

MY FIRST TRIP TO FLORIDA

On the afternoon of February 1st, 1882, I left Dexter, Missouri, for the practically unknown land of Florida, just because I had a month to roam over some part of these United States and Florida was least known of any other section- being in the deep Southland and therefore a little mysterious. I spent the night going to St. Louis for a good starting point. I started for Mobile, Alabama, the next day and was way down in Mississippi the morning of the third, Our train stopped at Artesia, Mississippi, for breakfast and I paid the enormous price of "six-bits" for that meal. They said "seventy-five cents", but I had spent three terms in college and knew they meant "six-bits" in Missouri parlance.

When I arrived at Mobile, expecting to get a boat from that point to Tampa, Florida, as the line was shown on all the maps, I learned there had been no boat on that line for two years and probably would not be for two years to come. I took in Mobile and saw some of their famous shell roads and learned what the horseman's idea of trotting speed meant when he said his horse could make "two-forty" on a shell road. Saturday the fourth I headed for Jacksonville, Florida, by rail for I was determined to go to Florida; however, I stayed over at Montgomery, Alabama, for Sunday as it was considered wicked to read Sunday newspapers or travel on the railroad cart on Sunday.

Sunday morning I followed a bunch of dressed-up people to a church. When we entered, the man at the door said it was time for services to commence and locked the door behind us. There I learned my first lesson in Catholic reverence for God's house and worship of the Creator. In the afternoon I stood on the spot where Jeff Davis took the oath of

as president of the Southern Confederacy, but I did not get much inspiration from it even if I was a red hot rebel of seven summers when the war closed and doubtless would have killed a great many Yankees if the war had continued long enough.

On Tuesday morning I arrived in Jacksonville on the banks of that wonderful river that would just as soon run up stream as down stream if the man in the moon said, "Come on, follow me." By noon I had tucked the city of Jacksonville in a very small corner of my remembrance and was ready to take the true little steamer that was going up stream to go further down into Florida. When we had traveled 225 miles, we would be four feet higher up hill than we were at the starting point.

We soon progressed to where the river was five miles wide and along the edges I saw some animals with their heads under the water much of the time. I was told they were Florida cattle feeding on moss that grew at the bottom of the river. That was a stranger sight to me than were the alligators I had heard so much about. Over to the left-some little distance from the water- was the outline of a large house and I was told it was the home of Harriet Beecher Stowe. I wondered if she got the quiet and rest she sought away down south where possibly some of the ghosts of the six hundred thousand "Yanks" and "Johnny Rebs" might have lingered, loath to leave the southland where their bodies slept.

We passed through Lake George at night and the morning found us in an immense prairie on a little stream that seemed to have no idea of where it was going or from where it had come. It never crossed itself but looked like it was going to do so at several places. At some of the bends the bow of the boat had to be poled away from one bank while the stern was pushed away from the other bank as the boat made very slow speed around the bend. It needed a hinge in the middle

