie grow maples all richly salmon red with young leaves and winged fruit. Willows are gray-green, too, and the sweet gum is a milky way of green stars with the divergent points of its new leaves. Here are creepers, lithe as snakes that climb from the muddy shores to the tops of the highest trees and swing down again, trailing tips in the water. In the dusk of the swamps the white blooms of the crinum glow like stars that are reflected in the black water.

But with all this luxuriance of other growing things the tree that dominates the St. Lucie is the palmetto. It grows from the black muck of the swamp, where the slow tides swirl sedately around its roots, and it towers from the highest
bank where the live-oak roots grip the sand with tenacity that holds it even against the undermining effect of the spring floods. Where the floods have had their way it leans far out over the water, or even drops into it, the long, straight trunk a famous climbing place for foot-wide turtles that come out to sun themselves and sit in solemn, silent rows with their heads tipped back so that the warmth may strike their throats. These plunge beneath the surface with much splashing as you pass, then secretly and silently paddle back and crawl out after a while. If the current did not cut the banks and let the palmettos fall the big turtles would have hard work to get their share of the spring sunshine. Often a water-oak leans far out over the water in this way, a favorite roosting place for the water turkeys.

The water turkey reminds me of a crow that has had his neck pulled. He is rather rare, of a not very numerous family, the anhingidæ or darters, there being only four species in the world. The bird is the funniest thing on the river. Its glossy crow-black is touched with white, and in some specimens this change begins at the shoulders and makes the whole neck look as if plucked. The anhinga dives like a loon and lives on fish, though how it gets them down that preposterously thin neck I cannot explain. It is some-
times called snake-bird, and perhaps the neck stretches for deglutition as does a snake’s. Often as I paddle up to one, pointing his slim, serrate-toothed, sharp-pointed bill this way and that, as if trying to poke holes in the atmosphere through which to escape, then with a tremendous burst of nervous energy whirring on short wings over my head, I note a big bunch at the base of this preposterous neck, which I take to be his crop distended with nourishing fish. He is a nervous bird, and he seems to fly with a lump in his throat. Once in the air he soars prettily like a hawk, and often comes back into his tree again, slamming with scrambling haste to a perch whence he cranes his head this way and that. Sometimes the water turkey, surprised on a low limb, will go into the river with a splash that reminds me of the way a kingfisher takes a fish.

After that it is hard to see the bird again. He has a way of coming just to the surface and poking up that slim head and neck to look around while yet his body is submerged. If you do happen to see him you then realize why the name "snake-bird" has been given to him. The natives who refuse to eat the catfish from the river declare the water turkey most toothsome. After all, there is a good deal in a name. No one eats cats, but we all know turkey is delicious.

The pileated woodpeckers love the banks of the
St. Lucie, their homes in the holes that so often look toward the river from palmetto stubs on the banks. Once seen, I do not find the bird difficult of approach. I watched one at close range the other morning for a quarter of an hour while he dug at an ash limb as if he intended to make a nest in it, but after all his grubbing was merely for breakfast food, which he pulled out and swallowed with gusto, his little slim neck and perky head reminding me of those of a guinea-fowl. I do not think Ceophlaeus pileatus a handsome bird, but he is fast becoming a rare one and just to watch a pair is a privilege.

There is nothing rare about the little green heron. He is almost as common to Massachusetts in summer as he is to Florida in winter, yet I think I would pick him for the gentle genius of the stream. On bright days this little fellow is not so easy to find. You will pass a dozen, sitting motionless and dumpy, head on breast and neck telescoped down between the shoulders, for one that you will see. He is a sweet little cherub of a bird thus, and he will keep his pose till you approach very near, knowing that immobility often means invisibility. I like to steadily intrude on him and watch his change of demeanor when he feels sure that he is watched. Gradually all dumpiness goes. His neck appears, then stretches till he will almost rival the water turkey.
Alertness grows upon him. His head cocks with a perky air and a crest rises on it. He walks, foot over foot, up his limb and finally poises there, as assertive and vigilant as a red-headed street urchin standing tiptoe behind the bat when the bases are full and the honor of the ward hangs on the next play. He reminds me of just that. But the resemblance ceases when he flies, for he just gives a flop or two, over perhaps to the next bush, then sinks into immobility again, seemingly confident that he has found safety by his flop.

But over all rare or common birds, graceful or awkward shrubs or trees, waves everywhere the benedictory grace of the palmettos. Ferns love them and climb by the brackets of their young trunks to the tops where they still grow when the trees are old and the boles are smooth to the crown of living petioles. Often the weather or some strange trick of growth has carved the upper portions of these aged trunks till the feathery fronds seem set in vases mounted in pedestals, and the ferns and air plants seem as if tucked into these by the slim fingers of some tall goddess of the woods. So across them falls the topaz splendor of the tropic sunset and as quick night glooms the river the passing sun caresses the palmettos last and leaves them, rustling gentle wildwood talk among themselves, waiting his return.
"As quick night glooms the river the passing sun caresses
the palmettos last"
CHAPTER XV

INTRUDING ON WARD'S HERONS

Ward’s heron is the Florida variety of the great blue heron, like him only more so. There is slight difference in the marking, the *Ardea wardi* having olive instead of black legs, whiter lower parts, and a somewhat darker neck. But Ward’s heron is almost a foot taller than the other, and when you see the two fly side by side you might well think the great blue heron the little blue heron, so much does this peninsular prototype dwarf his compatriot of wider range. There are Ward’s herons in the big lagoon here east of White City mornings that I am confident stand six feet in height. Out there on marshy islands they have a superb dignity of pose, statues of frozen alertness. Taking wing they blanket the landscape with wide pinions and their legs stretch rudder-wise to a great length behind them, while their necks are doubled back on themselves till the head is hunched in between the shoulders and the protruding neck curve looks like a pouch. By this use of the neck you will know them in the
distance from the sandhill cranes because the crane flies with neck fully stretched. But the sandhill crane is a foot shorter, anyway. Ward's heron rarely gets out of Florida, being found most frequently in the lower two-thirds of the State, or from Alachua County down.

It was by way of the sandhill cranes that I came to the heron rookery. They have a way of setting up a most prodigious cackling, a sonorous croaking call that outdoes all the barnyard fowls in St. Lucie County. It is quite like the barnyard, too, a cutdarkuting as of husky Plymouth Rock hens that have laid eggs and are proud of it. It carries far. The first time I heard it I hastened cautiously a mile or two through the flat-woods, expecting every minute to come onto the birds. But after I had made my mile or two the birds took flight, writing black Greek letters along the horizon. Most often in the dawn I heard them over toward the big lagoon and traced the sound there to its most conspicuous landmark. This is a tiny island, holding a score or two of cabbage palmettos flanked with odorous myrtles, these in turn standing in a jungle of ferns, osmundas in the main, a picturesquely beautiful spot, standing in the middle of this big, shallow lagoon that stretches thirty miles, north and south, flanking the pineapple-clad ridge from Fort Pierce down.

To this shore in the gray of dawn the sound
"A superb dignity of pose, statues of frozen alertness"
led me and then vanished with all evidence, the croaking cranes having slipped away on silent wings. I stopped a moment to admire the sunrise. It was a clear, winter morning, cool for Florida, and dawn had tumbled suddenly out of a cloudless sky, upon a flat land. It was too cold for the usual morning mists and there was nothing to restrain the light. It was daybreak all in a moment. Yet, after all, there was a good space of time between the dawn and the sunrise, a time in which all the sky in the east grew golden and then crimson. The island was two islands, one under the other with half the palms pointing directly toward the nadir. Lagoons within the lagoon reflected the pellucid blue of the high sky and the crimson gold of the eastern horizon, seven-foot saw grass dividing them with its dense tangle. Out of this saw grass came the clucking of coot as the flocks began to bestir themselves. Then there was a great chorus of musical chuckles and a great cloud of witnesses to the joy of living arose. The coot spend the night in the water in the little pools among the saw grass, but the grass tops are full of blackbirds all night long.

With the chorus out they came, a thousand red-wings flying jubilantly overhead to their feeding grounds. Behind me in the palmetto scrub there was further rustle of wings and todo of waking.
birds. I turned to see what was there and a wave of warmth struck my back and swept by me. I knew by that that the sun had popped up over the pineapple ridge to eastward and the day had fairly begun, but I waited, still watching the palmetto scrub that here grew in dense shrubbery, three feet high. Out of it came a cock robin, swinging so near me that he shied with a little nervous shriek of dismay. At the word the palmetto began to spout robins, singly and in flocks, filling the air with their fluttering and their good morning cries till the eruption had lasted for several minutes and I do not know how many hundred birds had taken wing. In this region the robins, still lingering on the fifteenth of February as if they knew of the snow and zero weather North, keep together in flocks, often of hundreds if not thousands of birds. Moreover, they roost together, always on or near the ground amongst the scrub palmettos, though why there instead of the pines or the tall palmettos I do not know. So with the blackbirds, redwing and rusty, crow blackbird and Florida grackle, all seem to roost low together in the great beds of saw grass out in the lonely lagoon.

Turning back to the east, I found the lagoon a flood of crimson glory with my palm-topped island swimming in it, all rimmed with fire, for the sun was just behind the dense trees whose
feathery fronds seemed just crisping with its flame. And then I looked again, carefully, and took the bird glass from my pocket and focused that on the tree tops as best I might against the crimson glow, for there above the fronded palms stretched a half-dozen or so of long necks with big, keen-pointed beaks set on small heads that topped the necks at right angles. Standing in the palm tops, or perhaps sitting there, were a dozen great Ward’s herons. I watched them for some time in their comings and goings, and soon made up my mind that there were many nests there.

I had stumbled upon a Ward’s heron rookery and was greatly pleased. Yet so far the stumble was a long-distance one. The island was an eighth of a mile away, and though there are boats on the lagoon, the saw grass grows so dense and divides portions of it off from other portions so definitely and finally, that none were available. You cannot penetrate the saw grass with a boat. I tried wading in it out toward my island, for the lagoon is nowhere deep except in the alligator holes, but only a pretty desperate man would make his way far in the saw grass. The herons flew croaking to and fro to their nests, but I had to be content to watch them with the bird glass.

Some days later I had built a tiny canoe of cotton drilling, stretched over palmetto-stalk ribs,
and painted. The adventures of this wee coracle, going to the lagoon, on the lagoon, and coming from the lagoon were humorously grotesque and exciting, but they have no part in this story. It is sufficient to say that it floated like a bird — too much like a bird sometimes — and that after due study and persistence, I reached the island in it a morning about a week after the discovery of it. I was right. The palmetto tops were full of the nests of Ward’s heron.

The island itself was a gem of palm-topped green in the clear water of the lagoon. Along its edges sedges and bulrushes grew from the water, and as the ground rose one came upon a grove of the lovely olive-colored myrtle, the spicebush of the South. Among these myrtles growing almost breast high were the Osmunda ferns, regalis mostly, so thick that they made progress slow. Beneath the palmettos was a noisy debris of fallen leaves, that rattled and crunched under foot, reminding one of walking through Northern woods in winter when there is a crust on the snow. It was not until I struck this pseudo snow crust that the herons took alarm. Then there was a crashing in the tree tops as great wings flapped against the broad, stiff leaves of the palms and the birds took flight with harsh croaks, circling about till I was reminded of the harpies in the Æneid. Some flapped off to the mainland, others lighted
A little blue heron and her nest, the commonest Florida heron
in the marsh shallows near by and froze there. It is surprising how immediately a big heron, thus motionless, becomes but an inanimate part of the landscape and escapes notice. Never before had I seen the big birds so near, every mark and feather of their noble forms being brought to close range by the glass. A most striking feature was the long, drooping, graceful plume which grew from the back of the head, a mark of the breeding season.

I found young birds in various stages of growth, from those almost grown which took wing when too closely approached, to little chaps that peeped beseechingly when the old birds came sailing back, evidently expecting to be fed. There were other nests in which I could see no young birds which seemed to be in good condition and which I thought contained eggs. But how was I to prove this? I might "shin" one of the smooth, straight trunks if it were like that of a Northern tree. But shinning a palmetto is another matter. The endogenous fiber crumbles on the outside, as to the weather-worn pith, but leaves the trunk beset with tiny splinters that fill whatever rubs too intimately against them. I might climb one of these palmetto trunks in that way if I had to; in fact, a morning or two later—but of that anon. I decided that one tall palm dominated a series of nests and if I could perch
among its fronds I would be able to make intimate study of what goes on in heron land. I circumnavigated the island and crossed it from side to side, finding there nothing to alarm but much to interest.

Some days later I came back, equipped to go to the top of my selected palm. It was a different sort of a morning. All the day before the wind had blown from the south and the sun had shone fervently in on a land that lay sweltering in warmth under a midsummer-like temperature. The weather which had been like that of the finest October became like that of the finest July. A myriad insects, before silent, found a voice as evening came on and the night, so full of genial warmth, thrilled with their gentle calls. Frog voices came from the little ponds in the savanna on the way down to the big lagoon, and that chill which comes with a windless dawn even was not great enough to silence them. Only the day-break put out the lights of the big fireflies whose yellow-green, fairy lamps had glowed and paled all night long among the grasses and bushes of the roadside. Something of the fervor of the tropics had come upon the land.

I ought to have realized what other life this genial warmth was likely to bring out, especially on the little island, the one dry refuge in miles of wild lagoon, but a month of cold weather had
lulled me into forgetfulness of what every man who tramps the wilds of southern Florida must not forget. So I landed right eagerly and marched up under the palmettos with an armful of short, stout slats, a pocket full of nails, a hammer and a small saw. I would nail the slats, ladderwise, one above another up the trunk of my chosen palmetto, saw an entrance to the very center of the branching fronds at its top, and there I should sit, the very head of the palmetto cabbage, in a bower of green, watching my neighbors in a score or so of nests a little below me. I submit that it was a proper scheme, and the only reason why it was not carried out to immediate success was that I had not reckoned on the tenants of the lower flat.

Upstairs everything was all right. The herons flapped away with croaking dismay as I came beneath their trees. I could see the long necks of some of the half-mature birds stretched upward from the nests of slender crossed reeds and sticks, and I glanced from them to the ground beneath the selected palmetto as I strode over brittle rubbish of their dead leaves and brush and royal ferns. And then I stopped with one foot in the air and a little whoop of dismay and utter terror of what was about to happen, for there beneath my selected palm, almost beneath my raised foot, was the body of a great snake. His head and tail
were both hidden by the fallen palmetto leaves, but I knew he could not be less than seven feet long by his thickness, which was several inches. I doubt if I could have much more than spanned him with my two hands at any part of his visible length, about five feet, as he stretched from palm to palm.

However, I did not try any such test. I was content to gaze at him with bulging eyes and watch him, in breathless silence, for fear he might make the first move. Nor was this study reassuring. It began with hopes that he might be merely one of the harmless big south Florida snakes. Some of these are found eight feet long and proportionately big round, and are looked upon with friendly favor by people who know them best, because they not only eat rats and other vermin but are fabled to kill and eat the poisonous snakes. The study ended in the conviction that here was none of these. I knew that I was looking upon a grandfather of rattlers, a diamond-back seven feet long, four inches thick, and stuffed with venom from his little wicked yellow eyes to his stubby tail. Almost any hunter of this region will show you seven-foot skins. Some have dens hung with them. Here was the real thing.

In blithely entering this apartment house, bound for the upper story, I had reckoned with-
out the hosts of the lower flat. On my previous visit this present incumbent, and I knew not how many more, had been stowed, torpid, beneath the leaves for warmth. This was their weather, and they were sleeping without many bedclothes.

I reached for my shooting-coat pocket and brought out a 38-caliber revolver. I had carried this for months for just such a desperate emergency, and the sight of its gleaming barrel gave me confidence. But not when I noted the tremulous figure eights which the front sight made in the air as I tried to get a bead on mine enemy. This would not do. A miss or a wound would mean an argument for which the island was far too small, from my point of view, to say nothing of the possible reinforcements for the other fellow. I backed gingerly away with both eyes over both shoulders as well as on the snake which moved almost imperceptibly. I tiptoed round him, trying to find some vantage ground, trying to get a little less shake into the muzzle of that revolver, but it was no use. The thought of stirring him up in the midst of that tangle of dead palm leaves, royal ferns and bushes was not a pleasant one, and I tiptoed back along my trail to my canoe, which looked mighty cozy and comfortable when I got to it. This cautious retreat was wise, too. The rattler did not follow me, but on my way I passed two big cotton-mouthed moc-
casins, thick, clumsy, four feet long and stubby-tailed, and almost as venomous as the rattlesnake whose island they helped tenant. I must have stepped within a foot of these on my way in.

The island in the big lagoon is a lovely spot. Its tenants of the upper story are beautiful and most fascinating. But the folk of the lower flat! Br-r r, wur-r r, ugh!
CHAPTER XVI

ONE ROAD TO PALM BEACH

One of the Alice-in-Wonderland fruits of the pineapple ridge which lies to the westward of the Indian River is the papaw. I never see it but I expect to find the walrus and the carpenter sitting under it engaged in animated argument. Especially is this the case with one variety, imported, they tell me, from the West Indies. Here is a stalk that comes up out of the ground as a milkweed might, green and succulent till it overtops a man's head, spreading from this single stem somewhat milkweed-like leaves from four to eight inches long. Nodding from the axils of these leaves come the flowers, followed by the fruit which is the grotesque climax of the whole, for here, stuck close on this succulent, head-high stem, is a muskmelon, or something just as good, so far as appearance goes.

The thick, green rind becomes yellow on ripening and even when you twist the fruit off and hold it in your hand the muskmelon thought remains uppermost. You may taste this gooblin-
land muskmelon if you will and still not entirely lose the idea, though it is to me something like eating a muskmelon in a bad dream. There are people who say they like papaws, and that if you take them at just the right period of their ripeness and eat them muskmelon-wise with sugar and a spoon you will hardly know the difference. Such people may have all the papaws that have thus far been reserved for me.

Well out in the pine barrens, I find another shrub which is a close relative of the papaw, the custard apple. This is a wild fruit which I am quite prepared to believe is delicious, perhaps because I have never eaten it. The opossums, coons and foxes, all very fond of it, have gotten ahead of me, long ago, and since their harvesting the low-growing shrub has been but a leafless thing, not to be noticed in a world of tropic vegetation. Now creamy white blossoms have burst from the bare twigs and are sending a new fragrance all along the level barrens on the soft, summer breeze. This fragrance has in it something of orange blossoms, something of the fruity odor of the guava which is to some people unpleasant but which I declare delicious, and a wild delight of its own. It suggests things good to eat. Some perfumes give you dreams of disembodiment in heavenly spaces of pure delight. Of such are carnations and English violets, the
clethra of our Northern swamps and the wild cherokee roses of the Southern hedgerows. The odor of the custard apple blooms makes you think of banquets of delicious fruits served by pink-fleshed, round-bodied wood nymphs while amorous breezes blow soft from Southern seas.

