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A FLORIDA SETTLER OF 1877

THE DIARY OF ERASTUS G. HILL

Chicago. Jany. 19th, 1877-

Am off for a home in the beautiful state of Florida. I can hardly realize that I am an emigrant & that after so many pleasant years in Chicago I am about to leave it perhaps forever. After two weeks investigation I have made up my mind to try it and if nothing else comes out of it I shall have a delightful trip for this season of the year. I only wish Hellie could go along but I hope to have her with me shortly. ****

The country we came through from Macon to Jessup is the poorest I have seen in the South. Pine sandy lands on which nothing will grow the only thing I could see done for more than 150 miles was getting out lumber & making turpentine. The only decent place the entire distance is Eastman where the Georgia Land & Lumbering Co have its Headquarters. Mr Eastman has built a very fine house & Mr Dodge of New York is just completing a fine large Hotel, though what there is to induce people to go there is more than I can see. We have considerable sport amongst ourselves in spite of our surroundings & pass the long weary days quite pleasantly. I talk politics with all sorts of people & find that they all without exception say they are tired of this continual wrangle & that what the people of the south want is peace and prosperity & no more agitation on political subjects. The niggers in this state all vote the Democratic ticket & do so from choice for they have been lied to & cheated by the carpetbaggers of the north until they have made up their minds that their real friends are their own people. I must confess that my mind has changed wonderfully in the last few days in respect to this question & there seems to be

Note-The QUARTERLY is grateful to Mrs. L. H. Hill of Lawtey, Florida, for permission to publish this diary which has been preserved for so many years in her family, and to Mr. A. Z. Adkins, Jr. of Gainesville for bringing it to the attention of the QUARTERLY and securing that permission. Our readers, also, will thank them ; for here we have a first-hand account of why and how so many thousands of families moved to Florida in the early days.

hardly a decent white man in the south but what is a democrat simply for the reason that the government has given them or forced upon them a diabolical set of rascals who plunder them of all they can acquire. We reach Jessup at 7 o'clock 185 miles in 11 hours pretty quick time. The train from Savannah comes along at 8 & we have time to get our supper & walk up & down the platform before we take it. I succeed in getting an upper berth & sleep pretty well till we awake in Florida.

Jany 26th 1877-

Jacksonville is reached at last we get here at 11 o'clock our ride since daylight was through a low flat pine & palmetto country worthless for all practical purposes & as a gentleman remarked not worth 25cts per acre. We reach Baldwin at about 9 o'clock & make connection with the Fernandina & Cedar Keys RR we come on to Jacksonville however. Stop at the Nichols House a very pleasant & comfortable Hotel as Southern Hotels go don't quite come up to our Palmer House. After dinner I called on Harry Stouk and found him quite pleasantly situated at the Montcrief House. T. L. Hansen & wife were here & I almost felt sorry that I hadn't gone there instead, but my stay will be so short here that it will make little difference. a Gentleman by the name of Traill in the service of the Hudson Bay Company is one of our 3. Chas Lord of England being the 3rd. Lord is in search of land & Traill in the search of health. I find he knows Bullock very well, as who dont? I fell in with a Gentleman by the name of West from Lafayette Ind. who spends his winters in Southern Florida & he is of the opinion of course that there is no section that has the advantages of Orange County west of Mellinville [Sanford] but it seems so far out of the world that I hesitate about trying it. It is about 250 miles south of here & the only communication is by water & private conveyance. I think I shall try the Gainesville Country first. Jacksonville is the most delightful town I ever saw on short acquaintance. We spent the afternoon in looking about town & I called on Mr

Keene who seems a very pleasant Gentleman. He has a very nice Dress and Fancy Goods Store & looks prosperous. had a very pleasant talk with him. he is a Maine man & has been here 21 years. I notice every house here is a hotel & I think there is more idleness to the square yard than any place I ever saw. no one seems to have anything to do but kill time The stores & business houses are a credit to the place being large & everything on sale that one could wish for. The town seems one vast grove of liveoaks & as they never lose their foliage they present a most beautiful sight all the yards are filled with flowers & orange trees & as the orange trees are filled with fruit they look beautifully. No grass in Florida, no grass in the yards, nothing but sand, sand, sand, but its the worst sand I ever saw. vegetation of all kinds seems to thrive luxuriously whether it needs fertilizing or not I dont know, but roses *are not in bloom* at least not in Jacksonville. the cold weather of the past winter has done a vast amount of damage to young trees & early production & makes people think that only Southern Florida can successfully raise tropical fruits. We do the town pretty thoroughly & the more we see of it the better we like it. The thom. stands at 70 & people sit with their doors and windows open & stroll up & down the covered verandas & dont act at all as if it was midwinter no overcoats needed. Oranges are to be seen everywhere & are very cheap. The finest can be bought for \$.25 per doz. & they are very much better than anything we can get at home All the Hotels have bands playing in the Parks in front of the house & the evening promenades are delightful. it is nearly full moon now & I can hardly imagine any more beautiful sight than the streets present this moonlight night. it is as near an earthly paradise as one can find on this continent & must be very like the evenings in Italy without the unpleasant surroundings. We retired at a late hour, leaving a very gay party of dancers in the dining room & fell asleep to the music from surrounding houses & parks. surely Jacksonville deserves all the praise it has received from its admiring friends.

