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Charles I. Glicksberg

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## LETTERS OF WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT FROM FLORIDA

CHARLES I. GLICKSBERG

In 1843, on the invitation of William Gilmore Sims, Bryant had taken a journey to the South. He visited Richmond, watched the sale of tobacco, and inspected a typical tobacco factory. Later, while enjoying the hospitality of some planters in the Barnwell district of South Carolina, he had the good fortune of witnessing a corn shucking and attending a racoon hunt. But of far greater interest to him was the life of the negro observed at first hand. He listened to negro ballads and the lively music of the banjo and heard, perhaps for the first time, the hearty, extravagant laughter of the slaves on the plantation. From personal observation he judged that the blacks of that region were "a cheerful, careless, dirty race, not hard-worked, and in many respects indulgently treated."<sup>1</sup>

In Picolata, East Florida, what impressed him immediately was the luxuriance and fragrant freshness of the vegetation. Beneath the window of his lodging flowed the waters of the St. Johns, one "of the noblest streams of the country." Much interested even then in botany and horticulture, Bryant studied the pine barrens and the fruits and plants that grew on them. He visited St. Augustine,<sup>2</sup> whose ancient appearance made him think of some Dutch towns. The old fort of St. Mark impressed

<sup>1</sup>*Prose Writings* of William Cullen Bryant. Edited by Parke Godwin. (New York, 1884), 11, 34.

<sup>2</sup>*Florida Herald*, St. Augustine (April 10, 1843): "William C. Bryant, Esq. Editor of the New York Evening Post. one of the ablest democratic papers in the country, and one of the sweetest of American poets, arrived in this city on Saturday last. He holds a proud place in the literature of his country. He has taken lodgings at the Florida House."

constantly expected and any sudden disturbance was sufficient to throw the entire town in an uproar. Father and son stopped only one night there and set out next day toward Tallahassee. The jolting journey by stage must have been far from pleasant to Judge Smith who was suffering from a swollen, rheumatic knee. However, the road, busy with wagons carrying cotton to waiting ships at St. Marks was full of interest to his son.<sup>36</sup>

That same year, Edmund was sent to Alexandria Boarding School in Alexandria, Virginia.<sup>37</sup> This school was conducted by Benjamin Hallowell, who shaped its course of study toward preparing boys to meet successfully the entrance examinations at West Point.<sup>38</sup> So Edmund Kirby Smith left a scene of actual warfare in his native Florida to begin preparatory training that would lead him into a military career. Only for short visits did he return to Florida after 1836.

<sup>36</sup>Edmund K. Smith to his mother, Jan. 31, 1836

<sup>37</sup>Date of entrance gained from letter of Judge Smith to Edmund K. Smith, Oct. 1, 1845. In this letter, the Judge writes: "I have not seen Edmund more than 5 or 6 hours for a single day in nine years including prep [aratory] studies. . ." Name of school obtained from Statements of Progress, Oct. 25, 1839 and Feb. 14, 1840

<sup>38</sup>Name of director of school obtained from letter of Edmund K. Smith to his mother, July 1, 1838. Type of courses seen on report blanks sent to Judge J. L. Smith.

scribed as being good-looking, of fair race, who "have appearance of being well treated. You rarely see a negro in ragged clothing, and the colored children, though slaves, are often dressed with neatness."<sup>38</sup>

About thirty years later Bryant again visited the South and described his impressions in a series of three letters which were printed in the *New York Evening Post*. During those three strenuous and eventful decades, numerous changes had come. In the embittered days of the reconstruction period, Bryant earnestly pleaded for moderation and forbearance. As he saw it then, it was the better part of wisdom to end the military occupation as soon as possible and remove from the devastated and demoralized Southern states the stigma, the visible token of their humiliation. There was also the difficult negro problem to be considered. Bryant was not a fanatic on the subject of abolition. He was fully aware that a hitherto suppressed and degraded slave population could not be immediately granted the rights and privileges of citizenship. The illiterate negroes would have to undergo the influences of civilization; before they could be permitted to vote, they would have to be educated. Bryant wished to give the negroes a chance to acquire economic independence and political enfranchisement, but the fiat of the law could not make them become the equal of the whites. No legislative enactment could change the plain fact that the negroes were at this time hopelessly incompetent to assume the duties of citizenship. He approved of the Civil Rights bill, he urged that the Fourteenth Amendment be adopted,

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 46.

but he could not support the demands and tactics of the radicals.