The newborn scent of the custard apple blooms has added a zest to the joy of the morning breezes. These were sufficiently intoxicating before. Always there are odorous flowers in bloom here, and always there is the spicy fragrance of the long-leaved pines to form a basis for any delight which they may bring. The soft winds which are their messengers call you out mornings early and I do not wonder that this is never a land of the closet or the counting house. No one whose senses are set a-tremble by them can stay indoors, and once he is afoot they lead him on and on, nor does nightfall make him willing to return. Then the great white moon simply lends further enchantment to the road.

To-day this lure led me far out on the old Government trail which is now, strange to relate, one road to Palm Beach. This is one rarely traversed by the butterflies of fashion. You may see these gliding by on the Pullman limited, looking with road-weary, unseeing eyes through the thick glass of the windows. The yachts of others take them down the sparkling waters of the
Indian River, but now and then an automobile enthusiast, lured south by the good trails through Ormond and Daytona and Rockledge, then bewildered by the vast sand depths of the roads below and finally learning with sinking heart at Fort Pierce that there is no bridge across the St. Lucie nearer its mouth, swings westward into the limitless prairie and follows this old Government trail which swings out from the noise of breakers somewhere above the head waters of the St. Lucie, keeps for a dozen to a score of miles to the westward of the seacoast, and marches steadily southward to Miami. I doubt if the country along its two shallow ruts is any less wild to-day than it was in the days of Osceola. Except for those narrow ruts which you may not see two rods away man has left the region unmarked. You see there what Ponce de Leon may have seen.

A mile west of the St. Lucie you still carry the settlements with you. Here are ditches, that first requisite of Florida farming, and wire fences, which come next. Here are comfortable houses, set high on heartwood posts, and here too are groves of grapefruit trees, the great golden globes weighing the tough branches with their glossy, dark-green foliage to the ground. Here are dogs that bark and cocks that crow and all the simple, genial activities of farm life. You
A Seminole village deep in the flat woods of Southern Florida
go your mile and with the houses at your back you stand within the untamed wilderness. A mile farther and you may look which way you will and you are lost from all touch with man. But before you make the mile you will pause and turn, for there, upside down upon a tree, but with an arrow pointing due south, is a sign which says, "โอฉ ฉ" The last warning, guiding word of civilization is humorous and you plod southward into the primeval with a laugh.

After a little the spaces take you in and make you one with their fraternity. The sun and the wind spy upon you. The broad blue eye of the heavens looks you through and finds you fit. Thereafter you begin to see this barren, lonely world as it is, and find it neither barren nor lonely. The absolute level begins to show undulations, and after you have walked it a half-score of miles you may tell the hills from the valleys though the variation be but that of a half-foot in a quarter section. Here is the top of a ridge which you might need a theodolite to find if it were not that it has its own peculiar vegetation. Along this the taller pines have crept and found permanent foothold. With them have come the saw palmetto, accentuating the rise of inches by the dense green vegetation of a foot or two in height. No summer floods have long topped this ridge, else the palmettos had failed to find perma-
nent rooting here. Down its long slope they fall away, and though the pines have ventured farther than they, the water has dwarfed them at first and later left them but dead stubs a few inches in diameter and standing but a score or so of feet high.

A study of them will show you not only the swing of the land from high to low, but the swing of the seasons through wet to dry and back again. During long successions of droughty years the pines have seeded down the slope and made a small growth in the rich bottoms. Then the pendulum of annual rainfall has swung back again and a series of wet decades have followed. Through these the trees have failed in growth and died, with their roots under water. Now their bareback, white stubs stand as markers on the borders where prairie land runs into muck.

On the intervals of prairie grow the grasses, soft, brown and ripe with last year's growth, showing as yet but little of the green of this. These paint all the background of the scene with their olives and tans, as if the painter of it first made his background with grass, then set his figures and lights and shades upon this, the gray stubs, the deep brown trunks of living trees, the vivid green of the palmetto leaves and gold of sunlight and purple of shadows chasing one another over all. The high lights in all this scene
are the pools. Where the long dip of the land culminates the grasses give way to sedge and bulrush, and these to sparkling water which catches the shine of the wide sky and throws it back to the eye in silvery lights.

Such, in broad splashes of color, is the prairie through which this old Government trail winds, from the St. Lucie to Palm Beach, and on down to Miami. Always the pines are present, though seemingly always just beyond. They stand so far apart that all about you is invariably the open space, while beyond, dwindling into the distance of receding miles, the trees draw together and group in a forest that you are never to find. As you proceed it recedes, slipping away in front and closing in behind as if the trees, shy but curious, fled, then followed.

By the time you see all this the wide spaces are no longer lonely, and the individuals that inhabit them begin to step forward out of the mass and salute you. I always notice first the prairie flowers. Like the trees these are scattered here and there, the conspicuous ones in no wise as plentiful as the daisies and buttercups of Northern meadows. Scattered like big stars at twilight the heliopsis blooms show golden disks of composite flowers, veritable tiny suns in the prairie firmament, while about them revolve constellations of yellow stars of coreopsis. The
ground in moist spots is often salmon red with the plants of the sundew and starred yellow with the blooms of the tiny, land-born utricularia, while in the pools their larger, many-flowered brethren float free, touching heads almost and studding the pool as stars stud the sky on a moonless, winter night.

Only in the pools is this profusion to be found. In some of these the blue blooms of the pickerel weed crowd shoulder to shoulder, almost as close as in some Northern bogs I know. But the flowers of the drier, grassy plains are far more scattered. Indeed, one may walk a half mile sometimes and hardly see one. Again they are more numerous but never what might be called grouped.

And yet, I must needs revise that again. There are places where the moist ground is white with *Houstonia rotundifolia*, which is not so very different from *Houstonia caerulea*, the common bluet of our Northern May fields. In other spots the purple-flowered variety, *Houstonia purpurea*, is very plentiful; yet neither have I found making such solid masses of bloom as the Northern variety. Of all the varied flowers of these sky-bounded levels, however, the one that pleases me most is the Calopogon. It makes the beautiful, level wilderness more beautiful with the quaint racemes of bright purple, curiously constructed flowers.
I think the most conspicuous bird along this lone, level trail is the black vulture, which in this region seems to be more common than the turkey buzzard. It is not always easy to distinguish the two at a distance, but the vulture has shorter wings, is a heavier bird, flaps oftener in flight and the under sides of his wings are silvery.

In places where the young grass is springing beneath still growing pines I find the Florida grackle, which is hardly to be told from our Northern species, in numbers, feeding on the ground and singing and fluttering iridescent black wings in the trees. With the blackbird groups fly up flocks of a swifter, cleaner built bird, colored in the main a slaty gray. These birds have the unmistakable head of the dove, and my first thought on seeing a flock of them was that I had stumbled upon a remnant of that vanishing bird, the passenger pigeon. This was a smaller bird, however, and, nowadays, a far more common one, the mourning dove. The whistling of their wings on first starting into flight should have told me better, for the flight of the passenger pigeon is said to be noiseless.

The mourning dove is a beautiful bird, with those gentle outlines which make all birds of this species lovable, but for quaint, gentle beauty it has a rival in the ground dove which is quite as common here. These I find in the open prairie
or among the pines, but far more often in the scrub of the palmetto hammocks, where they run along the ground almost at my feet, gentle, lovable and unafraid. The bird seems to be as much like a quail as a dove as its feet twinkle over the grass. In flight it is like a picture on a Japanese screen.

But, after all is said and done, the loveliest bird I have seen in all the South, pine barrens or savannas, palmetto hammocks or village gardens, is the bluebird. Here and there these may be found all along the Palm Beach road, sitting perhaps on top of the gray bones of a dead prairie pine with the rich cinnamon red of the breast and throat turned to the sun, or dropping thence like a bit of the blue sky itself, fluttering down into the olive brown wire grass, seeming to add a more beautiful bloom to the prairie than I have yet found there. The faint carol of the bird is so slight a sound that it might well be lost in all this limitless space, but somehow it seems to carry far and is sweeter than any song of Southern bird that I have yet heard. When the bluebird goes North the savannas will have lost their finest touch of beauty and of charm.

To those who would see the real Florida I recommend this lone Palm Beach trail, not taken in the whirl of an automobile rush to safety under the wing of one of the big hotels, but slowly and
with open eyes and ears that the beauty and significance of the place may enter in. Chief of these, I fancy, and longest to be remembered will be the wide sweep of sky which there seems to bend nearer and be bigger, bluer and friendlier than in most other places. The southeast trade winds sweep across this sky all day long, and bring with a temperature of June great store of white clouds that now roll in cumulus heads and again are torn to white streamers of carded fleece. Sometimes these gather and darken and spill April-like showers for a moment, then blow over and leave the vivid sun to pour the round, inverted bowl of the sky full of the sunshine's gold. Through it all you walk as if on the pinnacle of the world with the sky very big and very near and all things friendly.
CHAPTER XVII

MOONLIGHT AND MARCH MORNINGS

To be sure, March came blustering, but it blew in out of a succession of moon-flooded nights, soft and brilliant, in which the ineffable love of the heavens for the earth was so great that the humblest might know it. The moon did not rise in distant eastern heavens beyond the limit of human ken. In the pink afterglow of the sunset it was born from the Indian River, a new golden Venus rising from the silver foam of a sapphire sea that save for the path of moon-silver was as clear as the brooding truthful sky.

For nights the trade winds were lulled and sighed in across the savannas in little whispered words of peace, whispers that were like the touch of rose petals on the cheek, as warm as the breath of a sleeping child. It was as if the fond sky leaned upon the loving shoulder of the world and was content to dream there. In this nearness and intimacy, this warmth and peace, wee creatures of the tropic night woke and sang for very joy of living. The moonlit nights of the very
last days of January had been beautiful, but silent and with a chill in them that hushed all vibrant life and one did not wonder when the morning sun glinted on hoar frost on all the long grass. There was no frost under this moon of the last days of February, only a gentle warmth and softness that seemed to woo all things to life and love. In Massachusetts we are wont to take the statement that on the fourteenth of February the birds choose their mates with a somewhat grim smile of forgiving disbelief. In Florida we know that these are days for all nature to go a wooing, and the voices that come beneath the late February moon and echo along the winds of blustering March mornings prove it true.

It is a wiser man than I that knows the source of all these songs of love that thrill through the amorous, perfumed air of night. The fragile, green beauty of the long-horned grasshoppers seems to be reflected in their night songs that differ in tone from those which they sing under the searching vigor of the Southern sun. I fancy they needs must sing differently, and that it is a physical difference rather than a change of feeling that changes their tune. The soft coolness of the nights must slack the texture of their wing cases, as damp air changes the tension of the strings of one's violin, and they seem to play a reedier, less strident tune. The Southern
cricket that vies with the long-horned grasshoppers must be larger than the Northern cricket which chirps so cozily by the October hearth, if one may judge by voices. Nor is his cry the same, though it has a resemblance. It is rounder, fuller, and has something of the tinkling resonance of a metallic instrument.

The songs that came from the grass under the full light of the February moon were those of an orchestra that sang with silver throats to an accompaniment played upon bell metal. Yet the sonorous staccato of each was so blended with the many that the whole melted into a dreamy haze of harmony that seemed merely to give a clearer expression of the moonlight of which it was a part. So when Melba sings, the exquisite harmony of the hundred quivering strings of the orchestra is but the vocal expression of the hush of the hearts that wait her voice.

There were other voices under the moon that ushered in March that made no harmony with the moonlight, but cut across it with a clear individuality of their own. The frogs that seemed some weeks ago to be playing tiny xylophones have given up the wooden bars and now play by night on pebbles which they strike together, making a quaint, penetrating shrilling which could be done on no other instruments. Where they get the pebbles, which are not to be found by man in
any part of the State which I have yet visited, I cannot say. Moonlight is rarely helpful to too literal inquiry. The sound is very musical with a fairy-like quality. It is as if elves played musical glasses in this orchestra in which the grasshoppers and crickets are masters of the stringed instruments.

Another frog voice is that of the Southern bullfrog, which might better be named pigfrog, if voices are to count. The Northern bullfrog is a hoarse-voiced toper who bellows most sonorously for his favorite liquor. "Ah-hr-u-m!" he roars. "Ah-hr-u-m!" with the accent on the rum. This is wicked, of course, but there is a rough virility about it which bends one's mind towards forgiveness. Here is Jack Falstaff roaring for sack; Falstaff, the embodiment of coarse wickedness, and yet the best-loved rogue in the whole catalogue. No such engaging roisterer is the Southern bullfrog. His voice is but a grunt out of the fairyland which the moon makes over the misty savanna with its shallow lakes gleaming with roughened silver. Cased in this silver sits the Southern bullfrog, with his nose just out, and grunting like a young razorback. The similarity is startling, or rather it is not a similarity, but the same thing.

None of these pigfrogs grunted till the full moon of late February had brought the requisite
warmth. Then, one night I heard them, and went out in search of the drove of pigs that I was convinced was rooting in the bean patch of my neighbor across the road. The bean patch was empty, and the voices lured me on, for then I thought them to be young alligators, which grunt in similar fashion. The alligator hunter when he wishes to call the big ones sits motionless in the bow of his boat, under the gleam of his bull’s-eye lantern, shuts his mouth tight, and with a peculiar motion of the throat makes a ventriloquial grunt that is much like this, the difference being that the cracker-alligator grunt is a mournful one that seems to speak of an internal pain, that of the pigfrog is a three-syllable grunt of porcine content.

No wonder I thought them young razorbacks eating beans at seven dollars a half-bushel crate. But I was wrong. It was merely the love calls of Southern bullfrogs happy in the witchery of glorious moonlight, and the full warmth of late February which was jumping joy into all vegetation and into the hearts of all wild things.

On nights like this the little screech owl likes to sit up in the palmettos by the house and sing his little murmurous, quavering song. It is hard to hear anything mournful or foreboding in this, rather it seems to voice contentment with perhaps just a note of longing when it is a call for the
mate. Sometimes this is answered, the two qualities of inquiry and reply being distinctly audible though difficult to define. I think it is the difference between the rise and fall of an inflection. Another owl voice of the full moonlight is that of the Florida barred owl.

The first sound of his "hoo, hoo, hu-hu" is a disquieting one, especially when near-by. My first hearing of it was near an unoccupied house, miles from any other, on the bank of the river. Murder had been done on the place years before and my companion had just finished telling me about it when in the deep shade of the palmettos, almost over our heads, a barred owl shouted with his weird, inquiring laugh. It came the nearest to a materialization of anything I have seen lately. Up on a stub we soon discovered this big, dark spook of a bird with human-like, big brown eyes and this disquieting laugh. Soon he sailed on bat-like wings across the river, where we heard him laughing to himself again and again in this deep, cynical tone.

Further acquaintance with the barred owl makes his voice seem less spooklike. A neighbor of mine has that rarity in southern Florida, a big fireplace with a genuine brick chimney above it. On the top of this chimney of a moonlight night a barred owl loves to sit and there hoots companionably in a subdued, almost conversational tone.
He has an eye out for the main chance, though, for if I watch him from outside while my neighbor squeaks like a rat in the big fireplace, I see him cock his head like a flash and glare down chimney with one eye, hoping to get it fixed on the cause of this invitation to dinner. So far we have not been able to get him to come down chimney after it. The voice of the barred owl is a familiar night sound at almost any time of the year in Florida, but it is particularly prevalent now that the birds are breeding.

Under such sounds and sights as these fades the full moon of February, and with March mornings comes a blustering vigor into the trade winds which blow up from the southeast full of the freshness of salt spray, driving scuds of clouds that smell of the brine torn from Bahama reefs. This has none of the rough frigidity of the Northern March wind which seems to hurl javelins through its uproar, following them with threatening words. These winds bluster words of good cheer and jovial invitation and slap your face with scent of roses pickled in fresh brine. It is as much difference as there is between galloping horses when the one bears the sheriff approaching with a warrant, the other your true love with a rose.

It has taken this bluster of winds to make some birds know that it is time to sing. We had just
The gray of dawn on the Indian River
a touch of them in late February, and after the touch had passed I heard my first mocking bird for months. Mocking birds were singing in November in the northern part of the State, but they ceased when December cold came in and I did not hear one till that March bluster started them up. This morning I had but to go out in the gray of dawn to hear golden melodies from a half dozen, sitting in tops of sapling pines among the long leaves, swelling gray throats and flirting long tails that remind me always of the pump handle in the old-time organ loft. I do not know if it is the power of good example which sets the loggerhead shrike to singing or not. He rarely gets beyond a few rather insipid notes, before he sees a grasshopper or some other defenseless creature which he needs in his collection, and which he proceeds to capture and impale on the thorn of a sprout in his favorite orange tree. The butcher bird does now and then capture a small bird and add it to this collection, but I am convinced that he is not so bad a sinner, after all. Most of his prey is insects. Looking at my own butterfly collection I have almost a fellow feeling for him.

Another great insect destroyer is the little sparrow-hawk which winters in the savannas in countless numbers. If one would see sparrow-hawks he should go to a fire. The birds do not
flock at ordinary times but may be seen singly, watching for game much as the butcher bird does. But let a wisp of smoke appear in the air and you find them sailing in on swift wings from all directions. As the fire gathers headway in the dry grass and young pine growth they sail about like bats, whirling down into dense smoke and darting back again to a perch not far from the fire, always with a fat, flying grasshopper or other insect driven to flight by the fire. These they seize in their talons in true hawk fashion and devour when perched.

How such small birds — the sparrow-hawk is only ten inches long, no bigger than a robin — manage to include as many fat grasshoppers as I have seen one pick as brands from the burning, it is hard to tell. He who shoots a sparrow-hawk shoots a bird whose main record as a destroyer of insects outweighs his sparrow killing a thousand to one. But the sparrow-hawk is hardly a morning singer, though he does sometimes pipe up "killy-killy-killy-killy," whence the name in some sections, "killy-hawk."

With the coming of the first spring month I am convinced that the northward movement of migrating birds has begun. The redwing blackbirds have already gone, so far as the migrating flocks are concerned. Yet this morning a redwing sat up on the tree-top and showed me his
handsome epaulette and sang lustily. He was a trifle smaller than the average blackbird of my northern meadow-side acquaintance and his bill seemed slenderer. Moreover on the end of his song was just an extra gleeful twist that changed "konkaree" into "konkareedle" and marked the difference between the Florida redwing who stays at home in the State, summers and brings up his children there, and the migrants who are already on the way to distant Northern swamps. In the same way I heard a robin singing for the first time. The world has been alive with robins in huge flocks that scatter during the day and regather at night for roosting. These are half way home already, perhaps just stopping off at Washington to see what is doing in conservation legislation, which is a matter of vital interest to all birds.

Yet here was a robin greeting the first day of the first spring month with the good old home song with nary a twist or an extra syllable in it. It wakened a thousand memories that echoed among gray New England hills, not yet touched with the green of spring. Yet I smelled it in the swollen brooks and heard it in their roar; and then the wind was in the palm trees again and there was only the shout of the salt-laden trades, heavy with the odor of newborn orange blossoms, and I knew that my robin was probably one
of those that elect to stay behind and chance it with the summer weather in the far South.