Jany 27th-

We are up at 8 o'clock & get breakfast while picking our teeth on the piazza the agent of the Steamboat line came along & kindly invited us to go to Fernandina fare 2.00 as we have to go there anyhow it strikes us that we will save time by going today instead of waiting till Monday as I supposed we should be obliged to, so we close the trade and take our luggage aboard the boat. We start of so suddenly that I havnt time to say goodbye to Harry & they will think I am lost. We get a dozen fine oranges & go up on the upper deck and enjoy the beautiful day. Thom. stands at about 70 & the river is alive with boats sailing & rowing. Astor's yacht lays in the river opposite the Carleton House & is a beautiful craft. there seems to be some pleasant places down the river & quite a good many nice looking orange groves. When we get into the river called 2 sisters we have lots of sport Traill brought along his rifle and shotgun & we find game quite plenty. he shot 2 ducks some gulls a Kingfisher & made a wonderful shot with his rifle at a snipe over 200 yds. away & killed it. Ducks now very plenty but quite shy so that it was very difficult to get a shot at them. in places along the river we saw plenty of porpoises but as our boat was running very fast were not able to get a shot at them. notice a large number of cattle feeding on the marshes & some of them up to their necks in the water eating the tall grass. its about the only place where they can find any feed. most of them have short tails. The alligators bite off all they can reach. we havnt as yet got a good look at an aligator it is rather too early in the season for them in this part of the state. on account of the low tide we are delayed & dont get into Fernandina till 8 o'clock in the evening. we stop here notwithstanding the strenous efforts of the clerk of the boat to induce us to go on to St Mary's & stay over Sunday. We get a good supper & Traill finds in the landlord a red river man who talks over all the notibles of that country & who was Col of a Minnesota regiment during the war yet like everyone

else is a strong democrat now. Me is a very pleasant man & joins us in a game of whist in the parlor. Lord & I play against Traill & the Landlord & the score for 3
 Lord Traill Lord Traill Lord Traill
 games was 10 8 10 6 10 0 They
 thought it was time to go to bed & we thought so too
 for them.

Jany 28th-

Fernandina is a town of about 3000 inhabitants & delightfully situated, more so than any town I have seen it has St Marys river on one side & the Ocean on the other being on Amelia Island it must be 100 to 150 feet above the ocean & it is claimed has the most even temperature of any town in Florida. They claim that for every town so it must be taken with some allowance in the landlords garden however I notice cabbages heading out & he says he plants them at all seasons & they never freeze. Oranges seem to thrive here quite a good many being around the gardens with fruit on them. As it is Sunday and nothing going on in town it being unlike Chicago a religious community we take the shell road & walk over to the beach a distance of nearly 2 miles & find it a most delightful place. it extends up & down the coast for 20 miles & is as fine a beach as I ever saw. we can pick up any quantity of shells & as we walk towards St. Marys river there are several wrecks strewed along the shore. We strolled along the shore for 5 miles & as we come round into the river Fort Clinch comes in sight. we capture the place & find only a sergent in charge he lives a mile away & only look after it to see that no one does any damage. every-thing is falling to decay & unless something is done it will soon be a mass of ruins. It has mounted on the wall perhaps 1/2 a dozen immense 15 inch guns throwing 400 lb shot & down in the fort are a large number of smaller guns on wheels but they are rotting to pieces. The buildings are all falling down & the fort itself is fast being burried by the drifting sand. it was quite an important post during the war & was captured by Gen

Gilmore in 1862 & held during the rest of the war. We walk up through old Fernandina about a mile from the new town, this was the old Spanish settlement & remains of the old Fort still remain. When we reach the hotel we are very tired & ready for dinner to which we do ample justice & feel disposed to keep pretty quiet the rest of the day. I write a letter to Hellie & after supper all go to the African Church where we get the Simon-pure nigger worship. Twas quite amusing to my English friends. We left before services closed the Dark who was expounding the text was so long winded that we got tired & concluded that we wernt being instructed much & took a little walk around town. The Southern moonlight nights at this season of the year are the loveliest I ever saw. there seems to be a radiance that much surpasses the Northern moon I am inclined to think it must be a different moon. we cant enjoy it & sleep too however.

Jany 29th-

We wanted to get away into the country to day, but as there is but one train & that goes at 5 am we are unable to go as we havnt seen Mr Swann. Traill leaves us & returns to Jacksonville then to Southern Florida, hunting. he has a years leave of absence & we may meet again. he is a genial gentleman & we part from him with regret I think he will have to make Florida his home yet, for his lungs are very weak. Lord & I try to see Mr Swann but are unable to do so till 4 o'clock in the meanwhile we watch the Darks work & make up our mind that if there is a lazy shiftless set on earth its they. We see Mr Swann & find him a very pleasant gentleman. he talks with us for over two hours gives us letters of introduction to lots of people all along the road, passes from Fernandina to Cedar Keys & return for ourselves and families with transportation of all household goods &c free. the information he gives us is very valuable & he does it in the most disinterested way, tells us we need feel under no obligations to buy his land he only wants us to find a desirable place to locate

& be satisfied as we have to leave at 5 o'clock in the morning it is desirable to bring this diary to a close.