Moreover, now that the war was over, Bryant harbored no grudge against the South. Slavery had been abolished, the Union restored. The problem of reconstruction should be solved in an amicable and conciliatory spirit. Bryant had no prejudice concerning the character and native ability of the colored race. They were hard-working and law-abiding; in contrast with the dissolute and illiterate poor white, they were often far superior. They were eager to receive the benefits of education. In a few years, he predicted sanguinely, their educated men would take their place as the professional men, the politicians and orators of the community. While factionalism was rife, Bryant was consoled by the thought that God in his great wisdom would bring order out of confusion.

This brief introduction will perhaps suffice to outline Bryant's general attitude towards the South when he visited Florida in the spring of 1873. The three letters that follow have never been collected.

#### A LETTER FROM MR. BRYANT.

*Some Observations and Reflections in East Florida.*

Palatka, Florida, March 18, 1873.<sup>4</sup>

It is thirty years since I was last in Florida. In that time several of our western states, which then lay in wildernesses, have become populous and boast their large cities and intersecting railways, and count their millions where they counted their hundreds of inhabitants. East Florida still remains for the most part a forest.

The long peninsula of sand—sand formed by the

<sup>4</sup> *New York Evening Post*, March 24, 1873.

disintegration of the coral rock on which East Florida lies, is divided for nearly its whole length by the majestic river of St. John, which rises in the southern part of the peninsula, a broad, deep, placid stream, as black as a Claude Lorraine mirror, with no motion that makes a ripple, and here and there spreading into lakes. Into this great artery scores of smaller streams, just as dark and just as quiet, and either drained from swamps or fed by copious springs, bring their waters and keep its channels full, in some places almost even with the banks. These low tracts are, of course, swamp; they are corded with trees and shrubs of various kinds, the roots of which are in a black mould, which stains the water drained from them. As you pass along this calm, dark river, or its calm, dark tributaries, you sweep by these marshy spots, and come to others where the shore rises a few feet above the water, and the soil is almost pure white sand. On the more fertile of these spots grow more lofty live-oaks and magnolias, and here the settler makes his openings, and builds his dwelling, and plants his orchard of orange trees. In one of these spots, named Mandarin, Mrs. Stowe has her winter mansion, in the shadow of some enormous live oaks, and here she has planted an orange grove. In another, named Magnolia, is an excellent hotel, with a row of cottages for guests, and all around them the solitary woodland. A mile south of Magnolia is Green Cove Spring, where a little village has sprung up, with the yellow jessamine, now in late bloom, clambering over the cottages. The spring itself is one of the most beautiful objects of its kind that I ever saw—a natural well of twenty feet in diameter, throwing up the translucent water in huge gushes. So clear is the water that the minutest object at the bottom is readily discerned as if it were near the eye, and that

bottom, pearly white in some parts and bright green in others, gleams through the water with a brilliancy like that of some precious stone. From the spring a copious stream runs rapidly to the St. John, supplying in its way the baths for which the place for many years past has been famous. The beauty of the ground has been marred by cutting away the evergreen shrubs that once hung over the water and putting around it an ugly border of planks.

But these are merely stations in the great forest, which for the most part, where it is not swamp, is a sandy plain covered with the trees of the long-leaved pine, under which is a growth of the dwarf palmetto, shading the size of a man's leg. In many parts the trees have been thinned by the gatherers of turpentine; no others have sprung up in place of those that have been destroyed, and the wind sighs drearily through the branches of a few that are left. Sometimes you see a track made by the wheels of carts leading from the river bank, and looking that way you discern a log cabin or two in the distance. At times you come upon groups of the palmettos, towering to a height which they do not attain further north, and giving a tropical aspect to the woods. On one side of the river you perhaps see a tangled growth of evergreen shrubs and twining plants apparently impenetrable, and on the other bank small lean cows browsing upon the green things that come within their reach, and you are told that here in Florida, on account of the scarcity of nutriment, the neat cattle soon degenerate.