The March day was a little farther advanced when the meadow-lark chorus began. Like the robin the meadow-lark breeds from the Gulf to New Brunswick, but whereas most robins migrate well North, the proportion seems to be somewhat the other way with the meadow-larks. How their ground-built nests and eggs escape gliding snakes and prowling opossums and raccoons with which the savannas are infested I do not know. I have but to examine the mud along ditch sides of a morning to find it literally criss-crossed with the tracks of these night prowlers, till it seems impossible that any ground-nesting bird could escape. Yet the savannas are full of larks' nests every summer, and the numbers of them singing cheerily all about are a proof that the birds are wiser or the vermin stupider than anyone might suppose.

The meadow-lark's song is a sweet little trilling whistle. The neighbors say that it says, "Laziness will kill you," and after you have once fitted these words to it you can hear no other translation. I think they sing it to each other in gentle raillery, for they are among the last of the singing birds to begin in the morning.
CHAPTER XVIII

IN GRAPEFRUIT GROVES

The Spaniards brought the grapefruit to Florida, and left it behind them. Here it has been ever since, until the last ten or fifteen years neglected and despised, but taking care of itself with cheerful virility. It grew wild, or people planted a few trees about the house for its rapid growth of grateful shade and the picturesque decoration which its huge globes of yellow fruit furnished. These few people considered edible. Now we all know better and the North calls for grapefruit with a demand that this year is only partly satisfied with four million of boxes.

Floridians eat the once despised fruit with avidity now and a thrifty grapefruit grove is already recognized as a profitable investment. I say a thrifty grove, for all groves are not thrifty. The tree is lavish to its friends and in congenial surroundings will produce fruit almost beyond belief. I have seen a single limb not larger than my wrist weighed to the ground with ninety-five great yellow globes by actual count. I have seen
a whole orchard that had been tended for years with assiduous care calmly dying down from the top and sinking back into the earth from whence it sprang.

More than anything else the grapefruit must have the right subsoil under it. If you plant your trees where they may be well drained and where the soil beneath their tap-roots is a good clay, overlaid of course with the all-pervading Florida sand, they will love you for it. Care and fertilizer will do the rest, though even then it must be the right kind of care and of fertilizer. If you plant your trees where there is a "hard-pan bottom" neither love, money nor religion will bring them to good bearing. Why "hard-pan" which seems to be a dense stratum of black sulphuret of iron should be under the surface of one man's ten-acre lot, while under that of his next-door neighbor lies the beloved red clay, it is difficult to explain. Florida reminds me always of Cape Cod. It seems to be built out of the chips and dust of the making of the near-by continent, dumped irrelevantly. There is no telling why one acre is a desert that one would plough as uselessly as Ulysses ploughed the seashore and the next acre is fat with fertility, but it is so.

Hence people plant grapefruit groves not where they will, but where they may, and you discover them in the most delightful out-of-the-
"The tree is lavish to its friends and will produce fruit almost beyond belief"
way places. Paddling up river one day, ten miles from any habitation, along a stretch of profuse tropical forest, I heard the cluck of axle-boxes and a voice said "whoa!" Landing I found that the wilderness was but a sham, a thin curtain of verdure, and behind it was a stretch of fertile land covered by grapefruit trees in orderly procession, twenty-four feet apart each way, twelve hundred of them. This man must cart his fruit through ten miles of sandy barrens to the train. He might have set his trees along the railroad so far as cost of land was concerned, but they would not have grown there.

Once a week there comes into Fort Pierce a team of eight runt oxen, bred of Florida range cattle stock, drawing a creaking wain laden down with orange and grapefruit boxes. Thirty miles across the barrens these have come, from groves out at Fort Drum, and they will take a load of groceries and provisions back. It takes six days to make the round trip and you may hear the team long before you see it. The man who drives these oxen carries a whipstock as tall as himself with a lash twice its length, long enough to reach the leading off ox from a position on the nigh side of the cart. On the end of this lash is a snapper which gives off a noise like that of a pistol. Hence the Florida woodsman is called a "cracker," a name which has come to
be applied indiscriminately to all natives, whether drivers of oxen or not. Thus do we carelessly corrupt language. The cracker is the man who cracks his whip. Wherever the woodsman drives oxen you will hear it.

You find these pretty groves thus scattered in the most picturesque spots and just to wander in them is a delight. The fruit itself I suspect to be an evolution from the shaddock, which is a huge, coarse thing growing on what looks like an orange tree. Just as sometimes out of a rough-natured human family is born some youngster of finer fiber who is an artist or poet instead of clod-hopper and we can none of us tell why or how, so no doubt the grapefruit was born from some worthy shaddock tree and astonished and perhaps dismayed its parents. All are great globes of pale gold and surprise one with their size and profusion. How does this close-fibered, tough-wooded tree find in sun and soil the material to produce such fruit? Here is one ten years old that holds by actual measurement twenty boxes, almost a ton, of fruit on a tree that is about fifteen feet high and six inches in diameter at the butt. It is as if a thumbling pear tree in a Northern garden should suddenly take to producing pumpkins and bring forth twelve hundred of them.

On the Indian River it is the custom to let the
"Thirty miles across the barrens these have come, from groves out at Fort Drum"
fruit hang until mid-March when the blossoms appear with it, making a grove a place of singular beauty. Out of the dense, deep green foliage spring a hundred yellow glows, while all the outside of the tree is stippled with a frippery of white, a dense green heaven set with golden suns in crowded constellations and all one milky way of starry bloom. The scent of these blooms, which is the scent of orange blossoms, overpowers all other odors and carries miles on the brisk March winds.

There are other creatures that love the groves as well as I do. The mocking bird loves to pour his full-throated song from the tip of a blooming spray, and when the fervid sun of late March pours the whole world full of a resplendent heat which seems to lose its fierceness in these golden suns of fruit, caught there, concentrated, and built into a living fiber of delectability, he builds his nest in the crotch of some favorite tree. Twigs and weed stalks roughly placed make its foundation and outer defenses, the hollow being lined with silky or cottony fiber from wayside weeds. There are so many pappus-bearing plants whose seeds float freely that he may well have his choice, though if I were he I should save labor by taking the thistledown from the ditch sides. Here grow huge fellows whose heads of bloom, as big as my fist, set among innumerable keen
spines can hardly wait to pass through the purple stage before they turn yellowish and then white with thistledown. For what else should these bloom if not for the lining of birds’ nests?

The mocker reminds me so much of the catbird that I had thought to find their eggs similar, but they are not. The catbird’s egg is a rich greenish blue without a freckle; the mocking bird’s is a paler, and blotched about the big end with cinnamon brown. When it comes to aesthetic standards I suppose the catbird’s egg is the more beautiful, but any boy will agree with me that the mocker’s egg with its wondrous blotching is the prettier. The blotching on birds’ eggs is always a wonder and a delight. I remember the awed ecstasy with which as a small boy I looked upon the eggs of a sharp-shinned hawk, after having perilously climbed a big pine in a lonely part of the forest to view them. They were queer worlds most wondrously mapped with this same cinnamon brown. In a pelican rookery not long ago I was greatly disappointed that the huge eggs were merely a very pale, creamy or bluish white with a chalky shell. The eggs of such masterpieces of bird life ought to be equally picturesque.

With the mocker in the groves is the Southern butcher bird. Just as at first glimpse I am apt to mistake one bird for the other, so when I find a mocking bird’s nest I am not sure but it is a
butcher bird's till I have looked it over a bit. The butcher bird's eggs are a little less blue of ground color and have some smaller lavender spots mingled with the cinnamon brown. The nests are lined more often with grasses than with seed pappus. Outwardly they look the same and seem to be built in similar places. The butcher bird is as friendly with man as is the mocker. A neighbor of mine has an arching trellis of cherokee roses over the walk from his back door to his packing house, and in the thorns of this a butcher bird has a nest, though the place is a thoroughfare and the nest almost within reach of one's hand. The bird has a slender little attempt at a song at this time of year which I do not find altogether unmusical. Some naturalist or other has claimed that the Southern butcher bird squeaks like the weather-vane on which he likes to sit. I would be glad if all weather-vanes which squeak did it as musically as this loggerhead shrike in nesting time. It is a thin but pleasant little shrill whistle, which does not, however, go beyond a few notes. Then the bird stops as if overcome with shyness, which he might well be, singing in a mocking bird country.

There is another bird of the groves which I love well, much to the indignation of the owners, who pursue him with shot-guns. The Indian River fruit growers are hospitable to a fault.
They will load you down with fruit as many times as you come to their groves and beg you to come again and get some more. But that is only if you are a featherless biped. The little red-bellied woodpecker who comes to the grove for a snack comes at the peril of his life. Little does he care for that, this debonair juice-lifter. He comes with a flip and a jerk from the forests over yonder, thirsty, no doubt. He lights on the biggest and ripest grapefruit that he can find and sinks that trained bill to the hilt in it almost with one motion. Within is a half-pint or so of the most delectable liquid ever invented. The bird himself is not bigger than a half-pint, the bulk of an English sparrow and a half, say, and how he can absorb all the liquid refreshment in a grapefruit is more than I know, but when he is done with it there is little left but the skin. The number of drinks that a half dozen of these handsome little birds will take in a day is surprising. It is no wonder the grower rises in his wrath and comes forth with a shot-gun. But it is of little use. The living wake the dead with copious potations of the same good liquor, and the woods are full of mourners.

I watched one of these raiders drink his fill the other day and then go forth to a rather surprising adventure. After his drink he flew to the border of the grove, there to sit for a while with fluffed
up feathers, in that dreamy satisfaction that comes to all of us when full. It lasted but a few moments, though, then he was ready for further adventures. On the border of the grove stood a fifty-foot tall stub of a dead pine, its sapwood shaking loose from the sound core of heartwood, but still enveloping it. In this rotting sapwood are grubs innumerable for the delectation of red-bellied woodpeckers who have drunk deep of grapefruit wine, and to this stub my bibulous friend flew in wavering flight, and with little croaks of contentment began to zigzag jerkily up and round it, now and then poking lazily into cracks with his bill and pulling out a mouthful. Thus he went on to within a few feet of the top. There he got excited, rushed about as if he saw things. He gave little chirps of alarm, put his bill rapidly into a crevice and drew it as rapidly out again, ran round the stub top and dived at another crevice, then came back, and with a frantic dig and scramble pulled out a six-inch snake, which he threw over his left shoulder, whirling and wriggling to the ground.

It was a sure-enough snake, though of what variety I cannot say. I saw him, and my own potations had not been deep or of the kind which produces visions. I dare say he was a grub-eater himself and had worked his way up through the interstices of the rotten sapwood without realiz-
ing to what heights he had risen. The wood-
pecker was as surprised as I was and dashed ner-
vously about for some time. I hope it may serve
as a warning, but people who have the grapefruit
habit are apt to be slaves for life.

Often tearing through the grove goes Papilio
ajax. Why this vast haste in such a place which
invites us to linger and dream I do not know. He
looks like a green gleam, flying backwards, a
bilious glimpse of twinkling sea waves. The
seeming backward motion is effective in saving
the life of more than one specimen, for it makes
the creature a most difficult one to net. I dare say
the butcher birds and flycatchers have the same
trouble and it is a wise provision on the part of
nature for the continuation of the ajax line.

He often vanishes against the green of the
grove as if the working of a sudden charm had
conferred invisibility on the flier. This trait of
flying into a background and pulling the back-
ground in after it is common to many butterflies,
who thus prolong life when insect-eating crea-
tures are about. I had thought that Papilio cres-
phontes had none of this power till one vanished
before my very nose, seeming to become one with
a big yellow grapefruit, the grapefruit being the
one. If I had been a cresphontes-hunting dragon-
fly I should have given it up. By and by I saw
what had happened. Cresphontes had lighted
on the yellow ball and folded his wings. All his under side, wings, body and legs, was clothed in a pale yellow fuzz that was like an invisible cloak when laid against the smooth cheek of the fruit. Here was the butterfly's refuge. No wonder this butterfly haunts the grove. He is one of the largest of the Papilio tribe, a wonderful black and yellow creature, the veritable presiding fairy of the grapefruit groves.

The fruit will soon be picked and the golden suns will disappear from the deep green heaven. The white stardust of the milky way of blooms will follow and the groves would be lonesome and colorless if it were not for these great black and yellow butterflies which will flit about them in increasing numbers all summer long. I like to think of them as in their care, waiting my return in the time of full fruit.
CHAPTER XIX

BUTTERFLIES OF THE INDIAN RIVER

Where the Bahamas vex the Gulf Stream so that the rich romance of its violet blue is shoaled into an indignant green that is yet more lovely, there is a grape-like bloom on both sea and sky. Standing on the islands that bar the Indian River from the full tides, you may see this bloom sweep in a purpling vapor from the sea up into a sapphire sky, which it informs with an almost ruby iridescence at times. The gentle southeast winds of mid-March have blown this bloom in from the sea and sky and spread all the landscape of the southern East Coast with it, a pale blue, smoke-like haze in whose aroma there is yet no pungency of smoke. It is like the blue haze of Indian summer which often hangs the New England hills with a violet indistinctness out of which all dreams might well come true.

The road down Indian River winds sandily along the bluff always southward toward the sun. On your left hand you glimpse the blue river with the island a haze of deep blue on the horizon. It
is a dreamy world to the eastward, full of wild life. In the shallows schools of fishes flash their silvery sides to the sun. Herons wait, patient in the knowledge that the river will serve their dinner. The Florida great blue in all his six-foot magnificence flies with a croak of disapproba-
tion only when you come too near. Here are the smaller blue herons, in family groups. *Ardea wardi* and *Ardea caerulea* are fortunate in hav-
ing no plumes which are desired of courtesans, else would they, in spite of all law, have been shot off the earth as have the snowy egrets which once whitened the Florida savannas with beauty. Yet both are beautiful birds, and the young of the smaller heron rival the egrets in whiteness. It is rather singular that a bird that is pure white when young should, on reaching full maturity, so change color as to be at first taken by naturalists for another variety, yet such is the case.

Further out in the shining river frolicsome mullet leap six feet in the air, not as most fish do with a curving trajectory that brings them into the water head first, but falling back broadside on the surface with a spanking splash. Often a big fish will progress three times in the air thus as if trying out the hop, skip, and a jump of ath-
letic competitions. Half a thousand feet out in the shallow water are the spiles of abandoned docks. On these sit the cormorants, black and
ungainly, motionless for hours in the steep of the sun, again plunging for a fish and flopping back to the perch to be greeted by most amazing grunts from their companions. Lone pelicans sit slumping down into mere bunches of sleepy feathers with mighty bills laid across the top. You see brown-back gulls fishing and above them soaring a big bald eagle, ready to rob cormorant, gull or pelican with the cheerful indiscrimination of the overlord.

Such is the life that you glimpse through the open spaces as you fare southward toward the sun. But much of the way the river is screened from your view by dense growth of palmettos. In one spot a rubber tree has twined its descending roots about a palmetto till it has crushed the fibrous trunk to a debris of rotten wood and the roots have joined and become a tree, the tree, while the palmetto that nourished it passes to make the white sand fertile for the rootlets of the one-time parasite. Here are hickory and shrubby magnolias and many forms of cactus. Some of these climb the palmettos, vine-like, to spread the vivid scarlet of their blossoms high among the fronds. These creeping cacti are like creeping, thorny, jointed green snakes of a bad dream. The cherokee bean sends out its crimson spikes of tube-like blooms from leafless stems, roadside spurges show red involucre, and everywhere you
"A rubber tree twined its roots about a palmetto till it crushed the trunk to a debris of rotten wood."
find the low-growing composite blooms of the plant which produces the “Spanish needles,” seeds that are spear-like akenes to stab as you pass.

The white petals of this composite flower are no whiter than the wings of the great Southern white butterfly that delights in feeding on this pretty, daisy-like blossom. As the summer comes on, myriads of Southern white butterflies make the ridge their hostelry and the road southward their highway. Already they make the road a place of snowflakes, scurrying on March winds all hither and thither. They are as white as snow in flight, the tiny marking of black on the margin of the primaries serving only to accentuate the whiteness. So when they light and fold the wings the greenish tint of the secondaries beneath is only that reflected light which becomes green in some snow shadows. They serve to make the day cool while yet the sun is fervid, and to walk toward it even at a moderate pace is to perspire freely. Just as snowflakes during a white storm scurry together in companionship and alight in groups beneath some sheltering shrub, so toward nightfall when the level sun just tops the ridge to the westward these Southern snowflakes dance together and light in drifts beneath some overhanging shrub which shelters them from the wind. There hundreds wait for the reviving warmth of the next morning’s sun.
Stranger than this is the passing of what seem marshaled hosts along this Indian River road toward the south. The exceptional cold of the winter has kept the imagos in chrysalid and the rush is not yet on. But the time will come soon when each day uncountable millions will pass. Whether this is continued westward into the interior of the State I cannot say, nor do I know whence they come nor whither they go. Perhaps some West Coast observer will be able to state whether this flight goes to the south there or whether the vast numbers round the southern end of the peninsula and go north again. Last November this same southern movement was noticeable in the northern portion of the State, about Jacksonville. In its aggregate it must reach a number of butterflies which might well stagger the imagination. Butterflies fly easiest against a gentle breeze. One attacked will go off down the wind at express train speed, but as soon as his fright is over you will find him beating to windward again. They hunt, both for food and for mates, by scent. Therefore against the wind is their only logical course.

The trade winds blow gently all summer long, and most of the time during the winter, from the southeast. Hence the butterflies beating against it come to the coast line and follow it down, swarming the Indian River road with their white-
"The river is screened from your view by dense growth of palmettos"
ness. What becomes of them all when they get into the lower end of Dade County I cannot say.

But if *Pieris monuste* and his kin of the Southern whites is most conspicuous here because of numbers, there are a half-score other beauties which will soon attract your attention. Of these the largest are Papilios, the various varieties of swallowtail. Here is cressphontes, fresh from some orange grove, as large as one's hand, and of vivid contrast in gold and yellow. To be watched for is his veritable twin brother, *Papilio thoas*, just a little more widely banded with gold. *Papilio thoas* feeds upon the orange and other citrus fruit leaves as does cressphontes, but he is the butterfly of the hotter regions to the south, where he replaces cressphontes. Occasionally he has been found in the hot lands of Texas, why not in southern Florida? The thought gives a new fillip to the interest with which I watch. The next turn in the road may bring him. Time was when cressphontes was found only among the orange groves of the Southern States. Steadily he has been extending his range northward until specimens have been captured in the neighborhood of Pittsburg, and one has since been reported from Ontario.

Cressphontes and thoas are the largest and showiest of their tribe to be found in the country. With them flitting as madly and erratically is apt
to be *Papilio asterias*, also a symphony in black and yellow, with blue trimmings. The asterias is born of a grub that thrives on members of the parsley family, and you may find his brilliant black and greenish-yellow stripes on almost any carrot bed, North or South. Poke him and he will most strangely put out two horns much like a moth’s antennæ, from some concealed sheath in his head, and at the same time produce a musky smell wherewith to confound you. Asterias ranges from Maine to Florida in the summer time and westward to the Mississippi River. I have found him nowhere more plentiful than here.