Gainesville Febry 2d 1877-

I have been knocking about so much the last 4 days that I couldn't find time or place to keep a single note. We left Fernandina Tuesday A M 5 o'clock the stars shining brightly & got to Baldwin at 9 for breakfast here we commute with the trains to and from Jacksonville. I wouldnt recommend Baldwin as a place of residence it must be under water a good part of the year. We have the best cars on this road I have seen in the south an evidence that a little of the nothern element is working, but few niggers at the stations & but few houses & few stations we get to Lawtey about 10 1/2 o'clock & make our first stop in search of a home jumping off the train the first man I see is Dr Gleason who lived on Park Avenue near Lincoln & the same chap who played chess with me at O'Neils several years ago I recognized him immediately & he me & I began to feel at home at once. he introduced me to Capt Burrin who owns 18,000 acres of land here & who sold Dr Harris & the Chicago cclony their tract. He is a jolly good hearted Englishman & lived here alone in the woods for 5 years & was coaxed into selling the colony their lot & after the ice was once broken he is willing to furnish all who came with land at \$5. per acre. Dr Gleason introduced us to all who were about & we took a walk up the RR about a mile to where some of the boys were planting cucumbers. found that some of them knew me for they were from Farwells, HW King & Co & other wholesale houses in Chicago. Dr Harris was out surveying so that I didnt see him till late in the evening. We went to the "Harris House" and took dinner. Col Rice wife & three children Dr Harris wife & three children & two or 3 of the boys live there it is a little one story log cabin & at one time they lodged & fed 23, only 3 rooms in the whole business. Mrs Harris & Mrs Rice do all the work & Mrs H. came here for her health. She was so delicate. the children run wild & look as if it entirely agreed with

them. after looking around the place some Dr Gleason & I took a trial at chess & I got beaten 2 games out of 3. took supper at the Harris House & made the acquaintance of the Dr. he is an a no 1 man who is a driver, has been about the world a great deal & seems to have profited by it. lately connected with "Nesby" on the Toledo Blade. he is the life & soul of the whole enterprise & runs it as far as the business is concerned. The association is composed of 33 members & every member has a vote. The town has been laid out 60 acres in acre lots & the lots drawn for. when the land is surveyed & platted the farms will be drawn for in the same way some take 40 & some 80 acres. it looks very primitive only 20 acres cleared around the station the rest all pine forest. they have rented & under cultivation 125 acres & will keep what cleared land they have in the track for the benefit of the association. We spent the evening at Capt Burrin & slept at Dr Gleason he has a rough board house one room down stairs & one up without battening the cracks & the air circulates quite freely through all parts of it yet it is sufficiently comfortable for any season of the year The Dr & I sat up till 10 o'clock & played chess & I won 3 games out of 4. we had a couple of cots made up in one corner of the room & curtained off with sheets which gave us very comfortable accommodations. Wednesday morning we lay in bed pretty late for we had been without much sleep & were pretty well fagged out. Dr Harris insisted upon taking us over his tract & after a good deal of delay loading cartridges & c & c we got off after dinner each with guns. we tramped the entire afternoon till dark killed a few birds, plover, pigeon & c & got besides a very good idea of the nature of the country. My impressions were very favorable & the Dr seems to think he has got the best land in Florida. I picked out 20 acres which I thought would suit me & also a town lot he says I can have the town lot on the same terms as the members but they wont sell the land for less than \$5 per acre. had a long talk with Harris privately & told him what Lord wanted & he *sat up*

with Burrin nearly all night talking about it. Lord wants a large tract for a stock farm & has got plenty of money to run it so he is something of a catch for a man who has got land to sell. I played again with Gleason & got beat 3 games out of 5 & went to bed at 2 o'clock. Thursday morning while we were eating breakfast Dr Harris came in to tell us that Mr Burrin wanted to take Lord over some of his tract & wanted him to stay over another day to do so, they insisted upon it so much that we concluded to do so & Burrin & Lord started off on horseback & were gone all day. Gleason & I took a good look at the town plat & I picked out a building lot provided I concluded to locate there I spaded into several places & found very good soil with a clay subsoil 2 to 3 feet down. it seems to me that stuff ought to grow on such land & the clearings that we looked at show that with the miserable cultivation they have they produce very fair crops. I saw & made the acquaintance of Mr Low a gentleman from Washington who has bought 1400 acres about 6 miles from Temples Mills & is building himself a nice house on it. I made an appointment to meet him the next day & go out to his place. during the day I played several games of chess & rather got the worst of it also met Dr Horsey at Capt Burrin's. he lives in Fernandina & comes here for his health. he has consumption & says he has prolonged his life for several years he thinks this is the helthiest place on the road. He tells me that scarlet fever, measles, diphtheria, croup, colera, Influenza are things never known here, in fact no contagious diseases at all are prevalent, & it is a perfect paradise for children. it makes me feel anxious to get the babies here as soon as possible. Lord got back towards night much pleased with the land he had been over & he and the Capt seemed to have got along together first rate. we called on several of the boys in their cabins & find them very comfortably situated & Gleason & I sat up till after midnight & played chess getting considerable the worst of it. Should I make up my mind to stay *here* it would relieve the monotony of backwoods