For three hundred years has Florida been open to settlement, and St. Augustine is the oldest city in the United States by more than fifty years. How does it happen that East Florida is still for the most

part a wilderness. It certainly is not the fault of the region immediately north of it. The ocean winds from the Gulf of Mexico on the west, and the Atlantic on the east, mitigate the summer heats and prevent the winter frosts. It is claimed, and probably with truth, that the diseases which arise from malaria are of a milder character than in the lower parts of Georgia and South Carolina. The reason of the slow increase of population must be the meagreness of soil in the greater part of the peninsula. I remember that a writer in the *Evening Post* some time since spoke of the soil of East Florida as "the despair of the cultivator." The expression is a strong one, and perhaps, as applied to the whole region is not quite deserved. There are some noble orange groves along the St. John and in St. Augustine, which flourish and yield large returns of profit. The mud is dug from the neighboring marshes and mingled with the sand which forms the greater part of the soil, and the ground becomes fertile. The oranges of Florida are among the finest produced anywhere. The keeper of an apple-stand at Jacksonville, on the St. John, as we stopped coming up the river, asked me if I had ever tasted the Indian River oranges. I thought he said Indian rubber, and answered him accordingly. "Indian River," said he, "and you will find it the finest fruit that grows." I tried his Indian River oranges brought from New Smyrna, many leagues south of this, and could not but own that his praise was not ill-deserved, so rich and agreeably tempered to the palate was the juice, and so delicately tender the little cells in which the juice was contained. How far it is practicable to carry this method of obtaining muck from the marshes to make the immense tracts of sand productive I have not the means of judging. There is

an Orange Growers' Association here, who say in their prospectus that the best soil for the orange tree is that of the marshes when "properly drained. But the draining of the marshes seems to me a very doubtful undertaking, on account of their very slight elevation above the surface of the rivers. Could not the marshes in Florida be treated in the manner of the *Chinampas* in Mexico? There the wet ground is trenched with broad and deep ditches like canals, and the earth heaped in narrow parallel-ogams high above the water; and here all manner of vegetables and fruits are cultivated all the year round. In the dry season these narrow platforms are watered from the broad ditches that surround them.

But there are some indications of growth in East Florida. Thirty years ago, when I visited it, Jacksonville, on the St. John, was known only by its single orange grove just planted.<sup>5</sup> It is now a thriving town of four thousand inhabitants or more, and two hotels, at this season full of guests. I have just returned from St. Augustine, where thirty years since I passed nearly three weeks. It was then almost bare of trees, the orange groves by which it had been overshadowed having shortly before been killed by a severe frost. It has lost something of its ancient aspect; a few new houses having been built, among which are two hotels, but its orange trees have been renewed and they are now in bloom, sweetening the air for a great distance around them, and the mocking birds are singing among their branches. At present the place is suffering a northern invasion. All the hotels are crowded with

<sup>5</sup> In 1843, Bryant spoke of Jacksonville as "a little town of great activity, which has sprung up on the sandy bank within two or three years." *Prose Writings of William Cullen Bryant*, 11, 39.



guests, and every spare room in town which can be had for money is occupied by persons sent from the hotels, and still the tram-road over which the vehicles are drawn by mules, brings every day its fresh load of visitors. Whatever may be the fortune of the rest of East Florida, this place is likely to flourish on account of the purity of the air and the benignity of the climate, and to become the great winter watering-place of the United States. In a few years it will probably part with nearly all that is left reminding the visitor of its Spanish origin—its narrow streets, its high garden walls of shell-rock and its overhanging balconies—all but its fine old fort of St. Mark—and look like any other American town in the Southern States, saving its orange groves and the date palms, which, planted within thirty years, are now beginning to peer over the roofs of the houses. It will then be the resort of invalids who need not only a mild climate but the open air, and of idlers who come back to bask in the sunshine of this softer climate and these serener skies. For the sunshine here has been almost perpetual since we entered Florida, and although the climate here sympathizes in some degree with that of the Northern States and the great snow storms of that region chill the air even in these latitudes, yet they only make one the better for a brisk walk, and are a relief from the feeling of enervation which attends one of the warm days here.