In and out of the tangle of the thicket with asterias and cresphontes pass two other Papilios, palamedes and troilus. Palamedes might be described as a larger and more dignified asterias, being nearly the size of cresphontes, but having wider spaces of clear black on the upper sides of his wings. His grub feeds upon the laurels and *Magnolia glauca*, and the butterfly has been known to visit southern New England though his usual range is from Virginia south. You will easily know palamedes from cresphontes, even on the wing, by the lack of yellow in his coloring. Especially is this true of a glimpse from beneath. Cresphontes rivals the sun in his gold when seen from below, palamedes is dark beneath with the after wings as gorgeous as a peacock’s tail with
crowded eye-spots of orange and blue. It is rather interesting to note that, handsome as most butterflies are on the upper sides of their wings the under sides far surpass these in gorgeousness, as a rule. I have often wondered why.

Last of the Papilios I have met on the ridge I note with satisfaction good old *Papilio troilus* of Linnæus. There are many names with which one conjures in the butterfly world,—Scudder, Holland, Edwards, Cramer, Grote, Boisduval, Strecker, Stoll, Doubleday, and a score of others, but none that so touches one’s heart as does that of the Father of Natural History. To him came the beautiful things of the young world and received their names, as the animals are fabled to have passed before Adam and Eve. Surely none of the creatures that he named were more beautiful than this butterfly. In him the flaunting yellows are not found. Instead on the black foundation are spotted and stippled most wonderful shades of peacock blue touched modestly with a spot of crimson for each wing. Here is a fine restraint in coloring that shows harmony rather than contrast and puts the more gaudily painted members of the genus to shame. In the grub stage the favorite food of *Papilio troilus* is the leaves of the sassafras and spicebush, food through which any caterpillar might well grow into beauty and good taste.
These big swallow-tail butterflies certainly add romance and beauty to the road that leads sun-ward down the Indian River. At times, in certain favored spots the air is full of their rich beauty, now hovering in your very face, again dashing madly into the depths of the jungle or vanishing in mid-air as all butterflies so well know how to do. In the grub stage it is not difficult to know just what they feed. In the butterfly form I am satisfied that during the first few days after emerging from the chrysalis they are so busy mating that they do not find time to feed. At this stage they dash most wildly and nervously to and fro, seeking always and never quiet for a moment. Later the mood changes and you may find them clinging to some favorite flower so drunk with honey and perfume that you may pick them off with the fingers.

The world just now is full of orange blossoms and heavy with their odor. The honey from their yellow hearts is to be had for the asking and the bees are so busy that the trees fairly roar with the beat of their wings. Yet if I were butterfly or bee I should pass the heavy-scented groves for a flower which just now blooms profusely on the ridge. That is the Carolina Laurel-Cherry, commonly called at the South, "mock orange." This has indeed a lance-ovate, glossy, deep green orange-like leaf, but the bloom reminds me more
of that of the clethra. Like the clethra too it has a most delectable perfume, dainty and sweet as anything that grows in the South and far surpassing in light and seductive aroma the heavy perfume of the groves. The odor of this shrub floats like pleasant fancies all along the dusty ridge road and continually woos all that pass,—insects and men alike.

Nor are the Papilios all the bright-winged butterflies of the ridge. Here flies the zebra, his long, almost dragonfly-like wings rippled with black and yellow bars that seem to flow over them as he flies like dapple of sunlight on a black pool. The zebra is a lazy fellow. Compared with most other butterflies he fairly saunters along. I fancy that if one of those long-tailed skippers, or even one of the silver-spotted, that both frequent the same groves, were to find him on their mad track they would telescope him.

The Papilios seem to be the butterflies of the higher air levels. You are more apt to find the zebras flying head high and the skippers still lower. Perhaps this usual difference of air strata is why those collisions do not take place. Lower still, flitting among the very herbs at your feet are other, beautiful if smaller, varieties. Out of the shadows of the foliage come most awkwardly the spangled nymphs, pleased with the sunlight, yet scared in a moment into fleeing awkwardly back
again. Of these I note commonest Neonympha phocion, the Georgian satyr, singularly marked underneath with rough ovals of iron rust in which are blue-pupiled eyes with a yellow iris. Here, too, is Neonympha eurytus, as common North as South.

There are many more butterflies that one may see in a day's tramp down river in this enchanted land. This day has left with me, as one most vivid impression, the memory of a little patch of trailing blackberry vines whose white blooms are larger and more rose-like than those of Northern hillsides. Upon the patch had descended a snow squall of white butterflies till you could not tell petals from wings, or if it was flowers that took flight or butterflies that unfolded from the fragrant buds. Other spots were dear with tiny forester moths, most fairy-like of thumbnail creatures, the flutter of checkered black and white on their wings making them most noticeable. Once out of the deep shade of the thicket a painted bunting flew and lighted in full view, showing the rich blue of his iridescent head and neck, the flashing green of his back and wing coverts, the red of his under parts. I know of no other bird whose colors are at once so gaudy and so harmonious. He was like a flash of priceless jewels. No wonder he keeps these colors in the shelter of the thickets as much as possible. The hawk
that catches a painted bunting must think he is about to dine on a diadem.

So through all the vivid warmth of the long day flit these bright creatures of the sun, and the mysterious bloom of tropic seas blows in with the wind that sings in the palmettos. All tempt one to fare farther and farther south in search of greater enchantment.
CHAPTER XX

ALLIGATORS AND WILD TURKEYS

Out in the wild country to the westward of the St. Lucie River the winds of dawn mass fluffy cumulous clouds along the horizon, and the morning sun tints these till it seems as if a vast golden fleece were piled there to tempt westward faring argonauts. Thither I journeyed for nearly a day, the slow trail ending in a land of enchantment fifteen miles beyond the nearest outpost of civilization. Most of this trail led through the dry prairie where short, wire grass grows among widely scattered, slim pines, the slimness seeming to come rather from lack of nourishment than youth, for the soil here is but a thin and barren sand. Then the earth beneath us sank gently and the water rose till the good sorrel horse was splashing to his knees in water that was crystal clear and that deepened in spots till the hubs rolled on its surface. Schools of tiny fishes darted away as we splashed on, bream and garfish, bass and sea trout, spawned no doubt in some branch
of the upper waters of the river and venturing onward in companionable explorations wherever a half-inch of water might let their agile bodies slip.

We were on the border of "Little Cane Slough," and we fared on amphibiously thus some miles farther, coming at last to the country of islands which was our destination. In the geology of things Florida was once sea bottom, having been pushed up by a fold in the earth's strata which made the Appalachian mountain range. The giant force which raised these mountains thousands of feet high was nearly spent when it came to this part of the country and barely succeeded in getting the State above high tide. Thus the waters subsiding slowly made no extensive erosion. Yet they did their work and Little Cane Slough was once a river of salt water flowing out of the surgent State. In its slow, broad passage, the flood took some surface with it, leaving a bare, sandy bottom in the main free from any hint of humus in which vegetation might grow. In other spots it left the surface mud in higher islands of unexampled fertility.

Some of these islands are scarcely a hundred feet in diameter. Others measure a half mile or so, but all to-day are covered with a dense growth of vegetation from grass and shrubs to
mighty trees of many varieties. Hence you have an enchanting mingling of shallow, clear ponds, grassy and sedgy meadows and wooded islands, a country which all wild creatures love. The place is marked on the map as a lake. There are years and times of year when it is that, then drought reaches deep and the only water you can find is in the alligator holes into which fish and alligators both crowd till these tenement districts are much congested.

The sun which had started behind us in our westward race for the golden fleece of cumulous clouds outdistanced us and sank to victory among them, big and red with his running, but we camped on one of these thousand islands. You may venture into haunts of the alligator without fear. I doubt if there was ever a time when the largest of them would attack a man, certainly the few that are left wild have a wholesome fear of him and you must be stealthy of foot and quick of eye to even see one.

Twenty years ago fifteen footers promenaded from one deep hole to another, and their broad paths, worn through the thin surface of fertility, are left still, the grass not yet having found sufficient foothold to obliterate them. Rarely does one make trips like that to-day. They all stick too closely to their holes, and so cleverly are these placed that a screen of bushes or rushes conceals
"My first glimpse came at one of these places."
'ALLIGATORS AND WILD TURKEYS 223

the saurian when he is up sunning himself, and he has but to plunge to find safety.

My first glimpse came at one of these places, a deep pool surrounded by a growth of flags. Close beside this was a bushy island, and in one corner of the island was a smaller pool not over a dozen feet in diameter. Between the two, half screened by the bushes, lay Mister Alligator enjoying a mid-afternoon nap, but a nap in which he slept with one eyelid propped up. One gets so used to scaly monsters in the Florida woods, rough trunks of scrub palmettos that continually simulate saurian ugliness, that it took me a moment to see him, even when my companion pointed him out. Surely there could be nothing of life in that inert stub. But even as I looked there was a most prodigious scrambling of clawed feet, a swish of a tail so big and husky that it seemed to wag the alligator, and he was in with a plunge, not into the big pool as I expected, but with a dive into the little one beneath the bushes, an action that let me into one of the secrets of alligator housekeeping.

A good part of that afternoon and pretty nearly all of the next day I spent, with my companion, who has been intimate with alligators for many years, in wading, often waist deep, in the sunny, clear, tepid water, from one alligator hole to another, and in that way I learned much of the real life of the beast. A grown alligator is a huge
and formidable-looking reptile, but so great a fear has he of man that you have but to show yourself and say "Boo!" and he will make the water boil in his frantic endeavors to escape. You may go swimming in his private pool if you will and he will crowd down in the mud of its deepest hole to escape you. Only when cornered and continually prodded will he show fight. Then he may bite you with his big mouth or club you with his bigger tail, but it will be only that he may get an opportunity to get away. There is much interesting fiction about alligators that eat pickaninnies or even grown-ups, but I do not believe it has any foundation in fact.

I found several alligators' nests, big heaps of thin chopped reeds, dried leaves and rubbish, in which in midsummer the eggs are laid, white and with a tough, leathery skin, about as big as a hen's eggs. Last year's eggshells still linger about these nests. The heat and steam of the sub-tropical swamp hatches the eggs without further trouble on the part of the mother. She, however, stays not far away and if you wish to see her you have but to catch one of these lithe, wriggly youngsters after they are hatched and pinch the tail. The squeak of pain will usually bring a rush from the big one, though even then the sight of a man is enough to send her back again in a hurry. The young alligators are born
The heat and steam of the sub-tropical swamp hatches the eggs without further trouble.
on the banks of the pool in which their mother lives, and they need to be agile else their father will eat them. As for food, every alligator hole that I have visited swarms with fish.

Getting the sunlight just right on one of these alligator swimming pools I have seen, besides great store of small fishes swimming about the margin, hundreds of broad bream schooling in it, while bass and garfish two feet long lay in the deeper parts. So far as fish go the alligator need not go hungry. Often, too, he may get a duck or a heron, coming up with a snap from beneath the surface before the bird has a chance to rise from the water. I have seen a raccoon floundering and swimming in the shallows, his diet no doubt mainly fish, and he himself liable to capture by the alligator.

But the inner domicile of the alligator is not in the big pool. It is in the lesser one, and from this he has an entrance to a cave he has dug in the earth far beneath the bushes. Often you may prod in this cave with a fifteen-foot pole and not touch the reptile, so deep does it go. This is his refuge, his hiding-place. In time of danger or in cool weather he may lie at the bottom of it for days at a time. When he comes out again it is most circumspectly. He floats craftily just to the surface and lets his nostrils and his eyes, which are placed just right for this feat, come above the
surface, while all the rest of him is submerged. If you are familiar with alligators you may recognize these at a considerable distance; if not you will surely think them floating bits of bark or rubbish. Yet in time of low water this very refuge of the animal is his undoing. The alligator hunter comes to the pool armed with a long iron rod with which he jabs and prods till he finally drives his quarry to the surface to his death. Sometimes this iron has a hook on the end with which the reluctant beast is hauled out. Such hunting means close quarters and is not without excitement.

In times not long past, this sort of pot-hunting was much followed. Now the hunter most often "jacks" for his game, paddling at night with a bullseye lantern attached to the front of his hat like a miner's lamp. The beast in stupid curiosity watches the gleam of this light and the hunter sees it reflected from his eyes. Curiously enough, you may see this reflected glare well only when yourself wearing the lantern. You may stand beside the man wearing it and never get the reflection, however he turns his head. The reason for this, no doubt, is that the eyes of the watching beast are focused on the light alone and hence send its rays directly back. Now and then the jack-hunter grunts mysteriously from deep within himself. This ventriloquism is supposed to be
an imitation of the call of a young alligator and is used to lure the old one.

But not for fish and alligators merely is this bewitching country of islands set in the middle of Little Cane Slough. Here are innumerable flocks of the Florida little blue heron, ranging in numbers from three to fifty, wading and feeding mornings and evenings, resting at midday on tops of dead stubs, where the young birds, still in white plumage, are most conspicuous objects. The bald eagles that had ten bushels or so of nest in a big pine just east of our camp must find these birds easy game. Nor are the white youngsters, seemingly, unaware of this. Their blue elders often sit hunched up, asleep, but these hold the head erect and crane the neck this way and that, as if perpetually wondering whence trouble might come. Among these birds I saw for the first time the change of color from youth to maturity, from white to blue, going on. There were birds in the flocks that had blue backs and wing coverts while still white underneath.

All about among these islands are well beaten trails of other creatures than alligators. The range cattle make some of them, but not all. In some you may see the duplex-pointed hoof-marks of deer. Some are scratched out by the hurrying claws of raccoons. In many, along the grassy edges I found the wide, dignified print of that
king of wild birds, the wild turkey. Long and stealthily I prowled these trails hoping to come upon this majestic bird when feeding and thus see him at his work, but in this I was unsuccessful. The turkey feeds mainly in early forenoon and late afternoon, not leaving his perch as a rule till the sun is above the horizon, lurking among the bushes on high ground during the heat of the day, filling his crop again before sundown and flying heavily to his roost before dark. Just now his food is mainly succulent new grass with which he fills his crop until it will hold no more, fairly swelling him up in front like a pouter pigeon. There were a gobbler and two or three hens near-by — how near we were not to suspect until later; but we saw only the trail of these, not a feather of them did we glimpse, follow their tracks as we might.

It was late in the afternoon and we were a mile and a half from camp when we heard the first turkey voice. It was that of a lone gobbler and, just by chance, we stopped knee-deep in the grassy lagoon on the margin of an island which held his favorite roost, a limb of a big pine standing among deciduous trees. To this, from the other side he came. No doubt he had been picking grass on the other margin of the lagoon in which we stood, now he was headed for home and calling.
At this time of year there are great battles between gobblers for possession of hens. This gobbler seems to have been a defeated and compulsory bachelor, yet he gobbled away as if a whole barnyard was at his back, lifting his twenty-five pounds of live weight with rapid beats of his short, strong wings from the ground to lower limbs, thence higher and finally to his roost. Never yet, I believe, grew a more magnificent gobbler than this one, scorned of the fair sex though he was. The level sun shone upon his bronzed feathers till the radiance of their beauty fairly dazzled, seeming to flash from him in molten rays as if from burnished copper. He looked this way and that for those missing hens that surely ought to be lured into following such radiance. He gobbled to right and he gobbled to left in mingled defiance and entreaty, but there was no reply. Then he strutted and displayed all his magnificence. He spread the wide fan of his copper-red tail, drooped his wings till they hung below the limb and puffed out all his feathers, silhouetted against the pale rose of the sunset. Then he said "Pouf!" once or twice in a half-hissing, sudden grunt that sounded as if it came from the bunghole of an empty barrel. It had that sort of contemptuous hollow ring to it. This he varied with gobbling for some time. If afterward he put his head beneath his wing and forgot
his loneliness in slumber I cannot say, for the south Florida sun whirled suddenly beneath the horizon and took his roses and gold with him. The night was upon us and only the thinnest of new moons lighted our way in the long splash back to camp.
CHAPTER XXI

EASTER TIME AT PALM BEACH

Man has set Palm Beach as a gem in a jungle, which is itself as beautiful in its way as the nacre of the oyster in which we find the pearl. The gem is cut and polished till all its facets and angles flash forth not only their own brilliancy but the reflected glory of all around them. These blaze upon you from afar and draw you with a promise of all delights till you stand in their midst bewildered with them. The beauty of the surrounding jungle you must learn little by little, for it does not seek you, rather it withdraws and only subtly tempts. Yet when you come away you do not know which to love most, the gem or its setting. And all this you find upon a ribbon of island between the muddy blue of Lake Worth and the unbelievable colors of the transparent sea beyond. Unlimited resources of wealth have brought from the ends of the earth tropical trees and shrubs and set them in bewildering profusion. Wild nature in the setting, the landscape gardener in the gem, have done it all.
Not so long has man been banished from Eden that he need feel lonesome on returning. Here is the air that breathed over that place in the old time floating in over the miraculous sea, seemingly transmuting its swift-changing coloration into a symphony of perfume that now soothes in dreamy languor and again stimulates to the delight of action. Bloom of palm and of pine are in it and the smell of miles of pink and white oleanders that grow by wayside paths. There, too, is the mingling of a score of wee, wild scents from the jungle, and beneath it all the good, salty aroma distilled by the fervent sun of late March from crisping leagues of sapphire sea. It prompts you to breathe deep and long and look about with proprietary gladness as Adam and Eve might could they return for Old Home Week and tread again the well remembered primrose paths.

To appreciate fully this garden redivivus one must not dwell in its midst too long. Had Eve been permitted to come only occasionally, there had been no dallying with the serpent. I dare say those unfortunates who reach the place in December and do not leave it until April get to look upon its beauties with as lack-luster an eye as that with which the home-tied New Yorker looks upon Fifth Avenue. I have known Bostonians to pass the gilded dome of their State House, and go by way of the Common and Public
"There, too, is the mingling of a score of wee, wild scents from the jungle"
Garden through Copley Square into the Public Library without looking about and expanding the chest. Such a condition does familiarity breed.

There is a fortunate refuge from too much Eden at West Palm Beach. You may on the outskirts of this now beautiful hamlet see how little aid the earth may give in the building of a beauty spot. Here is the same barren, sandy ridge which one learns to expect on his first progress inland from any point on the East coast. Here grow rough-barked, dwarf pines of small stature, all bent westward in regular arcs from root to top as if yearning inland from their birth. Thus has the steady force of the easterly trades inclined them. The everlasting saw palmetto grows about their roots, and little else. Yet, so pervasive is the spirit of good example that the West Palm Beachers, going back to their barren land from across Lake Worth, have taken heart, and seeds and slips of blossoming shrub and vine, have brought or made soil, one scarcely knows whence or how, and made their West Palm Beach wilderness blossom in miniature like the Palm Beach rose.

Here are tiny fenced-in gardens all about little unpretentious houses, gardens which are soft with turf underfoot, stately with palms overhead, and all between bowered with purple bougain-
villea and violet bohenia, and passion vine and allamanda, almost, indeed, all the beauties of The Garden over yonder. There is none of the stateliness that space alone can give, but the shrubs and vines crowd lovingly together, till one might well wonder if Adam and Eve did not plant something of this sort just beyond the flash of that flaming sword and perhaps learn to love the home they had found better than the Eden they had lost.