life to have someone who can give his evenings to the game. He is crazy to have me come if for nothing else than to play chess with him. Friday morning we get away & leave Lawtey behind after a very pleasant stay & it seems almost like leaving home it looks as if their prospects were good for a successful colony & I sincerely hope it may be so. we get to Temples at about 11 o'clock & find Mr. Low waiting for us & anxious we should go out to his place, but Mr Temple has some business & cant go with us but says if we will wait until tomorrow he will take us all around both Saturday & Sunday Mr Low has a nurseryman going out to look at his tract with the purpose of setting out an orchard so we conclude we will go on to Gainsville & here we are. We stop at the Arlington house & have splendid accomodations the best we have seen in Florida it is a new house just opened for trade & everything is first class & prices lower than in Jacksonville. They give us parlors 3 & 4 for our rooms. we get a *good square* meal & then hunt up Mr Tomlinson who together with Mr Loomis of Chicago is putting out a 10 acre orange grove. pass the P.O. on our way & find letters from home, which though old are very acceptable. We have no difficulty in finding Mr. Tomlinson who takes us out to his place & we get our first lessons in orange culture. he has taken a wild piece of land set out about 100 trees & same bannas fenced it all in & got it in very nice shape in just a year. it has cost him to say nothing of his own time & labor 1000\$ to do this & he has certainly a fine showing for the expense. He has bought sour stumps & a few sweet seedlings & intends to bud them as soon as the sap starts nicely. if he makes it a sucess it will be an entire sucess but if a falure an entire falure I think I should have set out 1/2 & 1/2 & got two chances. The trees are looking nicely not having been injured by the winter while a great many of the trees in the famous Orange County district were killed outright. He tells me that he payed 10\$ per acre for that ground a year ago & that adjoining him they ask 100 & several tracts have been bought by

Chicago parties at 75 I endeavored to get off from such high priced ground immediately especially as I couldn't see where even \$10 per acre was profitably invested. The soil about here is bald sand it wont grow white beans & only by the highest cultivation can vegetables be made to grow. truck farming *has not* succeeded in this locality except on the hammock lands further down the road & last year everyone engaged in it lost money on account of the long distance to transport & the bad order of stuff on arrival high freights & dishonesty of commission men. *They say* truck wont pay. they say lots of things here which if one should follow out, I have no doubt they would arrive at the same pitiable state in which the natives at present are. I think however as far as I can see that the people hereabouts are a better class than in most of the other southern states yet they are but little raised above the brute & the niggers are *no* better in many respects. Mr. Tomlinson is a man 71 years of age yet he doesnt look over 60. his years residence in Florida making him younger by 10 years he says. he can work hard all day without making him tired & he looks hale and hearty. he has the *only* orange grove in the neighborhood of Gainesville strange as it may seem, although there are plenty of trees in the yards in town which appear to thrive well. The people as a general thing are too poor to afford the expense & the most of them when asked why they havnt planted out trees say "they never thought of it", "well why dont you do it now," its too late now" it makes me think of the man in this same country who when asked why he didnt shingle his cabin replied that when it was fair weather it didnt need it & when it rained he couldnt" That is about as much sense as they have got. Gainesville seems better located than any town on the road me have seen. A good many of the recently built houses have been put up by men from the north & give the place a better appearance than other towns outside of Jacksonville. there must be 1500 or 2000 inhabitants. it lays on a high sandy knowl & overlooks the country for some distance

around. Mr Tomlinson took us to see Dr McMillin who is an old resident here & a large property owner & we talked with him several hours he had maps & plats and seemed to take considerable interest in having us locate near Gainesville. wrote home in the evening & went to bed pretty early having a good place to sleep for the first time in several nights.

Saturday Feby 2d-

After a good nights rest & a good breakfast we had a call from Mr Tomlinson who wanted us to see Col Thompson an U.S. official who owned a place about 15 miles north of here. we called upon him & while Lord talked with him I conversed with Mr Barnes the sheriff of the county. he is a very strong republican & takes extreme views on political subjects. I couldnt agree with him on many points. he is a Boston man & has lived here since the war as has Col Thompson, but Col T has been bulldozed out of the country & has got to leave & is willing to sell a place for which he paid 9000\$ for since the war for \$3000. We made an appointment to meet him Wednesday & look at the place our train left at 11 o'clock so we had to hurry to reach it got back to Temples Mills about 1 o'clock & found Mr Low waiting for us with two saddle horses Lord took one & he the other & Mr Temple & myself concluded that we would prefer a buggy. Mr T had dinner waiting for us of which we took "quantum sufficit" & started through the woods. There is no regular road & a buggy can be driven through the woods in every direction as we could drive much faster than they we took a round about way & crossed streams & bays & through timber. Mr Temple is a man about 60 years of age who has lived in this country for 20 years he is a diamond in the rough possessed of considerable means but no culture, a fairly educated man & should judge but an odd genius nevertheless. he is engaged in the lumber business & is the owner of Temples Mills & as I write can look through the avenue of bannanas described in the Florida New