One of the sights most worth seeing here is the place of the late Mr. Buckingham Smith. That gentleman directed it by his will to be sold and the proceeds to be applied to the support of an hospital for poor and aged colored people. His executor, Dr. Bronson, a resident of this place and one of its most public-spirited citizens, has already begun the

building. The place is one of the finest things to be seen in East Florida. A lane between overhanging orange trees, now shining with their golden fruit, forming a fragrant covered way, leads to the mansion, which is overshadowed by gigantic mulberry trees. All around the mansion are rows of orange trees now in full bloom, yet with their bright yellow fruit glittering here and there among the dark green, and scattered irregularly about are great gnarled fig trees, and pomegranate bushes putting forth their young leaves. The dark color of the soil attests the care which has been taken to enrich it with the dark mould of the marshes, and here and there you have the grateful feeling of treading upon an elastic turf formed by the vigorously growing grass, a sensation quite rare in Florida, where the grass of our northern region is almost a stranger.

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#### MR. BRYANT IN FLORIDA.

*The effects of Freedom on the Negro--Noah as a Reader of the Bible--A New Industry--A Voyage on the Ochlawaha River--A Visit to the House of Osceola--The Present and Future Attractions of Florida.*

[Correspondence of the Evening Post.]

Green Cove Springs,  
On the St. John's River, March 23, 1873.<sup>6</sup>

I did not in my last finish what I had to say of St. Augustine.

Since I visited it thirty years ago, a great change has taken place in the constitution of society here; the slaves have been set free. I then observed that

<sup>6</sup> New York, *Evening Post*, April 3, 1873.

the negro race in the town had a sleek, well-fed look, and were for the most part neatly attired. In both respects it has seemed to me that there is a change for the worse. A lady who has long resided in the place said to me: "I am sure that the generation which have grown up since the war are decidedly more intelligent than their predecessors, but physically they are inferior. They are not so well supplied with wholesome food, and the consequence is that they are not so strong and hardy. They are easily fatigued with work, in comparison with their fathers and mothers. As to their manners, they are not disrespectful, but they are, of course, not trained to the same courtesy as their parents."

I was conducted, while at St. Augustine, to their principal school, in which are two departments, each of them with its female teacher from the Northern States. The pay of the teacher in the most advanced of their departments is forty dollars a month, on which she subsists, keeping house in a dwelling erected for that purpose by Dr. Bronson in the school-house yard, and presented by him to the school. In both departments the attendance was not large, but the pupils were quick in their answers to questions, and showed a respectable proficiency.

"You should see the school," said a lady who was present, and who took a lively interest in its success, "when the town is not, as now, full of strangers. Every little creature of the colored race who is able to carry a cup of tea on a waiter without spilling it, is kept at home to wait on the guests at the hotels and boarding houses. But the scholars whom we were most proud of have lately left us, and are at the colleges for colored people in Atlanta. They had become experts in algebra and had made a beginning in Latin, and in these and other

branches of education were so well trained that professors from our northern colleges, who were here last winter, expressed their astonishment at their proficiency. We shall soon have colored teachers for the colored race.”

The lady said that the colored people were so eager to learn that she gave, last summer, lessons to washerwomen at ten o'clock in the evening, after the labors of the day were over, and found others waiting at her door for their daily lessons at six o'clock in the morning, before their work was begun. Some of our party were present at a Sunday-school held in a Methodist church in St. Augustine, and were struck with the readiness shown by the little pupils in apprehending their instructions.

They are collecting funds for founding a college at a place called Live Oaks. The frame is a spacious structure, and has been put up and enclosed; seven thousand dollars have been raised for the completion of its plan, and eighteen thousand more are wanted. I was present at a meeting at which a colored man was setting forth its claim on the public liberality.

“We have nothing narrow or exclusive in our plan,” he said, extending his arms by way of giving greater emphasis to his words; “we have no prejudices of caste or color, all will be freely admitted into our institution, whatever their profession or their race by which I understood that no person would be refused admission on the ground that he was white.