You may, if you will, go westward still from this ridge and get into another land of enchantment, the borderland of the Everglades. Here a road winds from one saw-grass island to another across Clearwater Lake. It is a region of marsh plants, of cat-tail and pipewort, of purple bladderwort and wild grasses and sedges, where nestling blackbirds make love with a boldness that might put the flower-margined walks of The Garden to the blush, and where you may look into the wayside ditch and see big-mouthed bass waving their square tails as they move leisurely off into deeper water. To plunge from the barren ridge into the marsh district is like going from the sackcloth and ashes of Lent into the full awakening joy of Easter. Here the Florida wilderness itself marks the season of the revival of life and joy, and with nothing more vividly than the cypress.
The "traveler's tree" in a Palm Beach garden
On the farther margin of Clearwater Lake the ground rises a bit into cypress swamp. All winter these close-set, gnarled trees have held bare and knotted, writhing arms to Heaven in mute repentance for misdeeds. Gray Spanish moss alone has draped them, waving in the winds most lugubriously. The water has been warm about their roots, the sun has steeped them in its heat that has kept the water gay with bloom of bladderwort and sagittaria and pickerel weed, yet the cypress have held aloft their sackcloth moss and stretched their arms skyward, unforgiven, while the trade winds mumbled prayers in the gray gloom of their twining limbs. Now — it seems all of a sudden — the richest and softest drapery of green has hidden all their bareness as if they had taken off the sackcloth and put on the joy of forgiveness and new life. Spring green is always beautiful. It seems to me as if the cypress must have picked their shade from the softest and richest of colors that soothe the eye in the shoaling sea outside. They are vivid indeed against the rising land beyond, where flatwoods pines and saw palmetto hold sway again in grim monotony.

A day of this and you are ready again to pass the gateways and seek The Garden with senses once again hungry for its delights. One's self seems to belong in this scheme which simulates
the primitive joy of the earlier, happier days of the world. Often one cannot be so sure of the rest of mankind. The animal creation takes it as a matter of course. The black and white "raft" ducks that are common on the Indian River, yet fly before you get within gunshot of them, here in Lake Worth linger boldly about the docks and hardly move aside for chugging motorboats. I look daily for some fascinating descendant of Eve to call them up to eat out of her hand. Why should they here fear a gun? Adam never had one. In all my wanderings in palm-shaded walk and flower-scented jungle I saw no predatory bird or beast. It is easy to fancy that the serpent was banished with our first parents. Tiny lizards only, dash like scurrying brown flashes along the hot sand from one thicket to another in the denser part of the tangles of wild growth. A thousand glittering dragonfly fays flit on silver wings along the paths which the blue-throated, scurrying swifts cross.

Benevolent Afreets frequent The Garden and the jungle path at all points. In the days of Haroun-al-Raschid these used to gather princes up in mantles and bear them noiselessly from point to point. Here the mantle has become a wicker-basket wheel-chair, but the Afreets are in the business still and all along paths you see them passing, silently bearing one or two passengers.
A dollar wish will bring a bronze magician to your service for an hour and you glide majestically on air the while. You may be irreverent of tradition if you will and dub the Afreet and his conveyance an Afromobile, and say the air on which you glide majestically is but so much as is included in the inner tube of pneumatic tires, but the effect is the same.

But man! the sentence of banishment must still be heavy upon him, for he seems to me to tread The Garden somewhat fearfully, his glance over his shoulder expectant of another writ of ejectment. Often he pokes about with a grim solemnity which is much at variance with the laughing face of all nature. Very likely these are the newcomers who have not yet learned that from Paradise are barred all vengeful spirits. Man has been out so long that the habit of watchfulness and distrust is not to be lost in a day. You see none of this on the faces of children. They are from Paradise too recently to have forgotten.

Over on the bathing beach where beryl waves break on the amber sand these children play like fluffy sprites of foam blown inland from the spent waves, as much a part of the place as the fleets of rainbow-tinted nautilus that have made port on the same sands. Youth too belongs. Stretched in the shadow of a boat lie two, as lithe and keen
of outline as the sea gulls that swoop outside the line of breakers, they two a part of Paradise, soothed into immobility with the gentle spell of the place, reminding one for a fleeting moment of a paragraph from "Ben Hur." Yet the throng which must represent Mankind, with a capital M, melts in no such harmonious way into the symphony of sea and sky. These old ones have been away too long to fit into the place when they come back. Shorn of the world glamour of the tailor and haberdasher, the hall-marks of pelf and power, they are as grotesque as the satyrs of the time of Pan might be. Here is incongruity personified. Fingy Conners in fluffy ruffles and tights, Fairbanks in fleshings, or if not these some others just as good, go down to the sea in skips, and the breakers roar.

It is the cocoanut palms that put the touch of picturesque adventure on the place. Here are the bold beach-combers of the tropic world come to add storm-tossed beauty to The Garden. The cocoanut is the adventurer of all seas, born of salt and sand on the wave-worn shore it matures, clad in a brown, elastic, water-defying husk that will bear its live germ whithersoever the waters will take it. The storms that tear it from the yielding stem and toss it in the brine send it on through scud and spin drift, to currents that drift lazily to all shores. The breakers that roll it up
"It is the cocoanut palms that put the touch of picturesque adventure on the place"
the beach and bury it under driftwood are but planting it, and when in its own good time it germinates the tough fiber of its endogenous stem defies all but the fiercest hurricane. Here at maturity it will bear two hundred nuts a year to adventure further on all tides.

It is these trees that give the place its rightful name. They spring in stately, swaying rows along all the shore. They line the paths on either side with the gray columns of their trunks. The mighty fronds touch above your head and make swaying shadows on the way, as the leaves rustle in the easterly trades and the rich nuts fall to the ground for all. As Adam may have done, so you may do, pick the ripe fruit from the ground, beat the husk from it, bore a hole in the one soft spot at the stem end and drink the cool and delicious milk for your refreshment. Thousands of these nuts lie on the ground ungarnered save by the thirsty passer. Seed time and harvest are one with them and young fruit, acorn-like in size and appearance, grows at the same time that the ripe nuts are falling. You may find any size between at any time.

The cocoanut trees are beautiful, picturesque and romantic. You might well call them stately, yet there is a touch of the swashbuckler about each that forbids you to call them dignified. They should be the patron tree of buccaneers and wild
sea rovers, and one cannot look upon them without peopling the strand beneath them with such gentry. The lawless, sea-roving life of the South Seas is theirs as it was that of Bluebeard and Teach and Morgan and Pizarro. They add to Eden a spice of dare-devilry that makes it doubly dear.

Far different are the royal palms, the trees of kings' courtyards. I saw but four of these in The Garden. They stood apart, erect columns as smooth as if built out of gray masonry for fifty feet in height. You would sooner think this smooth but unpolished gray granite than wood. Miraculously from the top of this stone column, which swells outward as it progresses upward, then recedes as slightly, grows a green stem for a distance of a fathom, from the top of which spread the majestic, leafy fronds. Such columns should grace the stone palaces of the Pharaohs. So stately and impressive are these that I never see them but I fancy that they stood thus as pillars to the gateway by which stood the angel with the flaming sword, while our first parents fled with averted faces, outward.

At Easter time The Garden blossomed with white stems of femininity, bearing aloft Easter flowers of gorgeous millinery. The violet of bohemia blooms, the purple of bougainvillea, the soft pink and pure white of blooming oleanders were
All outdone and the butterfly-like flowers of hibiscus nodded and poised unnoticed as these passed by. Yet I saw three things outside The Garden that typified Easter to me with far more potentiality than these. One was the green of repentant cypresses in the gray swamp at the back of Clearwater Lake. Another was a cactus in the jungle on the outer rim of The Garden. Here was a stubborn thing, its oval, dusty, lifeless joints hideous with thorns. Seemingly nothing could give this thing life or beauty. It stood in arid sand, and rough, dusty ridges to seaward shut off even the reviving, purifying winds. Yet the time came and out of the very thorns sprang a wondrous, yellow bloom of satiny-cupped petals that was more lovely than any flower of sweetest wood in any rose garden in the world. Butterfly and bee that had so long passed by came to this and caressed it, nor could anyone remember the thorns or the hideous crooked joints for love of the beauty of this Easter bloom.

Best of all I remember, over in the flatwoods, a young, long-leaf pine that had for a week been growing altar candles for the season as is the way of such trees. Only this tree in its love could not stop there. From every spike it grew on the right and the left exultant buds that made of each candle a little cross of pale bloom, lighting the little lonely tree in the level waste with a glorifica-
tion and chaste beauty that made the worshipful onlooker forget all else. Nor in The Garden, nor in churches, nor even in the hearts of men has there grown, I believe, a lovelier or more acceptable Easter offering.
CHAPTER XXII

INTO THE MIRACULOUS SEA

Flying southward by rail from Palm Beach one immediately leaves behind tropical gardens and enters semi-arid wastes. The contrast is most vivid. The traveler feels like Es-Sindibad of old who thus was transported by magic, or perchance by an Afreet or the talons of a roc, from king's gardens to deserts, and anon back again. The dream of yesterday was of stately palms, of richly massed foliage plants, of broad-petaled flowers tiptoeing for a butterfly flight, of softly perfumed breezes and man and maid in rich garments wandering joyously among it all. The reality of today is sand and saw palmetto and dreary wind-bowed, stunted pines, and dust and desolation.

Only by thus plunging back into bleakness can you realize what man and climate have done, working together, to redeem the wilderness from itself. By and by the arid levels of sand change to equally arid levels of rock. The coral formation which is the backbone of lowest Florida here rises to the surface, showing everywhere in mi-
nute, multitudinous, interlacing mountain ranges of gray that snarl the surface with ridges and peaks a foot high, entwining craters a foot in diameter. In the craters only is soil and in these grow tired and dusty saw palmettos. The railroad builders, seeking earth to put about the ties, have scooped the dirt out of these near-by craters, leaving the surface pitted with their yawning mouths till, looking down upon it at the stations, one is reminded of the moon’s surface as seen through a good-sized telescope.

I say stations. These imply man, and here you find him, working in his own small, patient way with the climate for the redemption of the land. It may be that new gardens like those of Palm Beach are to be “wrested from the stubborn glebe” here and eventually make the wilderness blossom like the rose, with it. Certainly such gardening is done by main strength. Dynamite and sledge and pick are the tools and vast walls of rock surround such acreage as is partially subdued. They plant orange trees by blowing out a hole with dynamite, filling it in again with such soil as may be purloined from potholes and setting the young tree in the middle.

What these trees are going to do when their roots fill these submerged flower pots and clamor for more soil I cannot say. The country is very young yet and may solve its own problems as it
Into the miraculous sea
INTO THE MIRACULOUS SEA 245

goes along. Between the ribs in this bony structure of the State lie little parallels here and there of real soil. Here again is man at work. He plants these tiny prairies with tomatoes, peppers, egg plants and other tropical vegetables in the dead of winter, whispering, I have no doubt, many prayers to his patron saint for luck. If his prayers are answered his harvest is bountiful and his reward great. Great also is his risk. Winter frosts may nip his budding vines and hopes, winter flood may drown them in the saucer-like prairies; and even the summer-like climate may be his bane, tropic thunder showers sometimes bringing hail which beats his garden to a frazzle and leaves it for hours under an inch or two of noded ice.

The courage of the pioneer is proverbial. It seems to me that of the Dade County pioneer ranks as high as any. His land may some day be beautiful. To-day it is the stretch of purgatory which lies between one paradise and another, for through it one passes from Palm Beach down into the miraculous sea.

Even as far north as the play garden of the money gods you have wide glimpses of the miracle. There are days at Palm Beach when the sea is simply the sea as one may know it at Atlantic Beach or Nantasket, magical and mysterious always but lighted by no miraculous inner fires.
Again there come times of tide and sun when a wonder of color wells up from its depths, when it amazes with inner glows of gold and green and azure, and fires the skyline with smoky purples. Their subtle beautyingers with you long after other impressions of the place have passed, a memory that is a promise of delight, the lure which the Gulf Stream scatters far toward the cold waters of the North. Circe has all who see it within the slender, elastic bonds of her magic and the lure of it will never be withdrawn. He who with seeing eyes has known the call must some day come back to the very source, or die dreaming of what it must be.

You get the first look at this as your train slides off the mainland onto the first key and it flashes upon you again and again as you pass from one islet to the next or roar by some tiny bay where cocoanut palms lean over waters for the describing of which language has yet no fit words. Someone has said that in the building of North America all the chips and dust left over were dumped off shore and thus Florida was made. If so the sea which bathes its southernmost tip of coral islands must surely be formed from the dust of all gems that have been put into the ground for mines since the world was first conceived.

Here by the very railroad is a shallow lagoon, dredged out by the builders for all I know, whose
INTO THE MIRACULOUS SEA

color is the semi-opaque, semi-translucent white of pearls. Another has no hint of these gems of the sea but is a deep topaz. Anon the free tides wash the embankment with waves of mother-of-pearl that leap from shallows of a blue so soft and pure that to look upon it is to cry out with happiness. The heaven of poets and founders of loving creeds can have no purer hue than this. Beyond again the sea deepens through shining purples into sudden shoals of emerald and jade, that bar it from the distant stretch of the horizon where the depth and richness of the violet blue are a joy that is half a pain so deeply does it stir the soul.

I have said this sea is made of dust of all gems. It is more than that. It is as if it were steeped with all dreams of purity and nobility, all holy desires and longings unutterable, here made visible to the eye of man in miracles of translucent color. The memory of it stays with you as does the memory of music that has stirred the soul to such happiness and dear desires that the eyes are wet with wistful tears at the thought.

The eye finds the land of the keys little but a repetition of the dusty purgatory through which the train has brought him to the place of dreams. The rock-ribbed foundation is the same, though the vegetation is more luxuriant and varied. The palmettos seem to give up the struggle to main-
tain a hold upon the slender soil as you swing in bird-like flight from islet to islet, and to be replaced in part anyway by the slender-stemmed silver palm, which looks a bit like a spindling scion of a noble race. The red wood of the royal poinciana trees is everywhere visible, and these in the blooming season make the favored spots a flame of crimson fire. Beneath is a wild tangle of shrubbery, whose components are hardly to be differentiated in passing. Where clear beaches of coral strand rim round some opalescent bay the cocoanut palms feather the ground with shadowy fronds.

Along the side of the railway are to be seen the tall palm-like stems of the West Indian papaw, and one can but think that the negro laborers who made the grade have planted the seeds of the well-loved fruit, so regular and persistent are these rows, which stand up like grotesque telegraph poles along this railroad which, as we flee onward from key to key, more and more impresses one with the might of a dominating idea.

At the water-gaps in the flood of color are dredges and pile-drivers sturdily repairing the destruction which the West India hurricane of the previous autumn wrought on these seemingly indestructible foundations. Where the two miles and more of concrete viaduct is expected one finds the train running gingerly on piling and marl re-
“By and by the road leaves the embankment and winds totteringly out on piling.”
filling, the supposed everlasting foundation having been ripped out in a night by the wind and sea. Men cling like birds to slender staging or insecure foothold, swaying to one side to let the train pass, then swaying back again to go on with their work. Through the piling beneath race the sapphire tides, and to lose hold for a moment is to be drowned in a suffocating transparency of miraculous color.

A lean, knob-muscled navvy, who has been half-comatose, slumped in an awkward heap in his seat, rouses to the hail of these men as we pass, and becomes excited over the work. He explains that he has been in the hospital for five months, and is just on his way back to the job. The hurricane took his tent from over his head while he was eating his dinner, picked him up bodily and hurled him against a pile of railroad iron, breaking a leg and other bones. Some of his fellow-workers suffered similarly, some disappeared utterly, drowned in the opalescence, such toll does the sea take when man penetrates her mysteries too boldly with his puny strength.

Yet if man's strength is puny his mind is bold, daring as the sea itself, and one appreciates that as the train spins on. By and by the road leaves the embankment and winds totteringly out on piling, far into the very sea itself, while above loom mighty concrete buttresses carrying a bridging of
railroad iron on steel trestles. A little later it crawls beneath these trestles in the mighty space between two buttresses and as one holds his breath in suspense comes to a stop on a dock at the western tip of Knight’s Key. Beyond that the railroad in the sea is still in a measure fluent in the minds of its originators and builders, not having fully crystallized in concrete and iron. You sail thence four hours or more over the miraculous water, viewing as you go the fragments of this labor of titans slowly growing along key after key, waiting yet to be fully pieced together, till you make port beneath the friendly harbor lights of Key West.

The cleansing tides and the east winds which surge perpetually over the island keep the city of twenty thousand inhabitants serenely healthy on Key West, without wells or sewers, paving or street cleaning. Walking along the dusty streets where shack-like wooden houses are piled together in that good-natured confusion which marks the usual West Indian town, one does not go far without having a sudden impulse to shout with delight, for soon all roads lead to the verge of the island, the rich, soothing breath of the trade winds and a glimpse of the miraculous sea. You may come upon this sight as often as you will, you will never get over the sudden stab of the delight of it.

If environment is the matrix of beauty the in-
"As one holds his breath in suspense the road comes to a stop at the western tip of Knight's Key"
habitants of this favored isle should in time rival the gods and goddesses of mythology. That they do not is probably because not enough generations have succeeded each other in these surroundings. The creatures that have been longer and more intimately born of these coral keys in this bewildering sea have caught its colors. You have but to go down to the docks to see that. Here the local fishermen bring in out of the surrounding tides fishes as rainbow-hued as the waters from which they are taken.

Perhaps the commonest fish of the Key West docks is the common "grunt," a variety which seems to correspond in habits and size with our Northern cunner or salt water perch. As "hog and hominy" is derisively said to be the mainstay diet of the Florida "cracker," so "grits and grunts" is the favorite food of the Key West "conch." Yet look at the amazing little fish! His gaping mouth is orange yellow within, his tail the same color. His main color is light blue traversed with narrow lines of brassy spots mingled with olive. Beneath he is white. His back is bronze and a dozen bright blue lines on his head are separated by broad, brassy marks. Here is the amberjack, as long as your arm, a vivid silver with amber tints and a gilt band from his eye to his caudal fin. Here is the angel fish, named as well I fancy for his coloring as his
shape, which latter is much that of a conventionalized, flat angel with fins which somewhat humorously represent long folded wings.

If you will go to the docks you may look over the edge and see big, semi-submerged boxes containing scores of these swimming freely, waiting for the call to go up higher. This too is a blue fish with broad yellow margins to the scales, making a scheme of color as a whole that is quite as miraculous to the Northern eye as the sea from which it is taken. It is as if the wonderful blues and greens and sapphires of gem-like transparency which the sea suggests, though it is a thousand times more beautiful than these can ever be, had been by long years of association transmitted to the fishes which swim about in it.

