

the only tree in the State of its age and size demonstrates the fact that this region is at least the safest for orange culture.

Cedar Key is the Gulf terminus of the Key Line Railway, and is situated upon one of a series of small islands or "keys" lying close to the main land and surrounded by the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, forming a capacious and excellent harbour. The neighbouring island, Depot Key, is principally occupied by the extensive "cedar-mills" of A. W. Faber & Co, where immense quantities of cedar wood of the finest quality, brought from various localities up and down the coast, are cut into suitable shapes for the manufacture of the celebrated "Faber" pencils, and shipped thence to the manufacturing factories. The sponge trade is also a prominent feature of the commerce of the place, the vessels of the sponging-fleets which operate along the Gulf Coast in either direction making the harbour and city a depot of supplies as well as a market for their product.

From Jacksonville one goes everywhere in Eastern Florida. A favourite trip is up the St. John river and by rail to St. Augustine on the Atlantic Coast. The railroad traverses barren pine flats where not a house or sign of life meets the eye. St. Augustine is the oldest settlement in the United States, and its history carries one back almost to the middle ages. It was founded by the Spaniards in 1565, more than half a century before the landing of the pilgrims at Plymouth. It still retains much of its Spanish aspect, strangely quaint and in harmony with its romantic history. The mediæval fort and gateway, the narrow crooked streets, the Moorish bell tower, the shovel-hats and black gowns of the priests, the gliding figures of the nuns, and the dark brown and black eyes and hair of the people seem like a chapter from life in old Spain. The indolent, sweet-do-nothing air of the natives complete the resemblance. The most interesting feature of the town is the old fort San Marco, now Fort Marion. It was captured from Spain by the British, and was said to be the handsomest fort in the king's dominions. Its castellated battlements, its frowning bastions, bearing the royal Spanish arms; its portcullis, moat, and draw-bridge; its commanding look-out tower and time-stained, moss-grown massive walls impress the observer as a relic of the distant past; while its heavy casements, its gloomy dungeons suggest still darker memories. Anything more thoroughly quaint and unfamiliar to Canadian eyes it would be hard to conceive.

In the town, the central point of interest is the plaza—as the Spaniard would say—or public square. You have no more than time for a glance at the old alaya-market, and at the bay beyond, before your interest in the cathedral hurries you across the street to the north side. Everything in the interior—the pictures, the pews, the domes, the altar—all suggest an age long gone by.

The grand tour in Florida, which no visitor should fail to make, is the trip up the St. John and Ocklawaha rivers. For a hundred miles or so the St. John is too wide to be picturesque. It is rather a chain of lakes from one to three or four miles wide. But the steamers shoot shuttlewise from side to side, calling at the many plantations and winter resorts on either side. Many

of these are charming spots, embowered amid foliage of live oak, magnolia, and cypress, and as we approach the air is fragrant with the breath of the orange blossoms, and, like apples of gold, gleam the yellow fruit amid their glossy leaves. Among the places that may be thus visited are Beauclerc, which, it is claimed, is the oldest settlement on the river; Mandarin, the winter home of Mrs. Stowe, surrounded by a beautiful orange grove; Magnolia, with its magnificent hotel; and Green Cove Spring, where is situated what is claimed to be the original "Fountain of Youth," the object of the vain quest of Ponce de Leon, three hundred years ago. This is a sulphur spring of surprising clearness, in which I bathed in the open air in the middle of March.

The Upper St. John is far more interesting than its lower reaches. It is much narrower, and is exceedingly sinuous in character. It is one of the few rivers in the world running north, so that while going up the river you are going down the country to ever more Southern and tropical regions.

The trip, however, better worth making, if one cannot make the two, is the sail on the Ocklawaha. The best way is to take the train by the Key Line Railway from Palatka, on the St. John to Ocala and Silver Springs. This run is made in three or four hours—by the steamer it takes twenty. The descent of the river is made in fifteen hours, and chiefly in daylight. The river can scarcely be said to have any banks—the channel being for the most part simply a navigable passage through a cypress swamp. It is exceedingly narrow and tortuous, the overhanging branches often sweep the deck, and the guards of the boat rub bare in many places the trunks of the trees. In one spot the passage between two huge cypress trees is only twenty-two feet wide, and the steamer *Okahumkes* is twenty-one feet beam.

The greatest marvel of the trip is the famous Silver Springs. For nine miles one sails through waters clear as crystal, the bottom, at the depth of from ten to fifty feet or more, being distinctly visible. Shoals of fish glide by us in a vast natural aquarium, every motion, hue, and play of colour being vividly exhibited. At last this crystal stream flows into the discoloured Ocklawaha, and assumes its turbid character. Palms, palmettes, black ash, water oaks, magnolias, and cypresses fringe the banks from most of which hang funereal plumes of Spanish moss, waving like tattered banners in the air. It is an utter solitude, save when a single crane or heron, or a flock of snowy-winged curlews flit across the forest vista.

The chief excitement of the tourist is watching for alligators. One sharp-eyed girl counted twenty-five in a couple of hours. I did not see so many, but one was a huge fellow, ten or twelve feet long. They lie basking in the sun till disturbed by the approaching steamer, when they quickly "wink their tails" and glide into the water. The pilot at the wheel ever and anon calls out "Gator on the right," "Turtle on the left," "Snake on a log," as the case may be. The mud turtles are of huge proportions, and in numbers so great that one might suppose that a grand convention of all the turtles in the country was being held.