Yorker. it was probably true to nature when taken but just now no one would recognize the original. They are just commencing to leaf out & will soon be as beautiful as ever, but I believe I am on my way to Sand Lake the "Winter Seat" of Mr Low. The ride is a very rough one & after about an hour we reach the spot on which he is building his house. it is a peculiar plan very southern but must be pleasant on account of being cool. 4 sleeping rooms over the main house & Dining room. The servants all live out of the house & the Kitchen is entirely seperate. it is situated in one of the loveliest spots I ever saw about 60 feet above a beautiful lake shaped something like this he is surrounded by a chain of lakes & although I dont believe his land would produce anything yet with plenty of money it can be made a delightful spot. he claims that it is particularly adapted to the orange & it may be but the getting to it is terrible & when Mr Temple moves away as he intends to do shortly having bought 7000 acres of land near Lawtey his nearest station will be Starke a distance of 10 miles. he is very enthusiastic about it & having an unlimited amount of money will no doubt make a beautiful place of it, but it would never do for a poor man. he has had a terrible time getting lumber hauled & says it has cost him 1/4 of his expense of building drawing stuff from Temples. I presume he will put a road through to the nearest station for his own use. he hasnt a neighbor nearer than 6 miles except a few miserable crackers & says his only fear is that he may get lonesome & his wife wish to return to Washington society. his plans are magnificent & if carried out will give him the loveliest place in Florida. Mr Astor who is now at Jacksonville will visit him next week & he proposes to give him a deer hunt & try & induce him to to make an investment in the vicinity he will have a sail boat for his own use & as the lakes about are filled with excellent fish & the woods alive with game he can enjoy life if he dont make a cent. it certainly would make a delightful winter resort. We stayed about & admired the

beautiful views to be had from different points until it was time to start for home for an evenings ride through the woods here wouldnt be very pleasant. Mr Low wanted Lord to stay with him all night he had some points to show him, so Mr Temple & I came home with the arrangement that we should visit Kingsley's lake tomorrow. after getting back I made the acquaintance of 2 of Mr Temples daughters who were educated at Wilmington Del & found them both intelligent & good looking besides they had traveled a good deal & seemed well informed on any subject of conversation. Although Mr Temple is a rich man he hasnt a carpet in his house no paint or plaster & his house isnt even boarded up inside tis a large 2 story house with 9 or 10 rooms & he says cost *him* about 500\$ it would be considered a fine house in Florida. he has 6 daughters & 1 son, 2 daughters dead. he wants to sell his place here & will sell his house & 80 acres of land for 800\$ tis very low and wet about here however, & he was oblinded to ditch for 1/2 a mile before he could build his house & when he leaves here & the station removed it will be 4 miles from a station. it would I think be a good opening for a colony, but for an individual rather rough. went to bed about 10 o'clock & had the *best* room in the house, very comfortable but exceedingly primitive.

Sunday Feby 3d-

Got up this morning rather late for even in this country the Sabbath is observed. I was somewhat disturbed in my rest by the niggers in the night & some other things. I realized more fully than ever before the force of the saying that Saturday night was niggers night. they kept up a shouting and holowing til I went to sleep. This morning there are indications of rain but after breakfast Mr T. has the horse "geared up" & we wait expectantly for Low & Lord & we continued to wait all day for they didnt put in an appearance till 4 o'clock which made it too late to go to Kingsley Lake. I made it quite pleasant however with The Misses

Temple & would have written some letters if I had had the writing materials. went around considerable & looked at the land in the vicinity. When Mr T. leaves here he will take the station with him & his new place which will be 4 miles from Lawtey he intends building a good house & improving from 20 to 40 acres of land & make a permanent home of it. he offers to sell me all the land I want & take my choice of \$1 per acre. I think I shall look at it & take a piece anyhow for Katie even if I dont want to stay there myself at present. he will clear it of timber so that that expense will be unnecessary I think it is a rare chance provided the land is all right. we did intend to go to Darky Church but found it was over a mile away so Lord & I sat on the porch with The Temple girls till about 10 o'clock & the "Old Folks" went to bed & left us there I didnt tell them I was married which made it much pleasanter. Monday - After breakfast which for the first time we took with the girls Mr T being at the mill. we went over to the mill which is the old man's pet & watched them cut lumber till train time & after bidding the family good bye & being assured by Mr T that we should be welcome whenever we came again we are off our next stopping place is at Waldo & we stop at the Waldo House kept by Mrs. Birge a widow from Charleston who with her mother make things very homelike more so than any place I have seen in Florida. as soon as dinner we got a conveyance & went out to see Santa Fe lake. we had letters to Gen Earle & Mr Ewing who both live on the shore of the lake, but neither were at home but we saw Mr Klee who is the proprietor & projector of the "Balmoral Hotel" a scheme which is in "Status Quo" on account of lack of funds it is a magnificent site & if the means were provided it could be made the Saratoga of the South one of the most beautiful lakes I ever saw 9 miles by 4 with high land all around particularly adapted to the growth of the orange, Lemon pineapple bannana &c it could be made a delightful spot. I will write to Mr Thompson & see if he wouldnt like to enter into the

