

"THE ENCHANTED RIVER"

(By Walter Greep)

Some time back I promised the readers of The Herald a continuation of my descriptions of the southern battlefields and wrote the article, but afterwards decided to make another trip over these fields, made sacred by the blood of heroes, before writing. Several of the "old boys" who fought in east Tennessee and Georgia have expressed a desire for further descriptions and I will send in an article as soon as I can revisit the battlefields.

In the meantime I will trouble the readers, whenever space can be found for my effusions, with stories from the Land of Flowers. Only those who have spent the winter in Florida, so green and fulsome at this period of the year, can appreciate the charm and beauty of her sunny days and perfect nights. Dire reports come to me from friends in Kentucky that the weather man is stalking abroad, scattering darkness and gloom over the fair landscapes; chill and lowering clouds, walls of weeping winds and naked woods and meadows brown and sere, come from those who have their unhappy habits in their inclement clime. "Send me a blossom," pleads a Kentuckian, "Any sort of flower would look good in Kentucky now." And my—we are overrun with flowers; red hibiscus and creamy eucalypti, golden jasmene and the Christmas flower, the beautiful poinsettia, and roses are everywhere. I have seen only one rainy day since I have been in Florida and that took place while my Kentucky friend, Roma Baize, was here. Wanted to make him feel at home, I suppose. Only two cloudy days and warm enough to feel comfortable without wrap or coat. And it nearly Christmas.

It was my good pleasure yesterday, while stopping over in Ocala to fill an appointment, to visit the most famous scenic river in the world. Ocala is a beautiful little city in the west central portion of Florida and in the center of the old Seminole camp called Ocala or the "fat of the land." Two rivers flow away from it, one to the Gulf and the other to the Atlantic. The Withlacoochee loses itself in swamps and everglades before it reaches the sunny waters of the Gulf, but the Ocklawaha winds in sinuous curves till it merges with the St. Johns and creeps on like a sluggish serpent into the waters of the mighty main. At the juncture of these two rivers, where both their headwaters really come from, is Silver Springs, the world's greatest boiling springs and famous over the whole earth for its incomparable scenery. A peculiar mark of this spring is the clarity of its waters. Most of the Florida streams have black waters, caused by the rotting of palmetto roots. But this water boils up from a distance of eighty feet and is so clear that one can plainly distinguish a dime lying on the bottom.

The setting of this resort is enough within itself to give it the name it has borne—"The Enchanted River." Like a gem in a stone sits the little village in a morass of miles width, great cypress swamps radiating in every direction and hard roads leveled over impassable bogs out to the spring which is said to be a balm for every ill. It is about an hundred feet in diameter and is enclosed in a circle of giant trees green live and water oaks, with their dark curtains of Spanish moss almost shutting off the light from the glistening surface of the peaceful water. Tall palms wave their feathery branches on high while palmettoes bend and dip their thirsty lips in the cooling stream. Wild ferns and rushes, like those on the Nile, over the edges and flowers of every hue and form make a variegated carpet on the shores. The town, which boasts only a few houses, sits well back from the spring and therefore robs this beauty spot of none of its picturesque wildness. It is like a glimpse into fairyland. Riding down the stream in a glass bottomed boat, one can glance downward at the sunken gardens and flowers on the bottom, and the colors together with a peculiar rock formation which reflects the sun rays, transforms the water into every color of the rainbow. Little fishes and tiny water insects shoot and glide about under the boat like flashes of silver and all the while the Cracker guide, who has been brought up in the lore of the land, tells you wonderful stories of the strange events that have transpired in connection with these springs.

Leaving the main spring where the water is something of a whirlpool, one glides down the river in a boat, threading his way through the beds of water-lilies and wild hyacinths, now purple with bloom, till they cross the place where legend has sunk the boat of Ponce de Leon. Then the guide tells the wonderful story of the Spanish cavalier who sought eternal youth amongst the flowery glades of Florida. How, led on by the stories of the Indians, he constructed a boat and rowed down the St. Johns to its confluence with the Ocklawaha, thence up the Silver, and just as he neared the spring that would have made him young again—he being the first white man to see it—a native shot an arrow into his body. Desperately wounded he sunk the boat and trudged back to St. Augustine on foot and later died from the wound. The boat is still there. "And here it is," says the guide, and looking down we actually see the hull of a boat, all moss covered and doubtless petrified, some eighty feet under water, and we wonder how it ever came there. It is possible that there is some truth in the legend, as it coincides with history.

