



The Real Florida

By Charles Ledyard Norton



HERE are several Floridas. That, for instance, of the local real-estate agent, those of the different and rival railway companies, that of the settler, that of the tourist, and that of the hotel proprietor. The real Florida is a composite of all these, with certain superadded qualities that are always ignored by the authorities cited. The resident Floridian is very prone to refer any implied imperfection in soil or climate to the next town or the next county.

It is not generally known that Florida is the largest State east of the Mississippi. You may cut Massachusetts from the map and lay it down almost anywhere within the confines of the State without overlapping the Atlantic on one side or the Gulf of Mexico on the other. Its irregular, boot-like, and altogether inexcusable shape creates distances that are really magnificent. There are twelve hundred miles of seacoast—more than twice that if one counts sea-washed islands and subordinate peninsulas. You may measure nearly four hundred miles—six degrees of latitude—on its meridians, and more than three hundred miles along its parallels of longitude east and west.

To the average tourist the Floridian peninsula is a vast pine-grown tract, and as such its reputation has gone forth to the world at large. Many believe it to be mainly a malarial swamp infested by mosquitoes and venomous reptiles, and, upon the whole, very dreadful as a place of residence save for invalids in the last stages of consumption. In point of fact, Florida is a fine example of sanitary engineering. The natural drainage, thanks to a sandy soil underlaid by limestone, is wonderfully good. There is little stagnant water even in the swamps, and this little rarely becomes offensive save in summer. The ideal winter day in Florida is very much like a cool day of early summer in Northern latitudes. The air is full of life, and to one fond of outdoor exercise the inclination to ride or walk is quite irresistible. By a most beneficent dispensation of Providence, the rainy season occurs during the summer months. There are plenty of rainy days in winter, sometimes more, sometimes less, but the returns of the Weather Bureau show that the average number of clear, partly clear, or cloudy days without rain is very high. Of

claim a climate that will bear comparison with that of Egypt, Italy, or Spain.

A first visit to Florida almost of necessity brings a

series of surprises. While the generally level aspect of the country tallies with preconceived notions, the observant traveler soon sees that the streams are deep, clear, and swift, such as cannot possibly exist in a dead level. And he presently begins to credit the assertion that the central divide rises to a height of some three hundred feet above the sea-level. It must not be inferred that there is a total absence of all danger of malaria. Imprudence in Florida



A Type

will induce chills and fever as certainly, though perhaps not as speedily, as it will in the Western river-bottoms.

The tourist must not count too confidently upon continued warm weather in winter. Outer clothing such as is worn in summer at the North is suitable for ordinary wear, but there are cool days when something warmer is needed. For underwear, rather light-weight wool is recommended, additional warmth being secured by wearing two suits at once, thus may valuable trunk-space be largely economized.

A light mackintosh is indispensable if excursions of any kind are contemplated. Fall overcoats or wraps are necessary, and traveling-rugs exceedingly convenient.

Topographically, the State naturally divides itself into at least three sections. There is upper Florida, whose climate closely resembles that of Georgia. Roughly speaking, this is defined by the lower reaches of the St. John's River. Then comes middle Florida, including St. Augustine on the east, Tampa on the west, and other well-known resorts which may be mentioned hereafter. At or near the latitude of Lake Worth, on the Atlantic, and of Charlotte Harbor on the Gulf, begins sub-tropical Florida—a wide, flat, sparsely settled region, where the cocoa-palm flourishes, and where other species of sub-tropical flora grow in luxuriance. This region, at least for



Live-Oak, Palmetto, and Spanish Moss

course seasons vary, there are rainy winters as there are dry summers, there are occasional "northerly" when the temperature falls so suddenly as to be trying to sensitive lungs. Upon the whole, however, the State may fairly

the Atlantic coast, has been within the last year rendered more easily accessible to tourists through the development of an East Coast Line. From a purely picturesque point of view, it is not with unalloyed satisfaction that one sees the