But the one vast, continuing marvel is the sea itself. Never for one hour of the day is the magic of its coloring alike; always each new phase is more wonderful than the last. Within its heart of mystery are continually born new dreams that pulse in nascent beauty to the rhythm of its tides, quivering to the mind of him who looks upon them with all fond longings and the bliss of noble desires. He who is privileged to see it must be base indeed if it does not call some answering glow from within him.
Gathering turtle's eggs on a Florida beach
CHAPTER XXIII

DOWN THE ST. JOHNS

The everglades, which on the later maps of Florida are concentrated in the southern tip of the peninsula, there hardly conceded to extend as far north as Lake Okeechobee, as a matter of fact do flow in certain favored localities much farther north, well into the middle of the State. Up through St. Lucie and Osceola counties run one "slough" after another, wide depressions which in any but the driest weather are shallow, sand-bottomed lakes filled with numerous and beautiful wooded islands.

In the driest of weather these are deserts of white sand with tiny ponds innumerable all about in them, alive with concentrated schools of fish. It takes long drought to make this condition. A single good rain will set the fish free to roam clear water for mile on mile, and where before the rain the alligator hunter walked dry shod, afterward he must wade, knee deep or waist deep as the case may be. In the height of the rainy season, say in
July, I believe a man could make his way in a canoe up the St. Johns and on without touching bottom till he slid off the lower end of Dade County, having traversed the entire peninsula by water. He would, of course, have to know his way, as probably no man now knows it, but I believe the water is there. A good part of all Florida, in fact, emerges in the dry season, which is the winter, and submerges for the rest of the year. You may hoe your garden in January and row it in July, raising tomatoes in one season and trout in the other.

There is a project on foot which glibly promises to drain the everglades. Several dredges are lustily digging ditches through which this flood water is supposed to drain rapidly off some thousand square miles of level, clay-bottomed sand. To look at these tiny machines merrily at work on one hand and the area of water they attack on the other is to smile once more at the Atlantic Ocean, Mrs. Partington and her mop.

So the St. Johns River, the one large river of the State, rising on the map as it does in Sawgrass Lake, on the lower edge of Brevard County, not a dozen miles from the East Coast and the Indian River, really draws its water, during a part of the year at least, from the everglades themselves. In that it is to be congratulated, for the water of the everglades is beautifully clear
and pure. There are bogs and mud in the everglades, to be sure, but in the main their water falls straight from heaven and is caught and held in shallows of white sand that might well be the envy of a reservoir of city drinking water. The little city of West Palm Beach draws its water from one of these shallow everglade reservoirs, and has thus an inexhaustible supply, which analysts have pronounced pure and wholesome.

But if the lake bottoms of southern Florida are thus pure and send only clear water down the St. Johns, the condition of clarity does not last long. The St. Johns, as the tourist knows it, from Sanford to Jacksonville, is a dark and muddy stream that winds through an interminable succession of swamps, miry and forbidding at the surface, but brilliant above with foliage, flowers and strange birds and beasts. Beyond these swamps are higher ground and many pretty villages, groves and farms, but one sees little of this from the river. Except for the occasional landing, the occasional razorbacks and range cattle, one might as well be coming down the stream in the days before Florida knew the white man, and the river’s only boats were the narrow, artistic dug-outs of the Seminoles, built by fire and hatchet from a single cypress log.

Through the energy of many bold real estate men and many patient gardeners Sanford is rap-
idly becoming known to the world as "The Celery City," a title once held alone by Kalamazoo, Michigan, though it might well have been disputed by Arlington, Massachusetts. If you travel back and forth enough in Florida you can come to know certain spots in it, spots favored or otherwise, by their odors, also favored or otherwise. I know haunts in the upper part of the State toward which the fond, free scent of jasmine will lure you through many a sunny mile of stately, long-leaved pines, themselves giving forth a resinous aroma for a solid foundation on which the airy jasmine scent is built.

Farther south where the jasmine hardly dares the beat of the summer sun the orange groves send out messengers that beguile you through long distances in the same way. None of these calls you to Sanford. There the homely fragrance of crushed celery leaves drowns all else and salutes your appreciating nostrils from afar. I am told that Sanford people carry these odorous bunches of translucent golden-green beauty at weddings just as other, custom-bound folk carry bride roses, but I think the tale is persiflage. Certainly you have but to step from the train there in April to be accosted by a demure and smiling young woman who says, "Won't you try some of our celery?" holding up a tempting stalk or two, "We grow celery here and we are very
proud of it. We want all strangers to taste it and see how good it is."

This is an excellent custom, both for Sanford and the strangers. I have been to places in the North where mine host, who produced verses, always proffered me these, to read or to hear, soon after my arrival. I much prefer Sanford.

Aside from its celery, which should be glory enough, one of Sanford's other claims to fame is that it is at the head of steamship navigation on the St. Johns. Here you embark on an amber-watered lake which is but the river, grown wide and lazy for a time. If you were to ask me for Florida's most astounding characteristic I might hesitate, but I should eventually decide that it was the great number of fish which frequent its shallow waters. Looking from the Sanford dock as you go down to embark you see the sunny shallows full of schools of bream and in the deeper places, much bigger and a little more wary, other schools of "trout," as the Floridians insist on calling the big-mouthed bass which swarm in all fresh waters. Farther down stream you may amuse yourself with watching the big silver mullet which here seem to teem in all brackish waters, leaping, sometimes five or six feet in air, then falling back with a resounding splash in the wave as if they like the spank of the water on their scaly sides.
To name all that one sees on an April day while the boat surges round the curves of the lazy river might well be to write a catalogue of the commoner wild things of Florida, and a good many of those not so common. The paddle wheels suck the water from in front of the boat and the tide there falls a foot or two in a minute, for a minute. Then the hill of water thus heaped up behind rushes in again to fill the hollow and makes a miniature tidal wave. Creatures of the shallows are thus suddenly bared and again as suddenly flooded to fright and a hasty escape. The big Florida blue herons, standing in immobile alertness on the brink, are less alarmed at the approach of the steamer than by this fidgeting of the tides. If you will watch ahead you will often see one of these great stately birds bend his head and stand in astonishment at this falling off, then as the leaping wave splashes him give a croak of terror and flap rapidly away into the woods, to light in a big cypress, now all feathery green with new spring foliage, and stab the air this way and that with his keen beak, not knowing which way further to flee.

The fish crows, who have little fear of anything, croak humorously to one another at this. Having a frog in the throat so often has got into the fish crow's voice and made his croak catarrhal, but nothing can take away his sense of humor
which always sounds through his talk. I notice behind the St. Johns River steamers the fish crows playing the part of gulls, following in the vessel's wake and hovering to daintily pick refuse from the dangerous waves. The gull lights and feeds; the fish crow is ruined if the water reaches his wings, but he hovers perilously near the troubled surface and picks out his morsels, just the same, with plunging beak. *Corvus ossifragus* is courageous as well as humorous. In my first acquaintance with him I was inclined to hold him in light esteem, as a weakling and a trifler compared with his bigger, more saturnine relative, *Corvus americana*, but he wears well if he is light-minded.

I had come to think that all the large alligators left in Florida were in captivity, where, tame and most wooden in appearance, they dream their lives away. Yet in mid-afternoon, roaring down the St. Johns on this river steamer I came upon the finest specimen that I have seen anywhere. As the steamer shouldered by a bush-lined bank the negro helmsman leaned far out of the pilot house, yelling and pointing. "Hi!" he said, "look at dat big ol' 'gator." Right on the bank facing us he lay, black, knobby and ugly as sin, his only retreat the water in which the paddle wheel was thrashing within a dozen feet of his nose.

Then indeed I saw one alligator that was like the old-timers that used to line the river in fa-
vored spots. They said he was twelve feet long. He surely was ten, and active. Wakened from his siesta in the scorching April sun he glared at us with very evil eyes, opened his big mouth, showing stout, yellow teeth, and plunged right down the bank at us, going in with a great splash. Alligators are said to have a great fear of man and it is commonly reported that you may bathe in their swimming pools in the utmost safety, even at dinner time after a fast day. That may be. I know this big, old, black one looked as if he ate river steamers for luncheon and came down the bank as if he were about to do it. However nothing happened to prove it. Later on we saw another one, not quite as large, lying asleep on the bank. His stomach was greatly distended and he did not even wake up as we passed. I fancy he had just finished his steamer and was too full of it and contentment to bother about us.

A prettier sight by far as the steamer rounded another curve was a group of black vultures on the bank. These had been feeding and were too plethoric to fly. Vultures are usually reckoned disagreeable objects, but there was nothing unpleasant in these birds. They were sleek and black and plump enough to be barnyard fowl in a giant's hennery. Another curve disclosed another group, but here was something to astonish at first sight. Half these vultures were white,
with longer legs and necks, a different bird altogether, yet all feeding in a group. If you could mate a black vulture and a white heron the resulting progeny might be such a bird as this. Primaries, secondaries and tail were glossy, greenish black, the rest of the bird was white. The head and neck were bare like a vulture, and the group took flight together, the white birds going into the air with the black ones, and soaring about in the sky later in much the same sort of circling, flapless flight. Here they looked like big white water turkeys, their legs stretched heron-wise behind their fan-shaped tails, their necks stretched forward like that of a water turkey when flying, a thing a heron never does.

After all the answer was easy. Bird gazing on a roaring St. Johns River steamer, I had chanced upon a flock of birds of a variety that I had not before found in all Florida, the woodland ibis. They remained contentedly soaring in the heavens with their black friends as long as I could keep them in sight from the steamer, with a glass. It was a curious group, too, these long-necked, long-legged birds soaring like crazy cranes with the sedate, graceful vultures.

Nightfall catches the steamer still churning the dark waters down winding walls of forest, now and then stopping at a rough dock which represents some invisible town. The water gets black
and the wilderness ahead blends with it, while the goblin-like voices of Florida frogs sound from the swamps. I would hate to be lost in a Florida swamp over night. There are more strange voices there that gasp and gurgle and screech and choke than anywhere else in the world. By and by the sudden shaft of the searchlight leaps ahead, transforming a single ever-changing circle into fairyland walled within impenetrable murk.

Never before was a forest so green as that which this light penetrates till trunks and foliage bar it off. Never before were tree-trunks edged with such quivering rainbows and built of such corrugated gold. On any stump, once black and slimy with decay, now coruscating with jeweled light, might well sit a fairy with wand, transparent wings, and diaphanous garments of green and gold. You get to watch, breathless, for this as the rich circle slides on and on down the bank ahead or jumps like rainbowed lightning to another side or shoots far ahead along a straight stretch of river, perhaps firing with smokeless splendor some crazy dock or ancient river-bank house.

The scorching heat of the sun is gone and the river damp wraps all things in a coolness that is grateful to the wearied skin. The boat glides forward into white river mists, out of which fly wonderful winged creatures of the night. These, in-
visible in the darkness, become spirits of fire in the white shaft of the searchlight, up which they fly to the lantern itself, then vanish again. It is the moth and the flame, only there the moth is the flame itself, a winged, magical creature of gold, fluttering in a rainbow-tinted white light that has called it out of the black invisibility. It is no wonder that many of the travelers sit up all night. These have their reward, for they see the sudden sun flash all the white river mists with fire, through which they glide up to a magical city, which after all is only Jacksonville, the end of the route.
'A swoon of heat and blue tropic haze brings holly blossom time to northern Florida in mid-April. In this haze the distant shores of the St. Johns slip away until the silver gleam of the water seems to lift them and toss them over the horizon's rim, out of sight, making a boundless sea of the placid river. The thermometer climbs with the day into the eighties and stays there till the sun is well on his way down again. The noon weather has the dog-day feel of a New England August and gives little invitation to exercise in the full sun.

It is then that one is apt to give thanks to the great oaks which grow upon all the high hammock land and whose glossy green leaves and pendent masses of gray moss shut out the sun. Here in a druidical twilight one may roam in safety and near-comfort following the quaint odor of the holly blooms to the trees themselves. The oaks are mighty of trunk but soon divide into proportionately mighty limbs that lean far over the road.
till the moss that swings down from them is like banners swung across city streets in holiday decorations. Often the wild grapes, now with tender, crinkle-edged leaves two-thirds grown, swing in stout ropes across the street too, from one oak to another, and all these are also hung with the moss flags till they make the gloom grayer and deeper and in spite of the festive suggestion one half expects in the duskier corners to see the stones, the flash of the sacrificial knife, and hear the eerie chant of the elder priests. It takes the cheerful holly to remove this impression.

Compared with the oaks the holly is a Noah’s ark tree, with one central shaft from roots to apex and numerous short, slender limbs that shape the outline into a modified cylinder. At Christmas time this cylinder was of dense, dark green with red berries giving it a ruddy glow in all shadows, as if ingle-nook embers glowed therein. The stiff, prickly-edged leaves stippled the whole into a delightful decoration that has become hallowed by conventional association.

Now the tree is different. The dark green of the Christmas foliage is still there, but from all twig tips have sprung shoots of new leaves that have not yet known their set prickers, but light the dark surface with a wayward sprinkling of tender color which is but the green of the old leaves grown joyous and youthful in the new. Sitting
on the new wood are tiny clusters of flowers, each very prim and proper with four divisions of the white corolla, four stiff stamens set between and holding yellow heads at exact angles. All this should be as conventional as the Christmas decorations, but it is not. The waywardness of youth has got into the blood of the holly and the new sprigs are as jaunty and as airily conscious of the joy of living as any shrub you will find in a league of flat-woods and swamps.

Even the perfume of the holly blooms is wayward and just enough different in its originality to make you wonder if you will not come to dislike it, and then fall in love with it while you test it. The unobtrusiveness of the holly blooms is proof of their good taste, for this jaunty waywardness of the exultant spring does not appear till you come to know them well.

One looks in vain for the blooms of the jasmine in this region now. Six weeks ago they crowned all wild tangles with golden yellow and made cloth of gold all along the sunny forest aisles. Now all this bloom is gone and the jasmine, grown strangely wise and industrious, will do nothing in the fervid heat but climb in twining slenderness over new routes and plan flaunting displays of beauty for another winter-end. The wild cherokee roses, that shamed the gold with the purity of their white, have done better. There are hedge-
rows still starred with their beauty, but even these are passing and the stars are but single where once they marked a milky way of scintillant white. But the woods have other beauty to tempt the wayfarer into their aisles. In places they are green with the leaves of the partridge berry and the twin blossoms, I think a little larger than those I find on Northern hillsides in summer, send forth the same delicious scent.

In lower grounds the atamasco lilies have trooped forth to stroll here and there in the woodland shadows. Fairy lilies the people here call them, and Easter lilies. Fairy lilies they might well be. They spring from a bulb and show no leaves to the casual glance, only a dainty lily bloom that is pink in the bud, pure white in maturity, and pink again as it fades. The fairy lilies seem to thrive most where the cattlemen burn out the underbrush each winter. Their tender purity springing from the blackened stretches under the great pines is one of the dearest things imaginable. Sometimes you may stroll a mile with these stars tracing constellations on the dark vault at your feet.

On the margins of the oak hammock where thickets slope to the swamps the wild smilax races with the grapes, and all among these the viburnums and the dogwoods have set cymes of softest white. Above these still climbs the wild sweet
honeysuckle of the South, *Lonicera grata*, its fragrant white tubes turning yellow with age, and now and then a high wall of green foliage is all hung with bead-like decorations of the coral honeysuckle, giving it a curious, gem-like effect in red and yellow. Viewing these things, less obtrusive but equally beautiful, one is inclined to forget his regret for the vanished jasmine yellow and the pure white of the passing cherokee roses. Behind it all, looming toward the high sky line of the swamp in such places is the feathery softness of the new cypress leaves, delicately fluffed in the softest tints of pure spring green. Young cypress leaves are more like feathers than any other leaves I know. Collectively it seems as if they had as much right to be called plumage as foliage.

It is at this time of year that the frost weed slips shyly at first into sandy dooryards, and later makes them all gold of a morning with crowded heads of clear yellow flowers. With these two comes the phlox, almost unnoticed among low-growing herbs till it blooms. Then some morning the dooryard begins to blush and by night has grown all rosy with pink and purple flowers, a heterogeneous assortment of shades that blend nevertheless in a pleasing whole. Such marvels does April build out of sand and sun and rushing rain that has hardly time to fall so eager is the sun to be out and at it again.
More than flowers does this scorching midday sun bring out. It always seems as if under its potency the little green chameleons were drawn up as blisters from the herbage on which they like to rest. Once you get the shape of the motionless, finger-long creature in your eye you may note that it is that of an alligator whose tail fades indistinctly into the leaf or twig. But while the alligator is repellent his tiny, leaf-textured prototype fascinates, and it is easy to see how the desire to make pets of chameleons originated and grew till the law had to step in and put a stop to the wholesale cruelty which the practice engendered. He looks at you with such gentle, bird-like, bright eyes that you inadvertently reach out to stroke him. Then he gives you an example of his kind of thought transference. Surely the wee legs of the creature never could have moved him like that, but he has gone like the flashing of a thought to a place out of reach where he eyes you, as bright and immobile as before.

In Mark Twain's heaven people wished themselves from one part to another, traversing limitless space in no time. So evidently it is with the chameleon.

This tiny lizard sleeps in pale green with an immaculately white under side, a most charming nymph's nightdress. Pale green too is its fighting color, and when badly frightened the green
suffuses its entire body. Often in bright sunlight this green changes to a rich, dark brown, a color which makes it look so much like a twig as to defy the eye to find it until it moves. Yet I doubt if this change of coloring is so much a matter of protective instinct as we have been taught to believe as it is a matter of temperament and emotion. The animal seems to sleep, fight and run away in pale green. When let alone, unsuspicious and basking in the full sun, this color is changed to the brown, and if you will watch the change take place you will see some interesting variations into golden yellow, slaty gray and even a peppering of white dots on the back. Gentle and lovable as these creatures seem, the males have tiny battles which are quite tempestuous within teapot limits. At such times they protrude queer, inflated neck pouches and bite and thrash about with great agility and vehemence, the combat often ending in the vanquished leaving his twisted-off tail in the mouth of the other while he wishes himself to safety in the crevice of some dead stump. Then the victor struts with the trophy in his mouth, his neck pouch distended and his brightest green showing more vividly than ever.

This loss of the tail does not seem to be a serious matter with chameleons and other small lizards, indeed the appendage seems to be a sort of customary final ransom paid for bodily safety. It
twists off with comparative ease and the lizard merely goes without it until another, stubbier one grows in its place.

They are queer folk, these little Florida lizards. Another variety is known quite properly as the "five-lined skink" when young. Colloquially it is the "blue tail," from the color of that part which is a bright and beautiful blue. The body is then black with five stripes of vivid yellow. This coloring fades, the blue last, as the creature grows old till finally you would not know the beast. In maturity it is the "red-headed lizard," its olive brown, ten-inch whole including a big head which is quite brilliantly red. This lizard the neighbors call a "scorpion," and assure me it is deadly poison, with the accent on the deadly, though I fail to find any record of injury coming from contact with it. Its blood-red head gives it a rather raw look and I fancy that is all there is to it. To be repulsive is to be dangerous; that is a common fallacy.

If I were to see a "red-head" coming toward me with his mouth open I am quite sure I should run, though where or why I cannot imagine, for the skinks can wish themselves from one place to another just as well as the chameleons. Like the chameleons they battle and lose their tails, and it is no uncommon thing to see a couple fighting, whirling and scrambling among the leaves like
nothing in the world unless it is a snake in a fit, or a goblin pinwheel made of a blur of whizzing tails and a red blotch in the center.