The most wonderful aspect of the river is at night. Then on the top of the pilot house is kindled in an iron

vessel a fire of pitch-pine knots which throws a lurid glare far ahead on the river and into the abysmal depths of darkness on either side. The cypress trees thrust their spectral arms, draped with the melancholy moss, out into mid-stream, as if grasping at the little steamer as we pass. Anything more weird and awesome it is hard to conceive. Then the coloured deck hands and waiters gather at the bow of the boat and chant their strange, wild camp-meeting hymns and plantation songs, and one's memories of a night's sail on the Ocklawaha become among the most striking and strange of a lifetime.

The Three Bidders.

An Incident in the Life of Rowland Hill.

REVISED BY E. P. M.

JUST listen a moment, young friends,
And a story I'll unfold—
A marvellous tale of a wonderful sale,
Of a noble lady of old.
How hand and heart in an auction mart
Her soul and her body she sold.

'Twas in the king's highway so broad,
A century ago
That a preacher stood of noble blood,
Telling the poor and low
Of a Saviour's love and a home above,
And a peace that all might know.

A crowded throng drew eagerly near,
And they wept at the wondrous love
That could wash away their vilest sins,
And give them a home above;
When lo! through the crowd a lady proud,
Her gilded chariot drove.

"Make room! make room!" cried the
haughty groom,
"You obstruct the king's highway;
My lady is late and their majesties wait,
Give way there, good people, give way!"
But the preacher heard and his soul was
stirred,
And he cried to the rider, "Nay."

His eye like the lightning flashes out;
His voice like a trumpet rings:
"Your grand fetes days, your fashions and
ways,
Are all but perishing things;
'Tis the king's highway, but I hold it to-day
In the name of the King of Kings."

Then he cried, as he gazed on the lady fair,
And marked her soft eye fall:
"Now here in His name a sale I proclaim,
And bids for this fair lady call;
Who will purchase the whole, her body and
soul,
Her coronet, jewels and all?"

Three bidders already I see—
The World steps up as the first,
'My treasures and pleasures, my honors, I
give,
For which all my votaries thirst;
She'll be happy and gay through life's bright
day,
With a quiet grave at the worst.'

Next out speaks the Devil and boldly bids,
'The kingdoms of earth are all mine;
Fair lady, thy name with an envied fame,
On their brightest tablets shall shine;
Only give me thy soul and I give thee the
whole,
Their glory and wealth to be thine.'

And what wilt Thou give, O sinner's true
friend;
Thou Man of Sorrows unknown?
He gently said, 'My blood I have shed,
To purchase her for Mine own:
To conquer the grave and her soul to save,
I trod the winepress alone.

I will give her My cross of suffering here
My cup of sorrow to share;
Then with glory and love in My home above,
Forever to dwell with Me there;
She shall walk in light in a robe of white,
And a radiant crown shall wear.'

Thou hast heard the terms, my lady fair,
Offered by each for thee;
Which wilt thou choose and which wilt thou
lose,
This life, or the life to be?
The figure is mine, but the choice is thine,
Dear lady, which of the three?"

Nearer and nearer the preacher's stand
The gilded chariot stole;
And each head is bowed as over the crowd,
The gospel accents roll;
And every word which the lady heard,
Burned into her very soul.

"Pardon, good people," she kindly said,
As she rose from her cushioned seat;
As the crowd made way, you might almost
say,
You could hear her pulses beat;
And each head was bare as the lady fair,
Knelt low at the preacher's feet.

She took from her hand the jewels rare,
The coronet from her brow;
"Lord Jesus," she said as she bowed her
head,
The highest bidder art Thou;
Thou hast died for my sake, and I gratefully
take
Thy offer—and take it now.

I know the pleasures—'tis treasures of earth,
At best they but weary and cloy,
And the Tempter's gold but his honours of
gold

Prove ever a fatal decoy.
I long for Thy rest—Thy bid is the best;
O Lord, I accept it with joy!

I turn from the pride and ambitions of earth,
I welcome Thy cross now so dear;
My mission shall be to win souls for Thee,
While life shall be spared to me here;
My hope ever found with Thee to be crowned,
When Thou shalt in glory appear.

"Amen!" said the preacher with reverent
grace,
And the people all wept aloud;
Years have rolled on and all have gone,
Who around that altar bowed;
Lady and throng have been swept along,
On the wind like a morning cloud.

But soon, O how soon, the glory and gloom
Of the world shall pass away;
And the Lord shall come to His promised
throne,
With His saints in shining array;
May we all be there with the Lady fair,
On that Coronation day!

A Word of Caution.

WE do not want to be hard on the young folks, as regards rightful exercise, and recreation, and social intercourse with one another; but how about these roller-skates that are rolling away with so many precious hours of leisure and the silver dimes? Have you looked into the matter carefully—ay, prayerfully? Is there not danger of their rolling away with our good common sense? In fact, coming right down to what seems the truth of the matter, are we not being carried into an excess of "recreation" that is bordering somewhat upon dissipation? Where are the reading-clubs that flourished so before this skating-rink furore took possession of us? Where are the social "sings" and the "students' night," where the eager young minds sought for crumbs of knowledge? And more than that, where are the young people's prayer-meetings? As we said at the start, we do not mean to be hard on the young people, with hearts bounding with fresh life-blood, but when we find universal apathy creeping over our strongest bulwarks of society, we feel bound to throw out a word of caution. When recreation touches upon dissipation it smells the smell of scorched flame. We have but one life to live here; we cannot go back to make more of it when we see that we have handled it too lightly. We want our young folks cheery and light-hearted and happy, but we want also them to be constantly growing.—*Gracious Words.*

He will not forget you, for that would be ceasing to be got. If God were to forget for one moment, the universe would grow black—vanish—rush out again from the realm of law and order into chaos and night.