Save in the case of the very young, however, the schools have made but little impression upon the ignorance in which the colored race have been reared. Their worship in their churches gives evi-

dence of this. A lady, the other day, gave me an account of a sermon which she heard not long since in St. Augustine, as an example of their mode of embellishing Scripture history. The preacher had dwelt awhile on the fall of man and the act of disobedience by which sin came into the world, and had got as far as the time of Noah. He then said:

“De world got to be berry wicked; de people all bad, and de Lord make up his mind to drown dem. But Noah was a good man who read his Bible, and did jus as de Lord tole him. And de Lord tole Noah to build a big ark, big enough to hole part of ebery thing alive on de earth. And Noah built it. And de Lord call upon ebery living ting to come into de ark, and be save. And de birds come flyin’ to de ark, and de big lion and de cow and de possum come in, and de horse come trotting to de ark, and de leetle worm come creepin’ in; but only de wicked sinner wouldn’t come in, and dey laugh at Noah and his big ark. And den de rain come down, but Noah he set comfortable and dry in de ark and read his Bible. And de rain come down in big spouts, and come up to de doo’ step of de houses and gin to cober de floo’, and den de sinner be scaret and knock at de doo’ ob de ark berry hard. And de big lion hear de racket and roar, and de dog bark, and de ox bellow, but Noah keep on readin’ de Bible. And de sinner say, ‘Noah, Noah, let us come in. And Noah say, ‘I berry sorry, but I can’t let you in, for de Lord lock de doo’ and trow away de key’.”

The fund bequeathed by the late Mr. Peabody to the Southern States for the support of schools is found to be very convenient for the people of Florida. I visited a school for white children which received annually a thousand dollars from this source, and is under the care of a most skilful instructor

from the North. "At this school, when it was first opened," said the gentleman who accompanied me, "we thought that we could not possibly expect more than fifty or sixty scholars, but we opened with a hundred and twenty." The Catholic priesthood in Florida, as everywhere else, discourage the attendance of the children of their flocks at schools not under their especial care, and the population of St. Augustine is principally Catholic. The result shows that there are many of them who prefer that their children should be educated with those of other religious denominations, instead of being forced to keep by themselves as a peculiar caste.

Since my first visit to Florida a new branch of industry has been introduced, the credit of which is given to a lady with a Spanish name, Mrs. Olivarez. Thousands of acres in Florida are overspread with the dwarf Palmetto, a plant which has a shaggy stem lying flat on the ground and rooting itself by fibres from the under side, while its summit is crowned with a tuft of fan-like leaves of a tough fibre. Those leaves, dried and bleached in the sun and shredded into strips, are formed into braids and the braids into hats and bonnets of a texture as flexible, and I should think nearly as durable, as that of the well-known Panama hat. In this way a plant which the settler has regarded as a pest is made to give bread to thousands, and becomes so valuable that its disappearance would be regarded as a misfortune. The names of Mrs. Pucetti, Mrs. Carrana, Mrs. Canova, and Miss Usina, over the shop doors in St. Augustine, show how generally the original population of the town have concerned themselves in this branch of industry. Our party went the other day to the Magnolia Grove, a few miles north of St. Augustine, a noble wood of great live oaks,

festooned and curtained with moss, with a magnolia tree in the midst, where picnics are held, and on our way we passed by a solitary cabin, about which the sandy soil was spread with the leaves of the dwarf palmetto, whitening in the sun, which here at this season shines almost perpetually.

Some benevolent ladies among the guests from the North at Magnolia have discovered, in the depths of the surrounding forest, a family of Crackers, as they are called, or poor whites, who have attained a certain humble prosperity by this occupation. There is a mother and several children, among whom are daughters, unlettered, ignorant if you please, but not unintelligent, dwelling in a cabin kept with the most scrupulous neatness, kind, courteous, laborious and cheerful. Within the last year they had received eight hundred dollars for Palmetto braid, sent by them to New York.