scheme. There is a future in it for someone. no land can be bought which is desirable for less than 20 to 30\$ per acre & it is about 5 miles from the depot, but when people once get there they will never want to leave. Gen Earle has a very pleasant place but the "Earthly Paradise" business I failed to see yet I have no doubt it would be much pleasanter later in the season for I havnt found Florida to be a land of flowers at this season of the year anymore than Illinois. orange trees live oaks and other evergreens to be sure remain in foliage but everything else dies off in the winter & the face of the country is as bare as any other part of the States. twas about supper time when we returned & after tea Mrs Legan, Mrs Coleman, Lord & myself played whist till after 10 & each won 3 games. Mrs Coleman is a lady whose husband is in the U S Quartermasters department & has been ordered to Kansas while she has come to Florida to raise oranges. She has bought 40 acres of land about 3 miles from here & will build a house & live on it and improve the place She is waiting to have it surveyed before starting & in the meanwhile is stopping here. I had quite an interesting discussion with her on the subject of Spiritualism of which she is an ardent supporter.

Tuesday Feby 6th-

We got up intending to go to Gainesville but it looked so much like rain that we concluded to stay where we are & I wrote a note to Sheriff Barnes saying that we couldnt keep our appointment with him then we walked up to the RR to a place owned by a Capt Smith who has lived here over 30 years. he has about 200 bearing orange trees which look very well but havnt been attended to as they ought to be. twas a walk of 2 miles up & 2 back & as we walked pretty sharp got quite blown & had little appetite for dinner. I spent the afternoon in writing to Hellie Mr. Thompson & Smithmyer in the evening there was a minstrel performance close by but didnt care to go. Mr. Legare a man 80 years

old Mrs Coleman Lord & myself played whist & we beat 4 games out of 7 & after Mrs Birge's return she took her fathers place & we beat them 5 games in succession 3 of which were 0. They went to bed feeling very much down in the mouth & we thought they would have but little sleep in consequence. Wednesday morning when we awoke it was pouring & has continued to do so all day & we havnt been out of the house it is a perfect sea in every direction & were the soil not porous & sandy the roads would be impassible but as soon as the sun comes out everything is dry & hard as ever we have laid around the house & made ourselves as agreeable as possible to the ladies. Mrs Birge is a handsome young widow who is quite accomplished, paints plays & sings nicely & is very talkative & pleasant. her husband has been dead about 3 years & I think she wouldnt be averse to marrying again. it rains harder to night than it did this morning, but I hope it will be pleasanter tomorrow for I want to get through with our travels. We played whist again in the evening & won 6 out of 8 games. Lord & Mrs Coleman went to bed in disgust. Thursday 8th - We were up in good time & found it was a beautiful morning after breakfast Lord & I went down the RR for a mile or two & had a look at several places. it had rained a perfect torrent for nearly 24 hours & yet we found it perfectly dry & even walked across ploughed land without getting our boots dirty run across a gentleman from Charleston who had 160 acres & a very pleasant house. he showed us over his place & although it was rather too flat to suit me yet he may make quite a nice place of We went over a place owned by a Mr Dutton which showed the effects of the severe winter more than any place I have seen fully 1/2 of his small trees were killed but in conversation with a gentleman he told me he thought the most of them were dead before the freeze came. The town has been in quite a state of excitement over a murder by 2 niggers of a white man. it seems that he had bought a piece of property on which these fellows had squatted & Monday night they went to his house &

killed him with a gun loaded with broken nails. They got the fellows & have been trying them here to day. One man said to me that he thought perhaps they might be punished now but heretofore the law wouldnt reach them such was the miserable state of things here. After dinner we got away on the train & passing through Gainesville, Arredondo, Battons & Archer we arrived at Bronson where we found Col Couchman who had been expecting to see us for several days. he said Mr. Swann had been enquiring about us & Mr Burrin had asked him if he had seen anything of us. he took us immediately up to his office in the Court House, (after we had given our baggage to a dark to take it to the House used for a hotel) & showed us all the maps & parts of the country around about & then we took a walk around through several sections. the lands here are very sandy high & rolling & very pleasantly situated. I noticed one spot in particular in section 16 which pleased me specially, although as far as I could judge without trying the land it was rather poor for all purposes except oranges it belongs to the state & no one has tried to sell it therefore it remains unentered. I imagined something must be the matter with it or people wouldnt have gone around it twas a little over a mile from town & in the vicinity were a chain of low swampy lakes filled with cypress, yet abounding in fish so the Col said. The trees all through this section are filled with hanging moss which all physicians say is an indication of malaria. The swampy land near town is dense with this moss & the high pine land as well. I didnt at all like the locks of this & said so to the Col but he said the place was very healthy none more so in all the country, all of which I took in with a mental -if-. twas quite dark when we got back to town & we picked cur way through the woods to Col Coulter's house kept by a Mrs. Boyd as a sort of Semi hotel they gave us the usual hog & hominy with a few variations Mrs Coulter is a very pretty lady with 3 children. The land lady was a buxom widow & a Miss Somebody acted as business manager. After supper we

