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FLORIDA: THE LONG FRONTIER
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THE KEY TO PARIS
ALLIGATOR CROSSING
FREEDOM RIVER

A REGIONS OF AMERICA BOOK



Florida: The Long Frontier

MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS

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*To all who fight for
a beautiful and better*
FLORIDA

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his plump small wife, her bright dark eyes framed by six white sausage curls under her bonnet, went unnoticed, but in the Southern Methodist church where Dr. Stowe was invited to preach many Southern families got up and left in objection to "Mr. and Mrs. Uncle Tom." In Tallahassee, however, where they visited Mrs. Stowe's brother Charles S. Beecher, then superintendent of public schools, they were pleasantly entertained, although perhaps by Republicans.

Mrs. Stowe wrote two books *Letters from Florida* and *Palmetto Leaves*, part of a concerted flood of genteel advertising about Florida by Northern writers, paid by energetic Northern investors to encourage new settlers, visitors and investors.

William Cullen Bryant was sent down to write a series of articles for the New York *Evening Post*. Daniel O. Brinton wrote *Florida for Tourists, Invalids and Settlers* and the *Floridian Peninsula*. An able newspaperwoman, Abby M. Brooks, traveled indefatigably to write, as "Sylvia Sunshine," a surprisingly good book, *Petals Plucked from Sunny Climes*. Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher wrote a similar book: *Letters from Florida*. Sidney Lanier wrote perhaps the best, *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History*; and later still, young Lafcadio Hearn from New Orleans produced a queer little set of Florida pieces that is a rare book now.

All beautifully descriptive, not one mentioned the native hardships, mosquitoes, sand flies, deer flies, yellow fever, snakes, hurricanes, lack of roads, or in the north, malaria, local politics or the ruin and reconstruction of the late war. Only one advised would-be Yankee settlers to settle in colonies because of the bitterness of Floridians.

Passengers on river boats got off at the Tocoï landing for the wagons over the rutty, sandy trail to St. Augustine, now a prosperous tourist city. Its dilapidated Spanish charm, under the warm honey-colored sun, the balconies over its narrow streets, the nuns and priests walking in the fragrance of the old orange trees, the gaunt Castillo, gave them endless pleasure. Shrewd Yankee businessmen figured the value of oysters unloaded from the fishing boats and oranges from the dark groves on Anastasia Island as their wives bargained for "aigrettes" with squatting Indians, or for palmetto hats and fans and thread lace

with dark-eyed Minorcan girls, as staunch Confederates as any Southern landlady.

St. Johns River boats took more adventurous visitors up beyond Enterprise to Salt Lake. The wagons that brought in fish, venison and honey for Jacksonville took passengers jolting back through the sandy scrub to the new settlement of Titusville at the head of the flashing waters of the Indian River. It was named by that crippled old reprobate Colonel Henry Titus, who dominated its few houses, seven saloons and one store from a wheel chair on the veranda of his long, low hotel, a shotgun across his lap. People were attracted as much by his wild tales as by the lavish meals of venison, oysters, fish and rum punches. He had fought antislavery mobs in bloody Kansas, was said to have escaped jail after capture by John Brown, had raided Cuba and Nicaragua, but notably had run the blockade on this coast, where he had made a lot of money supplying, at high prices, medicines and anything else to the Confederate Army. A huge, mustachioed blusterer, he swaggered even in a wheel chair among his admiring tourists. Sailing vessels took the more adventurous tourists from Matanzas to Titusville.

Very far south, on the lonely, pale-green and violet shining waters of Biscayne Bay, ex-Governor William H. Gleason, from his two-story frame house on the river, could look over to the unlighted but repaired Florida lighthouse, dissatisfied with the emptiness. After his Tallahassee impeachment he had returned from a European trip more ambitious than ever. Presently he met on the *Halifax* an energetic ex-Union Army surgeon named John Milton Hawks, deeply interested in developing the east coast although his first colony of 500 freedmen at Spruce Creek had vanished into the brush when the company treasurer absconded with his funds. He had agreed to explore the east coast with Gleason, on foot if necessary.

The two men went south by wagon to what was left of the settlement named "Fort Pierce" for an Indian War general, a post office and a dirt-floored shack or two, battling the screaming hordes of mosquitoes for which it had been called "Port Fierce." Thirty-seven miles south by wagon they found not one house all the way to the