I returned the other day from a little voyage up the Ochlawaha River to Silver Spring. We took passage at Palatka, a little town on the St. John, beyond which the larger steamers do not ascend, and which, therefore, is a sort of mart for the surrounding region. It has its rich orange groves, on both sides of the river, and its little plantations of bananas, from amidst the long leaves of which, withered by the frosts of last January, new ones are breaking forth with a greenness and vigor which give some promise of fruit in the approaching season. Our steamer was a little thing of its kind, rudely constructed, with slight attention to comfort or convenience, for navigating a narrow and extremely winding river, where it must occasionally strike the trunks of the trees rising from the water's edge. We left our wharf at eight o'clock in the evening, and when the morning broke found our-

selves in the Ochlawaha, with the steersman, a sturdy black fellow, at the wheel, apparently exerting his utmost strength to keep the little steamer from running into the bank, on some sudden turn of the stream, or dashing itself against the cypress stems that grew directly from the dark waters. In the night a lady of our party had her finger stung by a scorpion.

Our way was for more than a hundred miles along a narrow passage made by the river channel through a woodland solitude, mostly a morass, in which the roots of the trees as far as the sight could penetrate were steeped in the water. We looked for alligators, but the sunshine, though bright, was not warm enough to call them forth, but occasionally we passed a huge snake, the water moccassin, coiled up on a log or projecting branch over the stream. The kingfisher chattered and dived for his prey before us, brilliantly colored butterflies crossed from one bank to the other; the water-turkey left his perch, and the noisy, long-necked birds which they call the lepkin flew away screaming into the depth of the woods. Once a deer showed himself on the bank, and quickly disappeared.

When night again came on the crew lighted a fire of resinous pine on the upper deck over the bow of the steamer, and then the scene presented was one of the most remarkable that I ever saw. The strong ruddy glare of the fire seemed to bring closer to each other the leafy walls of the green arcade through which we were passing, and, changing their hue to the eye, gave them an unearthly yet beautiful aspect, such as we might ascribe to the groves of the Underworlds.

The morning found us moored to the landing in Silver Spring, a basin some five or six rods across,



a natural well of transparent water, with patches of a bright green color at the bottom, and so clear that you see at a great depth the fish with which it abounds. It feeds a stream called the Silver Run, which flows with a current of clear white water into the Ochlawaha, and gives to that river a perceptible flow and frequent ripples, which you do not remark in the lower branches of the St. John.

Five of the party on board our steamer in carriages to Ocala, six miles distant, the principal town of Marion county, and before the Indian war of Florida the residence of the famous chief Osceola, which we reached by a sandy road through pine barrens. The town is pleasantly situated, in a region of more varied surface than I had seen in any part of Florida, gentle declivities and long smooth valleys, with groups of lofty and spreading trees, looking like a country long settled, although the town was only laid out twenty-seven years since. It is, in short, such a region as Bartram, in his account of Florida, loves to describe, or rather to exaggerate in his flowery prose. The landlord of the Ocala House, who escorted us to the town, gave us, as we went, some account of his neighborhood.

“Here,” he said, “in Marion county is some of the best land in Florida. There were large plantations on both sides of the way that we are traveling, where Sea Island cotton and sugar cane were raised. They are abandoned; there is nobody to work them. The negroes in this county exceed the whites in number, and the moment they were free they took advantage of the Homestead act and took up lands in the tracts belonging to the government, and refused to work on the plantations. There are plantations on which were machines and implements for making sugar, costing, perhaps, twenty thousand

dollars, all of which are useless and ruined for that reason. But we do the best we can. We have thirty public schools in this state, and we cheerfully pay our school tax for the education of the blacks. Our most eminent men sit with them on juries and associate with them in various departments of public business. We have, in the main, a law-abiding population. I was foreman of the Grand Jury at the term of our court now sitting, and we found but two indictments."

I went with Mr. Harris, our landlord, into the Court-house. Two persons stood up, arraigned on one of these indictments, while it was read to them—a man and woman, black as jet. It was an indictment for adultery; from which I inferred that an effort was making to enforce the marriage obligation, hitherto but little respected by the colored race; one of the consequences of a state of slavery.

Our guide returned with us to Silver Spring, taking another route, or rather passing from one old plantation road to another. "I do this," he said, "that you may see that Florida is not all swamp and sand, but contains good land. Here is a hummock of twenty-five thousand acres, and there are numerous other large ones between this and the Gulf of Mexico. We passed through a beautiful forest of lofty trees—the sweet and sour gum, the magnolia, the water oak, the prickly ash and others, with a dark soil, a firm road beneath our wheels, and here and there the limestone rock cropping out in the roadsides. We reached Silver Spring after a long drive, and thence made our way to this place.