But enough of these uncanny creatures. The woods are vibrant with bird voices, local and migrant. Vireos warble in the tree tops, white-bellied swallows twitter as they soar and swoop, red birds whistle till the very dogs run hither and thither, believing they have a hundred masters all calling them at once. Mocking birds mock, not so much their bird neighbors as me. I stalk them for this and for that old friend, for this and for that stranger, only to find half the time that it is just Mister Mocking Bird sitting on a twig on the other side of the orange tree and looking as soulful and demure as if he had not just finished cackling with elfin laughter at my mystification.

He is a rare old bird, this mocker, and you come to love him more and more as you know him better. Even now though he fools me and mocks me I am ready to swear that he never did it. He was just singing heavenly melodies without any thought outside of the pure and noble joy of living. As for imitating other birds, I am convinced that it is no such thing. They learned their notes from him. They tell me that mocking birds sing more and better in September than they do in April. This, I dare say, is true, though listening to them in April I do not see how it can be.
When the grateful coolness of the evening comes fast with the lengthening shadows the mocking birds carol their friendliest good-nights. The sun goes down in a flame of red as vivid as the color of the scarlet tanager which I heard in the pine tops at noon, warbling his cheery, robin-like notes through an air that quivered with gold and green, and was sticky with the aroma of pitchy distillations. The sun was the original distiller of naval stores. It is quite plain that he taught the Jacksonville millionaires the way to wealth, leading them by the nose, so to speak. The silver river of the morning is for a time a plain of burnished copper through which the sun burns a long straight trail of fire that vanishes into the blue mists of the distance. Up this trail flies the copper burnishing and the blue mists follow after, leaving an opaque mystery of darkness, an unknown, unexplorable country where was the river. Shadows well up in the orange groves, blurring the long aisles between the trees, while the mocking birds and red birds go to sleep with their heads under their wings. Silence has fallen on the cheery voices of the day, and out of the mystery of the darkness come the sourceless noises of the night.

Out of grass and shrubbery flood the shrill pipings of myriads of insects, beings that exist for us only as voices. The thought gives them
neither body nor location. It is as impossible to guess the direction whence the noises come as it is to find the creatures themselves. They are but a million infinitesimal shrillnesses merging in an uproar that nevertheless soothes and lulls. From the gray void where by day there was a river come other voices, they tell me those of frogs. These swell in rattling gusts up out of silence and down back again, an unmusical clangor as of drowning cowbells struck harshly. These should be mechanical frogs with brazen throats and tense cat-gut tongues, made in Switzerland, frankensteins of the batrachian world, wound up and warranted for eight hours, to make such eerie, disquieting music. To turn your back to the river and walk inland along the dim, uncertain aisles of the orange groves is to escape this and meet pleasanter if still mysterious voices.

From dusk till the full blackness of the moonless night wipes out all things below the tree tops the Southern whip-poor-will sings. The voice is less shrill and insistent than that of our Northern whip-poor-will, does not carry quite so far, is less of a plaint and more of a chuckle. Some Southern people say that the bird says, "Dick-fell-out-of-the-white-oak," others "Dick-married-the-widow." Both phrases seem to recognize a humorous quality in the tale the bird has to tell, far different from the lonely "whip-poor-will."
Best authorities, however, seem to have agreed that "Chuck-Will's-widow" is the most accurate translation. It is easy to fancy that Will's widow is buxom and still young, and that to chuck her — under the chin, of course — would put a mellow gurgle into any night bird's note. At any rate the gurgle is there, and though the voice ceases in complete darkness the first crack of dawn lets it through again, and we lose it only when the red-bird chorus begins to pipe hosanna to the new day.
The white sands of the Florida coast seem like the pearly gates drawing reluctantly together behind the departing traveler. The winter has rolled up like a scroll behind him, enfolding pictures of delights so different from those which a Northern winter could have given him that it seems as if for him the ages have rolled back and he is our father Adam stepping forth from Paradise, while his eyes still cling fondly to beloved scenes. The swoon of summer is on all the land which lies blue beyond those pearly gates and the soft odors follow like half-embodied memories.

Strongest perhaps of these and most gratefully lasting is the resinous aroma of the Southern pines which clothe the level peninsula in living green from Tampa to the Indian River, from Fernandina to the Keys. In the coolest of winter days this odor greets the dawn and lingers behind the sunset, and though the stronger scent of flowers often overpowers it for a time it is always there, a permanent delight. Now the fervid heat
of the sun is distilling this from all barrens, for the sap is exultant in the trees and all the turpentine camps are in full swing.

People who regret the turpentine camps set the day not far ahead, in three years or in five, when the smoke of the last still will have vanished and the ruthless ax of the woodsman following will have cut the last tree for the second-quality lumber which the turpentine-bleeding process leaves behind. Others say the end of the trees is something like the end of the world. It has been prophesied almost since the beginning and has never yet happened. Certain it is that turpentine is to-day being carried on within a few miles of Jacksonville, Florida’s principal city, just as ruthlessly as it was a dozen years ago, and though the end of the world has surely come for the trees in certain tracts, in others they still give up amber tears of resin under the wounds that are re-opened weekly that they may continue to bleed.

Young trees grow where the old ones have been taken out and in many a once-ploughed field stands to-day a young growth that will soon be big enough to yield a “crop of boxes.” It takes but fifteen years of growth under favorable circumstances to make a tree large enough to be profitable. From the time such a tree feels the ax of the turpenter until it ceases to bleed
profitably may be several years, three at least. Then if left alone it does not die. The sun which draws rich aromas from the resin on the long scar leaves behind a seal of hardened pitch which closes the wound and beneath such bark as is left the sap rises still to the nourishment of the leaves above. After a few years the man may come back with his ax and again draw revenue from new wounds that cut through the yet untouched bark. Another "crop of boxes" extending through more years depletes the final vitality of the tree. After that its value is measured only by the worth of the sap-drained lumber remaining in its trunk.

The Chinese taught the world the first rudiments of the uses of turpentine. As one follows one art of modern civilization after another to its source, it is surprising how many of them came from the far slopes of eastern Asia. It seems sometimes as if the Chinese had grown old in the arts before we of the Western world began to know there was any such thing, old and forgetful of most of them but still having lingering traditions on which we base our first halting experiments. Through them came to the shores of the Mediterranean in the unremembered ages the knowledge of the uses of the oil and the gum of the terebinthine tree, a rudimentary knowledge which modern chemistry has expanded into a
IN A TURPENTINE CAMP

science which touches all arts, from portrait painting to pavements, from sanitation to seamanship.

Without the distillations from these stately trees of the Florida barrens the forward march of the world's progress would go on somewhat haltingly and for that reason if no other we may well hope that their destruction may never be accomplished. That conservation must take the place of destruction is already the cry, and the regulations which would bring this about would not seem to be difficult to enforce. Methods which improve the product and prolong the life of the tree are already coming into vogue from economic reasons. Legislation prompted by these is already discussed. The awakening of an æsthetic sentiment which will save to Florida one of her chief beauties, the endless groves of stately trees where one wanders as in a mighty-columned temple filled with incense burning upon the altars of the wood gods, may well do the rest. The world needs turpentine and Florida needs tourists; wisdom may well be justified of both.

The old, crude method of the turpentine maker was to "box" the tree near the ground, cutting a considerable cavity in the trunk into which the sap might drip and collect. Then above this is cut a wide scarf going just beneath the bark into the sapwood, a scarf whose upper edge draws
down into a point in the middle. In our great-grandmother's day young children wore short flaring skirts and projecting white garments beneath, the lower edges of which were cut into saw points. Looking into the gold-green depths of a Florida pine wood which is being turpentinied you catch the flash of these white garments beneath the skirts of the forest as your train rushes by, and you smile. Here is all the world in pantalets. The flitting perspective flips these before your eyes in bewildering changes till you recall the lines of one who sang —

Oh, had I lived when song was great,
And legs of trees were limber,
And ta'en my fiddle to the gate
And fiddled in the timber!

Old elms came breaking from the vine,
The vine streamed out to follow.
And, sweating rosin, danced the pine
From many a cloudy hollow —

and you make sure that the days of old Amphion have come again. Here are the stately trees that buttress this solemn temple of the deep pine woods, doing a weaving maypole dance in pantalets. Surely this could happen only in an American forest.

The pitch sweats from the wood in curdy white cream and imperceptibly flows down into the boxes cut for it in the base of the tree. When
these boxes are full appear stalwart negroes, often fantastically clad, dipping the accumulated pitch into buckets and filling casks that are drawn by solemn mules, whose faces are so inscrutably stupid that they appear wise with an elder, satyr-like wisdom.

The negroes, in the freedom of the old wood, lose the veneer which civilization is giving the race and work with a care-free swing. Often you hear them in the distance singing some song that lilts and croons, that ignores the studied inter-relation of tonic and sub-dominant, that has neither beginning nor end, but chimes in its minor cadences with the music of the wind in the tree tops. It might well be impossible to reduce such songs to the bonds of modern notation. It is a music that grew in the marrow of the race before tunes were invented—a music grown sad and fragmentary now, I fear, but surely that which Amphion learned and to which the free-footed trees danced in his days. The negro of the pineries is careless, often brutal, always happy-go-lucky, but the men who employ him say that he works well with right management; in fact, is the best labor that can be had for the place, and that the business would not know what to do without him. He surely fits the scene and one would be sorry to miss him from it.

The old crude method of boxing the trees is,
fortunately, rapidly passing and in the place of the great hole cut in the base of the trunk one often passes through miles of trees that have flower-pot-like receptacles hung beneath them to catch the pitch. This means a cleaner product, longer-lived trees and greater facilities in handling. It means that when fire sweeps through the barrens as so often happens the blaze will not get down into the heart of the tree and destroy it. Before this trees which were boxed deeply would hold the fire in their light-wood hearts till it had eaten them out and the stately columns, reeling and sagging drunkenly, would finally fall in ruin, leaving but a burnt-out crater where once they stood.

The mule teams bring the casks of pitch to the still on creaking wagons. The big copper, flask-like top is taken off the great copper kettle and barrel after barrel is hoisted and dumped in till it is full, scores of barrels of pitch from thousands of trees being required for one run. The fire is started beneath the kettle and the pitch warmed up a bit till the chips which have been collected with the sap have risen to the surface and been skimmed off. The cover is replaced and connected with the great copper worm which winds down and round in big convolutions in a great tank of water which shall cool it. Then a tiny stream of water is set flowing by way of a spigot into the pitch kettle and the fire is pushed again.
IN A TURPENTINE CAMP

The refining heat melts the dross and the very spirit of the tree begins to bubble forth, is caught up by the steam from the water which is introduced and carried over into the great copper worm whence both flow, cooled and condensed by the surrounding water. But the two cannot mingle and in the end the floating turpentine is siphoned off and the residual water allowed to flow away.

By what alchemy of a subtler kind than any yet applied by man the tree draws from the gray Florida sand, from the black humus scattered through it, from the flooding rains of summer and the long glories of winter suns and the winds of space, this aromatic essence of pungency and fire no man can say. These are things for a deeper chemistry than that yet taught in the schools to fathom. So desired is it by artist and artisan that in a year more than three quarters of a million casks are shipped from Southern ports to the markets of the world, a massing of results that might well astound the Confucian alchemists of the elder race who first worked on the gum of the terebinthine tree.

After some hours of heat all the turpentine has passed from the retort and the spigot is turned at the bottom of the tank that the residue may run off. In the old-time rough working of boxed trees this was a dark, viscid liquid which soon
hardened in cooling into a brittle mass which is known the world over as rosin. To-day one may well be surprised and delighted to stand by the still when the liquid is drawn off and see what he gets. Instead of the dark mass he will see a pelucid flood which is dipped into the casks in which it is to harden and be shipped, at first a pale amber wine which might have got its color from the same source as that juice of the grape which flows from the vats in Italian vineyards. You may dip flowers in this liquid and take them out coated with a brittle transparency which is beautiful to look at and which will keep them, hermetically sealed and preserved, till a rough touch shatters the glassy envelope and it falls in splintered fragments. This is the finest rosin, the "water white" of the trade, bringing the distillers a matter of ten dollars or so a cask. The next best grade is known as "window glass," almost the equal of the other in purity, and from that the quality runs down through grade after grade till the old-time opaque, dark red rosin stands at the bottom of the list. Twelve grades in all are commonly quoted by the trade.

The flowing sap in the Florida pine trees is as susceptible as that of the Northern sugar maples to heat or cold. In the months of winter, December, January and February, little pitch is collected. In early summer or late spring the flow
is best. But as the pine of the Southern forests is more stately and taciturn than the maple, so the movements of life within its veins are slower and more dignified. On a warm spring morning in Vermont you may hear the patter of the sap in the pails and see it drip from the very trees. A man may watch a Southern pine for long before he sees any amber tear pass from the trunk into the receptacle placed to hold it. That drumming of the rising sap is never heard.

The solemn quiet of the flat-woods seems to be on the whole thing, and it is no wonder that the songs the negroes sing while working in the woods have minor cadences in them. One must learn to know these lonesome and at first monotonous pine forests before he understands them and comes to love them. Once that is accomplished, their charm for him is perennial. The endearing aroma of the pines follows him far and seems most potent when the fervent warmth of spring suns turns his thoughts toward the cool winds of Northern hillsides.

So long as the southwest winds follow his home-bound ship, so long he sniffs, or thinks he sniffs, the wild freedom of the pine levels, and the chant of the wind in the sparse tree tops seems to come to his ears and whine that wild, minor, endless tune of the elder world, fragments of which the care-free negroes chant as they gather the
pitch and scar anew the bleeding trunks. It takes a change of weather and the rough burr of a northeaster to change this. Then he smells once more the cool brine swept far out of arctic seas. His ears lose the minor cadences and prick to welcome the major uproar of surf that bellows hoarse on Grand Manan and sends white surges playing follow-your-leader over the gray rocks of Marblehead, leaps the rough cliffs of Scituate and rolls in fluffy masses of spindrift far inland on the sands of Cape Cod. Then only is the charm broken and he breathes deep of the home wind and knows that it is blowing to him across a cool land, one yet but gray-green with the first impulses of spring, but dearer and more beautiful than all others.
INDEX
INDEX

A

Abu Kasim, 32.
_Achrosticum aureum_, 117, 146.
Adam, 155, 215, 232, 234, 236, 239, 276.
Æneid, 168.
Afreed, 32, 236, 237, 243.
Ajax, 47.
Alder, 156.
Alice-in-Wonderland, 175.
Allamanda, 234.
Amaryllis, 146.
Amberjack, 251.
Ampelopsis, 54.
Amphion, 280, 281.
_Anarcharis canadensis_, 32.
Anastasia Island, 87.
Andalusia, 94.
_Andropogon_, 55.
_Arctatus_, 56, 59.
_Scoparius_, 56.
Angel fish, 251, 252.
Angleworm, 142.
Anhinga, 159.
_Anosia plexippus_, 19, 24.
_Berenice_, 24.
Apple, 49.
Baldwin, 56.

Apple, Custard, 176, 177.
Golden, 49.
Apple tree, 49.
_Ardea wardi_, 163.
Ash, swamp, 141, 142, 157.
Aster, purple, 55.
_Elliottii_, 55.

B

Balthazar, 95.
Bamboo, 141, 142.
Bananas, 40, 86, 101, 105, 114, 150.
Bass, 147, 150, 220, 225.
Large-mouthed black, 142, 147.
Northern, 150.
Straw, 142, 149.
Wide-mouthed, 151, 234, 257.
Bayberry, 70, 88, 113.
Beans, 109.
Bear, 84.
Begonia, 113.
Ben Hur, 248.
Bethlehem, 94.
Birds:

Anhinga, 159.
_Ardea carulea_, 209.
_Wardī_, 163, 209.
Birds:
Blackbird, 126, 166, 183, 195, 234, 272, 273.
Redwing, 113, 126, 166, 194.
Rusty, 166.
Bluebird, 3, 48, 112, 126, 184.
Bobolink, 107.
Bunting, painted, 218, 219.
Bay-winged, 3.
Butcher, southern, 41, 194, 203, 206.
Buzzard, 8, 9.
Turkey, 183.
Cardinal, 44, 45, 69, 70.
Catbird, 11, 12, 40, 202.
Ceophleaus pileatus, 161.
Chickadee, 45, 46.
Coot, 165.
Cormorant, 7, 8, 209, 210.
Corvus, Americanus, 43, 113, 259.
Ossifragus, 43, 259.
Crane, 165.
Sandhill, 164.
Crow, fish, 113, 258, 259.
Florida, 43.
Cuckoo, 4.
Yellow-billed, 107.
Dove, 183, 184.
Mourning, 183.
Duck, 1, 42, 225.
“Raft,” 236.
Wood, 149.
Eagle, bald, 210, 227.
Egret, 209.
Finch, 43.
Flycatcher, 20, 43, 69, 206.

Birds:
Goldfinch, 115.
Goose, wild, 22.
Canadian, 137.
Grackle, Florida, 166, 183.
Grebe, pied-billed, 33, 34, 35, 36.
Grosbeak, cardinal, 61, 62.
Gulls, 1, 210, 238, 259.
Blackbacks, 1.
Brownbacks, 1, 210.
Herring, 1.
Kittiwake, 1.
Heron, 58, 59, 169, 209, 225.
Florida, 58, 81, 82.
Florida great blue, 209, 258.
Florida little blue, 227.
Great blue, 58, 163.
Little Green, 161.
Wards, 58, 163, 167, 168.
White, 261.
Hawk, 161, 218.
“Killy,” 194.
Sharp shinned, 202.
Sparrow, 193, 194.
Jay, blue, 69, 80, 115.
Florida, 115.
Junco, 3.
Kingfisher, 160.
Kinglet, 5, 77.
Golden-crowned, 3.
Ruby-crowned, 3.
Loon, 159.
Martin, 3.
Meadow lark, 126, 196.
Mockingbird, 11, 12, 39, 40, 41, 42, 89, 193, 201, 202, 203, 272, 273.
Owl, 2.
### INDEX

**Birds:**

- Owl, Florida barred, 191, 192.
- Screech, 190.
- Pigeon, 112.
  - Passenger, 183.
- Plover, killdeer, 150.
  - Semi-palmated, 89.
- Quail, 184.
- Red bird, 77, 115, 272.
- Shrike, loggerhead, 41, 42, 193, 203.
- Snake bird, 160.
- Sparrow, 43, 69.
  - Chipping, 3.
  - English, 2, 204.
  - Fox, 3.
  - Song, 3.
- Swallow, chimney, 3.
  - White-bellied, 3, 5, 272.
- Tanager, scarlet, 273.
- Thrush, hermit, 89.
- Titmouse, 69.
- Tufted, 46, 70.
- Turkey, water, 159, 160, 161, 261.
  - Wild, 228.
- Vireo, 272.
- Vulture, black, 183, 260, 261.
- Warbler, 5, 42, 43, 69, 77.
  - Myrtle, 2, 3, 4, 113.
  - Pine, 3.
  - Wilson’s, 3.
  - Yellow-rump, 114.
- Woodpecker, 69.