Turning a short bend in the river we face a real picture of dream-land—a rudely constructed cave with flowers entwining and around it float the graceful forms of a number of snowy swans, who are trained and tame and who cackle for food as we approach. On enquiry we are informed that this is the studio of Marguerite Clark where many of her famous plays were filmed. Those in Hartford who saw the incomparable water scenery in the "Seven Swans" can see the original here because here is where that picture was made. The old bird-nosed boat in which Prince Charming came for his bride is still moored nearby.

The shores, dusky and silent, lay like a shadow dreaming, till the sudden flash of the headlight reveals the stealthy figure of a bear as he comes to the water-edge to drink or the slimy form of an alligator as he turns over in his bed of rushes. Old King Solomon, the oldest 'gator in Florida, lay slumbrous and oblivious to the world as I passed him and all the noise I could make worried him not in the least nor did he even open his eyes. The moon shines with a peculiar brilliance in Florida and riding down that stream to the home of the stolen princess, with the shadowsayer on the shore and the moonbeams pave a pathway on the water, carries one back to those old sweet stories he first heard at mother's knee. We approach the cave where she hid from her pursuers and an awe comes over us; the swans cackle the news of our approach, ever mindful of their little human sister; the scene is weird and eerie. The nymphs seem to dance in those crystal depths and the low intonings of the night birds, mingled with the chirp of the crickets and the distant scream of the panther or wildcat, casts a spell over one that it takes days to live down and the years cannot make him forget. When they called it the "Enchanted River" the Indians made no mistake.

I am keeping in touch with several Kentuckians down here this winter. Got a message from Dr. Ford a few days ago and am expecting to see him before the winter is over. Any other Kentuckians who may be here will do me a favor, if they will write me at Bartow. I will contribute other articles later and would like to know how they are enjoying the winter.

Mr. Fred White Says, "Don't Idle Because You Only See One Rat."

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"I have eight children and give Foley's Honey and Tar to all of them," writes Mrs. P. Rehkamp, 2404 Herman St., Covington, Ky.; "they all were subject to croup." It loosens and clears mucus and phlegm, stops that strangling cough, makes easy breathing possible and permits quiet sleep. It contains no opiates, and children like it. Good for colds, bronchial coughs and the coughs that linger on after influenza or grip. Good for grown-ups as for children. Sold everywhere.

Sensations That Will Eclipse Those

BIG WOOL CONSUMPTION RECORDED IN OCTOBER

Manufacturers used about 69,000,000 pounds of wool, grease equivalent, in October, 1919, the greatest amount consumed in any one month since May, 1918, when the wool textile industries' capacity was taxed by the war's demand, according to the monthly wool consumption report recently released by the Bureau of Markets, United States Department of Agriculture.

Of the amount used in October, 34 per cent was Fine; 18 per cent, 1/2 Blood; 17 per cent, 3/4 Blood; 16 per cent, 1/4 Blood; 4 per cent, Low; 10 per cent, Carpet; and 1 per cent, grade not stated. More fine wool was used in October than in any month since the monthly wool reports were inaugurated. The heavy consumption of fine wool reflects the great demand for the finer qualities of wool which has been so pronounced during the last six months, say the Bureau of Markets' specialists.

Massachusetts still holds the lead with 25,612,133 pounds, of all kinds classes and conditions, followed by Pennsylvania, 8,979,814 pounds; Rhode Island, 6,936,621 pounds; New Jersey, 5,735,314 pounds, and New York, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Ohio, and Maine in the order mentioned.

The total amounts used, by condition, were: grease, 49,506,856 pounds; scoured, 8,561,958 pounds; pulled, 1,949,601 pounds.

Detailed monthly wool consumption reports will be sent to anyone addressing a request to the Bureau of Markets, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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