Since writing about the braiding of palmetto leaves I have seen people at work on the leaves of

the tree palmetto, which are larger and longer than those of the dwarf species. They claim that it has a tougher fibre and is more durable, and object to the braid made from the foliage of the dwarf plant, that after a certain time it acquires a red tinge.

Coming to this place, I found the two hotels crowded with guests, many of whom were quartered in the neighboring cottages. This hotel, the Clarendon, is like a beehive, murmuring all day, and far into the night, with its swarm of inmates. It is so everywhere. Florida is overrun with a northern invasion. The Jacksonville newspapers give long lists of passengers daily arriving. The hotel at Magnolia is full, the two hotels at Palatka are full, and accommodations for strangers are sought in private houses. At St. Augustine they come in daily by scores; and people are seen wandering about the streets with their travelling bags, seeking quarters. "We have accommodations in St. Augustine," said the keeper of our hotel, "for twice as many visitors as we had last winter. We were crowded then, and are crowded now."

For my part I have no doubt that the number of those who resort to Florida will increase with every season—for this reason, if for no other, that this region may be reached without a sea voyage. With the increase of resort, the accommodations for visitors will be improved and multiplied. There will be better means of reaching Silver Spring and the glades of Ocala, and of penetrating to Indian River, that the children of the North may pluck, where they grow, those apples of the Hesperides, the finest oranges in the world. In many more places the arid sands will be coaxed into fertility and beauty by being mingled with the dark soil of the

marshes, and kept perpetually fresh by water drawn from a very little depth by windmills, and distributed over the surface. At some future time here will be groves of the date palm, which has flourished at St. Augustine, and gardens with hedges of myrtle, and walks embowered with the arbutus, and the laurel of Europe, and every beautiful evergreen which grows under the skies of Italy, for the refreshment of those who come from the snow fields of our harsher clime.

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### A LETTER FROM MR. BRYANT

A Florida Town—A Glimpse of Savannah . . . . .

Norfolk, Virginia, April 9, 1873.<sup>7</sup>

I have yet one or two things to say to the South, which furnish matter for another letter.

On my journey hither I stopped for two or three days at Jacksonville, the principal town in East Florida, and really a flourishing place. When I said, the other day, that its population exceeds four thousand, I merely repeated what somebody told me. I afterwards inquired of one who has lived there ever since the civil war. "The place," he answered, "is rated at ten thousand, but probably that is more than it contains; we may fairly call it eight thousand." It is laid out with very broad streets, shaded with sturdy trees, the live oak and water oak, evergreens both, and through the unpaved sandy streets, without a pebble, the wheel carriages plough their way unheard, or run as noiselessly over the sawdust with which some of them are overspread, while the foot-passengers make their way on sidewalks of plank. Steamers and other river

<sup>7</sup> New York *Evening Post*, April 15, 1873.

craft lie at the wharfs on the river St. John, new buildings are going up, and the private dwellings are, for the most part, spacious and surrounded by gardens. If the wheel carriages roll silently, the steam sawmills, on the other hand, keep up a continual grating and creaking. The broad, sandy plains around the town are stripped of their huge pines, the growth of centuries, which are here slit into planks, and the refuse parts of the trees are pushed upward on ascending platforms and then flung down upon a fire that blazes and crackles from morning till night. At present, certainly, Jacksonville seems to be prosperous.

In approaching Savannah by rail I perceived some striking indications of the ravages of the late civil war. Mansions of the former large plantations reduced to ashes, with the chimneys standing, and new log cabins raised in the clearings of the dreary pine forest, marked the changed relations of the white and black races. Here and there we passed breastworks of earth thrown up for defence. Savannah, however, shows to the casual observer no traces of the late struggle. Its well-built rows of houses, extending over what were open fields when I last saw the city, its great trees spreading a broader shadow, its glossy broad-leaved evergreens peeping over the garden walls, and its warehouses crammed with bales of cotton, give no report of the terrible collision between the North and the South. Between Savannah and Charleston, however, the ruined dwellings of the planters are not infrequently seen. [The remainder of the letter relates to Charleston and Virginia.]