**Birds:**

- Woodpecker, Partridge, 47.
  - Pileated, 160.
  - Red-bellied, 205.
  - Red-headed, 47, 48, 77, 204.
  - Wren, Carolina, 69.
- Biscayne Bay, 64.
- Blackberry, 52, 218.
- Bladderwort, 235.
  - Purple, 234.
- Bleriot, 9.
- Blitzen, 88.
- Bluebeard, 240.
- Boheria, 234, 240.
- Boisduval, 215.
- Bouganvillea, 234, 240.
- Bream, 220, 225, 256.
- Buckeye, 27.
- Buckthorn, 112.
- Bulrush, 168, 181.
- Buttercup, 181.
  - Butterflies:
    - *Basilarchia disippus*, 20, 21.
    - *Floridensis*, 20.
    - *Catopsilia eubule*, 18.
    - *Dione vanillac*, 21, 22.
    - *Georgian satyr*, 218.
    - *Neonympha eurytus*, 218.
    - *Phocion*, 218.
    - *Nymphs*, spangled, 217.
    - *Papilio*, 217.
    - *Ajax*, 206.
## INDEX

### Butterflies:
- **Asterias**, 214.
- Cresphontes, 52, 206, 213, 214.
- Palamedes, 214.
- **Thoas**, 213.
- **Troilus**, 214, 215.
- **Turnus**, 148.
- **Pieris monuste**, 213.
- Queen, 23, 24.
- Skipper, 16.
  - Long-tailed, 15, 217.
  - Silver-spotted, 217.
- Southern white, 211, 213.
- Sulphur, big, 55.
  - Cloudless, 18.
  - Little, 8, 55.
  - Orange, 51.
- Viceroy, 20, 21, 24.

**Butterwort**, 125.

### C
- Cactus, 210, 241.
- Calapogon, 182.
- Caliban, 70.
- Canary, 115.
- Cardinal, 44, 45, 69, 70.
- Caribou, 88.
- Caribbean Sea, 107.
- Carnation, 176.
- Carrot, 214.
- Catbird, 17, 12, 40, 201.
- Catbrier, 78.
- Caterpillar, 51.
- Catfish, 149, 151.
- **Catopsilia eubule**, 18.
- Cat-tail, 234.
- Cedar, 61, 70.
  - Red, 88.
- Celery, 25, 257.

### Chameleon, 269, 270, 271.
- Channel cats, 29, 31.
- Chapman, 8.
- Charleston, 1.
- Cherry, Carolina laurel, 216.
- Chestnut, 50, 109.
- Chickadee, 45, 46.
- Circe, 246.
- Clethra, 177, 217.
- Cobra, 36.
- Cock robin, 166.
- Cocoanut, 109, 239.
- Cod, 3.
- **Cephalus pileatus**, 161
- Columbus, 27.
- Convolvulus, 76.
- Cogn, 154, 176.
- Coot, 165.
- Coreopsis, 181.
- Cormorant, 7, 8, 209, 210.
- Coreus americanus, 43, 113, 259.
  - Ossifragus, 43, 259.
- County, Alachua, 164.
  - Brevard, 254.
  - Dade, 213, 254.
  - St. Lucie, 164, 253.
- Cows, aquatic, 30.
- Crab, 30.
- Cramer, 215.
- Crane, 165.
  - Sandhill, 164.
- Cricket, 188, 189.
- Crow, fish, 113, 258, 259.
  - Florida, 43.
- Chrysanthemum, 91.
- Cuba, 107.
- Cuckoo, 4, 107.
- Cunner, northern, 251.
  - Swamp, 58, 235.
Cypress, Root, 81.  
Stump, 81.

Daisy, 181.
Dancer, 88.
Daytona, 178.
Deer, 84, 227.
Dendroica coronata, 2.
De Soto, 9, 63.
Diamond back, 172.
Dione vanilloi, 21, 22.
Doctor's lake, 33.
Dog fennel, 50.
Dogwood, 267.
Donkey, 88.
Doubleday, 215.
Dove, 183, 184.
     Mourning, 183.
Dragon fly, 25, 206.
Drosera brevifolia, 123.
Duck, 1, 42, 225.
     "Raft," 236.
     Wood, 149.
Dunder, 88.

Easter, 234, 249, 241.
Eden, 97, 232, 233, 234, 240.
Edwards, 215.
Eel, 147.
Egg plant, 109, 245.
Egret, 209.
Elm, 11, 101.
Es-Sindibad, 243.
Eudamus proteus, 15.
Euphrates, 32.
Eve, 155, 215, 232, 234, 236.

INDEX

Cypress, Root, 81.  
Stump, 81.

Daisy, 181.
Dancer, 88.
Daytona, 178.
Deer, 84, 227.
Dendroica coronata, 2.
De Soto, 9, 63.
Diamond back, 172.
Dione vanilloi, 21, 22.
Doctor's lake, 33.
Dog fennel, 50.
Dogwood, 267.
Donkey, 88.
Doubleday, 215.
Dove, 183, 184.
     Mourning, 183.
Dragon fly, 25, 206.
Drosera brevifolia, 123.
Duck, 1, 42, 225.
     "Raft," 236.
     Wood, 149.
Dunder, 88.

Easter, 234, 249, 241.
Eden, 97, 232, 233, 234, 240.
Edwards, 215.
Eel, 147.
Egg plant, 109, 245.
Egret, 209.
Elm, 11, 101.
Es-Sindibad, 243.
Eudamus proteus, 15.
Euphrates, 32.
Eve, 155, 215, 232, 234, 236.

Evergreens, 57.

F

Falstaff, Jack, 189.
Ferns:
     Achrostichum aureum, 117, 146.
     Osmunda, 164, 168.
     Cinnamomea, 146.
     Regalis, 146, 168.
     Polypody, northern, 92.
     Southern, 92, 100, 101.
Fernandino, 64, 276.
Finch, 43.
Fir, 29.
Firefly, 170.
Fishes, Amberjack, 251.
     Angel, 251, 252.
     Bass, 147, 150, 220, 225.
     Large-mouthed black,
     142, 147, 234.
     Northern, 150.
     Straw, 142, 149.
     Wide-mouthed, 151, 257.
Bream, 220, 225, 257.
Catfish, 149, 151.
     Channel, 29, 31.
Cod, 37.
Crab, blue, 30.
Cunner, northern, 251.
Garfish, 151, 220, 225.
     "Grunt," 251.
Menhaden, 131.
Mud, 150.
Mullet, 33, 141, 209, 257.
Perch, salt-water, 251.
Shrimp, 32.
INDEX

Fishes:
Sunfish, 148, 149.
Trout, sea, 149, 220.
Flag, 223.
Flat woods, 110, 116, 152, 164, 241, 266.
Flycatcher, 20, 43, 69, 206.
Fort Drum, 199.
Fort Pierce, 112, 129, 164, 178, 199.
Fox, 154, 176.
Fritillary, 21.
Frog, 34, 188, 262, 274.
Bull, northern, 189.
Southern, 189, 190.
Tree, 126.
Frost weed, 268.
Fuzzy wuzzy, 39.

Grasses, Pampas, 55.
Purple wood, 55, 59, 67.
Saw, 165, 166, 167.
Wire, 184, 220.
Grasshopper, 16, 50, 51, 189, 193.
Long-horned, 187, 188.
Lubber, 79, 80.
Short-horned, 78, 82.
Grebe, pied-billed, 33, 34, 35, 36.
Greenbrier, 54, 73, 111.
Grosbeak, cardinal, 61, 62.
Grote, 215.
“Grunt,” 251.
Guava, 109, 110, 114, 176.
Gull, 1, 210, 238, 259.
Black-back, 1.
Herring, 1.
Kittiwake, 1.
Gum tree, 57.
Gum, sour, 53.
Sweet, 53, 56, 57, 67, 69.

H

“Hardpan,” 198.
Haroun-al-Raschid, 236.
Harpies, 168.
Hastings, 101, 102, 182.
Hawk, 160.
“Killy,” 194.
Sharp shinned, 202.
Sparrow, 193, 194.
Heliconius charitonius, 13.
Heliopsis, 181.
Hemlock, 89.
Heron, 58, 59, 169, 209, 225.
Florida, 58, 81, 82, 209.
Florida big blue, 258.
Great blue, 58, 163.

Gallilee, 32.
Gall berries, 112, 120.
Garfish, 151, 220, 225.
Gentian, blue, 78.
Georgian satyr, 218.
Goldenrod, 54.
Goldfinch, 115.
Goose, Canadian, 137.
Wild, 22.
Grackle, Florida, 166, 183.
Grape, 54, 73, 267.
Scuppernong, 52, 53.
Wild, 10, 265.
Grapefruit, 102, 178, 197, 198, 199, 204, 206.
Grove, 207.
Grasses, Andropogon, 53.
Arctalus, 56, 59.
Scorparius, 56.
Flat-bladed, 69.
Heron, Little green, 160.
  Ward’s, 58, 163, 167, 168.
Hesperides, 49.
Hiawatha, 148.
Hibiscus, 113, 240.
Holland, 215.
Holly, 89, 264, 266.
Honeysuckle, 69, 268.
Hornet, white-faced, 15.
Horsebrier, 54.
Horse-chestnut, 27.
Houstonia cerulea, 182.
  Purpurea, 182.
  Rotundifolia, 182.
Huckleberry, low-bush black, 112.
Hyla, 127.
Ipomea, 17.
Ivy, English, 64, 72, 91.
Jabberwock, 84, 85.
Jacksonville, 9, 30, 50, 84, 111, 129, 212, 263, 277.
Jamaica, 107.
Japanese plum, 27.
Jasmine, 26, 40, 68, 70, 73, 76, 111, 256, 266, 268.
Jay, blue, 69, 80, 115.
  Florida, 115.
Junco, 3.

K

Keats’ St. Agnes’ Eve, 2.
Keys, 276.
Key West, 250, 251.
King Arthur, 37.
Kingfisher, 160.
Kinglet, 577.
  Golden-crowned, 3.
  Ruby-crowned, 3.
Kittiwake, 1.
Knight’s Key, 250.
Kumquat, 102, 109.

L

  Sawgrass, 254.
  Worth, 231, 233, 236.
Lemon, 109.
Lichen, 51.
Lilies, atamasco, 267.
  Easter, 147.
  Fairy, 267.
  Yellow pond, 122.
Limnanthemum lacunosum, 108.
Linnaeus, 215.
“Little Cane Slough,” 221, 227.
Lizard, 143, 236, 269, 270, 271.
  “Blue-tail,” 271.
  Chameleon, 269, 270, 271.
  “Red-headed,” 271.
  “Scorpion,” 271.
  “Skink, five-lined,” 271.
Locust, 79.
Longfellow, 7.
Lonicera grata, 268.
Loon, 159.
Loquat, 26, 27, 28, 147, 148.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>M</strong></th>
<th><strong>N</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manatee, 144.</td>
<td>Nymph, spangled, 217.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandalay, 26.</td>
<td><strong>O</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangrove, 30, 134, 157.</td>
<td>Live, 1, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple, 56, 57, 158.</td>
<td>38, 42, 44, 45, 53, 57,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swamp, 53, 56, 118.</td>
<td>59, 61, 62, 69, 73, 80,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Marion, 17, 96.</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin, 3.</td>
<td>River, 80.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matanzas River, 90.</td>
<td>Scrub, 46.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadow lark, 126, 196.</td>
<td>Water, 157, 159.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melba, 188.</td>
<td>Oberon, 77.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menhaden, 131.</td>
<td>Oleander, 67, 70, 71, 72, 113, 240.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milkweed, 175.</td>
<td>White, 232.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistletoe, 62, 77.</td>
<td>Oppossum, 154, 176, 196.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moccasin, cotton-mouthed, 173.</td>
<td>Orange, 49, 52, 60, 103, 106, 108,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, 34, 36.</td>
<td>109, 115, 193, 216, 244, 272.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mocking bird, 11, 12, 39, 40, 41,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42, 89, 193, 200, 201, 203,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>272, 273.</td>
<td>Blossoms, 18, 27, 52, 176,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monarch, 19, 20, 21, 24, 55,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148.</td>
<td>195, 201.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan, 240.</td>
<td>Grove, 51, 55, 59, 64, 65,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning glory, 17.</td>
<td>102, 103, 150, 256,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moss, 44, 73, 265.</td>
<td>273.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club, 46.</td>
<td>Puppy, 51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moth, forester, 218.</td>
<td>Ormond, 178.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullet, 30, 144, 209, 257.</td>
<td><em>Cinnamomea</em>, 146.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myrtle, 121, 164, 168.</td>
<td>Owl, 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEX

Owl, Florida barred, 190, 192.
Screech, 190.

P

Palatka, 110.

Palm, 86, 117, 125, 195, 232, 243.
Cocoonut, 110, 238, 248.
Royal, 110.
Silver, 248.
Palm Beach, 177, 181, 184, 231, 243, 244, 245.
West, 233, 255.

Palmetto, 1, 45, 52, 82, 84, 89, 92, 101, 110, 111, 120, 140, 153, 154, 156, 158, 161, 162, 166, 168, 169, 171, 179, 190, 210, 219.
Cabbage, 110, 164.
Sabal, 153.
Saw, 235, 243, 244.
Scrub, 82, 83, 88, 153, 154, 165, 166, 223.

Palmetto blooms, 147, 148.
"Palmetto Leaves," 61.

Pan, 238.
Papaw, 175, 176, 248.
Papilio ajax, 206.

Asterias, 214.
Cresphontes, 52, 206, 213, 214.
Palamedes, 214.
Thoas, 213.
Troilus, 214, 215.

Turanus, 148.

Paradise, 237, 238, 276.
Parsley, 214.
Partridge berry, 46, 267.
Passion vine, 234.

Peacock, 214.
Pelican, 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 129, 130, 131, 135, 136, 137, 138.
Pelican Island, 131, 133.
Pelican rookery, 202.
Pepper, 245.
Perch, saltery, 251.
Persian, 32.
Peter, 31.
Pharaohs, 240.
Phlox, 268.
Pickle week, 122, 182, 235.
Pieris monuste, 213.
Pigeon, 112.

Passenger, 183.
Dwarf, 233.

Long-leaved, 7, 45, 53, 64, 120, 177, 241, 256.
Northern, 57, 67.
Pitch, 29, 140.
Southern, 26, 276.
White, 29, 87.

Yellow, 78.
Pineapple, 114, 116, 150.
Pinguicula lutea, 125, 127.

Pumila, 125.

Pipewort, 234.
Pipsissewa, 46.
Pizzarro, 240.

Pitch, 278, 280, 282, 286.
Plover, "kildeer," 150.

Semi-palmated, 89.

Poinciana, royal, 248.
Poinsettias, 91, 101.
Polecat, 154.

Polypody, northern, 92.

Ponce de Leon, 158, 178.

Prancer, 88.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prospero, 79.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puck, 77.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puritan, 63.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyrola, 46.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quail, 184.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbit, cotton-tailed, 154.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raccoon, 154, 196, 225, 227.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rat, 155, 192.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rattlesnake, 85, 172.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razorback, 81, 84, 85, 189, 190.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redbird, 77, 115, 272, 273.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resin, 278.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolution, 17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roc, 243.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockledge, 178.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose, 64, 71, 72, 76, 86.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bride, 256.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee, 67, 68, 70, 72, 78, 177, 203, 266, 268.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marechal Neil, 91.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea, 86, 91.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rushes, 121.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saggitaria, 235.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford, 255, 256, 257.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanhedrim, 63.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Claus, 9, 86, 87, 88, 90.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sargasso Sea, 118.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scudder, 215.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scutch, 50.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea trout, 149, 220.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedge, 31, 68, 181.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senna, wild, 18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminoles, 90, 94, 111, 255.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesbania, 71.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaddock, 200.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare, 89.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrike, loggerhead, 41, 42, 193.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrimp, 32.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipper, 16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-tailed, 15, 217.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver-spotted, 217.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smilax auriculata, 54.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild, 267.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snakes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobra, 36.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamondback, 172.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopher, 154, 155.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green, 210.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hog-nosed, 37.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigo, 154.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moccasin, cotton-mouthed, 173.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, 34, 36.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rattler, 85, 172, 174.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snake bird, 150.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snipe, 42.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soudanese, 39.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Beach, 87.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish bayonets, 39.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Main, 89.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish moss, 38.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Spanish needles,” 211.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparrow, 43, 69.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chipping, 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English, 2, 204.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox, 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song, 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spice bush, 70, 168.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spruce, 29.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEX

St. Andrew's cross, 89.
St. Lucie River, 113, 144, 156, 158, 161, 178, 181, 220.
St. Peter's-wort, 78.
Stoll, 215.
Stowe, Harriet Beecher, 61.
Stowe place, 73, 74.
Strecker, 215.
Sugar cane, 1, 101, 105.
Sundew, 123, 124, 182.
Sumac, 10, 52.
Swallow, chimney, 3.
White-bellied, 3, 5, 272.
Sweet potato, 16, 17, 19, 76.
Sycamore, 57, 109.

T

Taine, 47, 48.
Tampa, 276.
Tanager, scarlet, 273.
Tarleton, 17.
Teach, 240.
Terebinthine tree, 278.
Thrush, hermit, 89.
Tiger swallowtail, 148.
Tillandsia, 116.
Titania, 77.
Titmouse, 69.
Tufted, 46, 70.
Toad, tree, 47.
Tomato, 109, 245.
Tomoka, 156.
Trade winds, 26, 185, 212.

Trinculo, 79.
Trinidad, 26.
Trout, 257.
Tuberose, 26.
Tupelo, 53, 54.
Turkey, water, 159, 160, 161, 261.
Wild, 228.
Turpentine camp, 277.
Turtle, 159.
Twain, Mark, 269.

U

Ulysses, 198.
Utricularia, 123, 125.
Inflata, 108, 182.
Subulata, 123.
Vulgaris, 122.

V

Venus, 186.
Viburnum, 267.
Viceroy, 20, 21, 24.
Viola bland, 116.
Lanceolata, 116.
Violet, 64, 116.
English, 91, 176.
White, 116.
Vireo, 272.
Virginia creeper, 53, 54.
Vulture, black, 183, 260, 261.

W

Warbler, 5, 42, 43, 69, 77.
Myrtle, 2, 3, 4, 113.
Pine, 3.
Wilson's, 3.
Yellow-rump, 114.
INDEX

Water hyacinth, 30, 32, 33, 34, 37.
Water moccasin, 34, 36.
White City, 112, 163.
Whip-poor-will, southern, 274.
Willow, 114, 116, 145, 146, 158.
Brittle, 147.
Swamp, 115.
Wistaria, 15.
Woodpecker, 69.
Partridge, 47.
Pileated, 160.

Woodpecker, Red-bellied, 205.
Red-headed, 47, 48, 77, 204.
Wren, Carolina, 69.

Y

Yucca, 39, 41, 42.

Z

Zebra, 13, 55, 217.