sat on the veranda with Col Coulter & the *judge* & talked Florida. The Col has a very large & nice place here & owns most of the land immediately adjoining the station we talked stock raising & recommended Mrs Birges calves which he said he would write for there were quite a number of young folks boarding at the place & they made things quite lively during the evening. We were pretty tired & went to bed early, had a room together & managed to get a fair nights rest. no plaster or paint in this house, which is the best in town. We were up in good season & after breakfast joined the Col at the depot the train comes along a little after 8 & after we had disposed of that we went into Col Sebring's store & waited till Coachman got ready to go with us. Col Seabring is an old Kentuckian who has lately settled here he has 80 acres & is building a very pleasant house about 1/2 a mile from town. he & a Dr Ambrose keep a general store seem to be quite interested in filling up the place before long Coachman came back & said that it was impossible to get any conveyance & we must go on foot, so we brace up & start off the Cols son with a gun going along. We traveled till 2 o'clock & saw some very pretty country & some very poor land. We were on the west side of the RR & the nearest land he had to show us was over 3 miles away I found the greatest difficulty was the distance from town & the malarial appearance of the country. I cant help thinking that it is sickly in hot weather here, assurances to the contrary notwithstanding. I get so I dont believe a word people tell me, for all tell a different story. one section seems to work against another & all unite to get the best of a stranger sections 31 and 29 have some very pretty points about them & if they went out of the world I should feel 1/2 tempted to give them a trial. We called at quite a number of places, at one of which we had a drink of most excellent water from a well about 35 feet deep this country is underlaid with clay & the water is very soft. one party found fault with it because it was too soft. We were as hungry as bears when we got back &

took our Hog and Hominy with good relish & at 4 o'clock were on our winding way having now examined all the desirable points on the road. Thought we might just as well go through to Cedar Keys as not for it cost nothing extra. Soon after leaving Bronson we came to the Gulf Hammock & for the first time I realized what Hammock land was. The Magnolia, Cypress Oak, pine palmetto and cedar grows in abundance & the growth of small trees fills up all the ground vines twine all through making an almost impenetrable thicket. There is but very little of this land in cultivation for it must cost a large amount of money & time to do it. the lands are very rich when once got under cultivation, but I wouldnt undertake to clear 10 acres for \$1000. the Palmettos are the largest I have seen, being some of them as big as one's body and 50 or 60 feet high. they use them for piling for they last a long time in the water & have no grain & useless for anything else as they cant be split. We got into Cedar Keys about dark. this is a place on a small island about one mile from the mainland & is a very scrubby looking town. We stop at the Island House kept by Dr McIlwain no plaster & no paint, but we have a most excellent supper of fried oysters fish good butter & milk & other things foreign to Florida after supper I find that the Dr plays chess & we play 5 games of which I lost 3. talked till after midnight with 2 men from down the coast one at Manatee & the other Tampa they talked up their section of course, but by a little shrewd questioning I found out that their section was badly damaged by the frost, that mails only came once a month & then they had to come to Cedar Keys after it, over 200 miles. after they grew anything there was no place to sell it, boats sometimes two weeks on the way to Cedar Keys in bad weather & only sail boats anyway -I passed- Mr Jones who lives at Homosassa about 40 miles below here & to whom I have a letter of introduction they tell me has a very pleasant pleasure house where parties go down from here to hunt & fish. he comes here in a sailboat 2 or 3 times a week & takes parties

down but as my business was not hunting & fishing I thought I wouldnt use my letter of introduction & we left at 6 o'clock in the morning Saturday at Roseland our engine broke down & we had to wait for two hours, but on this road 2 or 3 hours makes little difference when they have 13 hours to go 160 miles. we get our breakfast & Capt Mason's in the Hammock & visit his snakeship a hugh rattlesnake kept in a box, a savage looking fellow over 7 feet long which a chap here says he caught out in the brush. they are quite plenty in this part of the country, as in fact all kinds of vermin & reptiles are. The pine woods are comparatively free of them but the Hammocks & swamps have lots of such things, yet a gentleman told me he had tramped hundreds of miles hunting through the country & seen but very few not so many as in any northern state. didnt stop at Gainesville, but got off at Waldo & got my clothes which I left to be washed & I should judge that starch was another thing they didnt have in this country. Lord stopped off at Temple's & I came through to Lawtey & found everybody in good health & spirits. made arrangements to get my grub at Harris's & sleep at Dr Gleason's They all seem glad to see me back & have felt worried for fear I would get taken in somewhere else I attended the business meeting of the company in the evening & had the honor of being the only outsider present the rest who came being requested to vacate. it was arranged however that I should be invited to remain so I knew beforehand what was up. The members chose their lands & the utmost good feeling prevailed twas after 11 o'clock when we got back to the house. the Dr & I sat up a while until it got to be *bed time* talking about the lands I had looked at down the road & I turned into my rustic couch which was in one corner of the room & made up on a 5 foot bench about 2 feet across.

Sunday Feby 11th-

Was up quite early for sunday morning & went over to the stove & commenced a letter to Hellie wrote

till breakfast time went over to breakfast & after breakfast The Dr said he & Col Rice Campbell & Johns were going to look at their lands & wanted me to go along. I rolled up my pants & sleeves & told them I was ready. We started out at about 10 o'clock & pegged steadily till after 4 crossed bays & swamps knee deep got pretty thoroughly wet yet had a first-rate time & we were all as hungry as bears when we got back didnt change my wet boots or clothes but wore them all the evening. called to see Mr Bradshaw & wife and stayed till about 8 o'clock they are very pleasant folks, then picked my way in the dark across the town among the logs and stumps to the Drs & talked with him till midnight & tried my couch again.

Monday Feby 12th-

Tis a most beautiful morning but rather cool in fact cooler than any morning since I have been here. The boys & some of them last night were afraid of a frost but the Thom didnt get below 45-they have a very nice crop of potatoes & cucumbers & some other things that the cold would hurt & naturally feel anxious about it. I didnt get a bit of cold last night in consequence of my exposure something I couldnt have done anywhere but in Florida. I wrote a good long letter to Hellie or rather finished the one I commenced yesterday & another to Ten Eyck in which I am afraid I rather over did the thing in my description of the country, however it is best to make it strong enough. Lord came on the train going to Jacksonville & we parted company after a very pleasant acquaintance of 3 weeks whether I shall see him again or not is a question. The Capt went to Fernandina on the same train, so they had a chance to talk matters over on the train to Baldwin. The Dr & I went down the RR to look at some lots below the town plat, some of which looked very fair but whether or not I shall be able to make a trade for any of them is a question Had a good long letter from Hellie & learned that the baby had been quite sick, but was all right again. played chess with Dr G till after 1 o'clock & beat him 6 games out of 10 he didnt feel in good health the last

part of the play, but offered to bet me that he could win 8 9 games out of 12 in a series I didnt bet but we are going to play the series nevertheless & commence tonight. I got Campbell to figure on the cost of a house if I built one here & he said it would cost 260\$ - the sort of a one I wanted I suppose I might build a little box which would be a sweat pen in summer for 50\$ less. it costs but little more to build a good sized house than it does to build a little one. I looked at several pieces of land near the station but as the Capt has gone to Fernandina I didnt make any headway in a trade. have an appointment with Mr Temple tomorrow to meet him at his new station & see what sort of a place it is. I expect I will have to walk from here for the train dont stop there yet. I have my eye on a piece just east of the town plat here & if I can make a trade with the Capt. will proceed to business at once. tried to buy 20 acres south of the town of McCulby the Capt clerk & he wanted \$10 per acre he has cut the timber off of about 5 acres & has really a fine piece of land but they all seem to think they have a. gold mine under each acre had quite a lively tussel with the Dr at chess we played on two games till 1 o'clock & I got one of them. this is the 1st of a series of 12 games out of which the Dr says he can beat me 8.

Wednesday-It rains hard & nothing can be done of course. I cant meet Temple for he wont be on the ground such a day, & I write several letters to Merrill, Ten Eyck, Mr Matten &c after dinner it held up some & Dr Harris Col Rice & myself took guns & went for Meadow larks in the Tetson field where they are making depredations on the melons cucumbers beans & all green things. we drove them away & kept them away & killed 1/2 a dozen, besides getting a good wetting. Capt Burrin got back from Fernandina, but I didnt get a chance to see him till nearly night, meantime Gleason had got hold of him & made him believe it was going to ruin the prospects of the town if I was allowed to go away. he said I would go to Temples & of course use all my influence to get other people to go there too & that it musnt be done

"Why" says Burrin "I have sold several acre lots adjoining the piece he wants for 100\$ each & that 4 acre field next to him is worth 100\$ per acre I cant sell him that piece for any price to compete with Temples land" But you cant afford to let him go away, when we get such a man here we *must* keep him Dr Harris labored with him in the evening & Dr Gleason told me what had been done & said they had fixed the Capt so he was anxious to see me. We played 3 more of our series of games of which I lost 2, making me 2 to his 3 twas 1 1/2 o'clock when we got to bed.

Thursday-

It still continues to be cold & wet so much so that my overcoat is quite comfortable & I get a taste of the unpleasant side of Florida weather. I get breakfast & go over to the depot with the *determination* of going down to Temples, when the Capt takes me by the arm & says he wants me to go down with him & look at that piece of ground of course I hang back & tell him it is no use to talk about buying, that we couldnt come within 40 rods of a trade but he insisted upon my going with him & after looking it all over I asked him what proposition he had to make he began to tell how valuable the piece was & how much it would be worth &c&c & finally said if I wanted it I could have it at 5\$ per acre, before the words were fairly out of his mouth I said I would take it & that closed the trade & I became a citizen of Lawtey. I think I have made a very good trade & everyone tells me that I have the choicest piece of ground in the vicinity.

Feb'y 22-

I havnt added anything to this diary for several days having been so busy, & will send it as it is up to a week ago. Nothing of interest would be added for I have been clearing up land building fence surveying &c all the time commenced the house this morning will have to go down the road today to see about some lumber & tools I need a *grub hoe* & *spade* When the furniture is shipped have bill lading & duplicate receipt sent by mail to me. Nothing to add from last night. *be a good girl.*