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EAST FLORIDA IN 1834: LETTERS OF DR. JOHN DURKEE

edited by W. STANLEY HOOLE

IN THE SUMMER OF 1833 Dr. John Durkee, for more than ten years a practicing physician in Meredith Bridge (now a part of Laconia), New Hampshire, traveled to East Florida for the benefit of his health.¹ Settling in Jacksonville, a village of fewer than 250 people and about twenty houses and stores, he soon recuperated sufficiently to lead an active life.² He rode horseback into the hinterland of Duval County, hunted, fished, and because of his scientific background interested himself primarily in such subjects as alligators, snakes, deer, birds, trees, cattle, soils, and Indian archeology. Meantime, he kept abreast of the commercial affairs of the frontier community and studied the peculiarities of its people. Unless plantation owners are "interdicted by legislative enactments" to control their wasteful depletion of the land, he observed, Florida would "at length become depopulated and at least much retarded in its increase and prosperity."³

During April-June 1834 Durkee wrote several letters to his brother in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He does not name his brother. The editor of the Portsmouth *Journal* found them to contain "so much interesting information respecting the topography, natural history, climate &c. of a distant section of our

* Mr. Hoole, dean emeritus of The University of Alabama Libraries, was editor of *The Alabama Review* from 1948 to 1967. He is indebted to the University of Alabama Research Grants Committee for the financial aid which made this study possible.

1. The New Hampshire Medical Society elected Durkee a member on June 4, 1822, and appointed him one of ten censors responsible for examining applicants in 1823. *Records of the New Hampshire Medical Society* (Concord, 1911), 170, 178-79. He is listed as head of a family in Meredith, New Hampshire, in U. S. Census Office, *Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, Population*, V (Washington, 1830), 16; microcopy of original manuscript, roll 19, National Archives, Washington.
2. T. Frederick Davis, *History of Jacksonville, Florida, and Vicinity, 1513-1924* (St. Augustine, 1925; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1964), 75.
3. Durkee is not mentioned in Webster Merritt, *A Century of Medicine in Jacksonville and Duval County* (Gainesville, 1949). Dr. William M. Straight of Miami, who is compiling a history of Florida medicine, has no record of him. Straight to Hoole, November 8, 1972.

Union which is but little known among us" that he published them in his weekly on August 2, 9, 16, 23 "for the benefit of our readers." "If more of those who travel, and possess the ability, would turn their attention to such scientific researches," he editorialized, "they would be entitled to the thanks of the public." The letters, captioned "East Florida in 1834," were considered equally valuable by the editor of the *Hampshire Gazette* of Northampton, Massachusetts, who reprinted them in his paper on August 13, 20, 27, and September 3.

Durkee did not remain in Florida after his recuperation. In 1835 he resumed his practice in Meredith in association with Dr. John Langdon, a young protege.⁴ But his letters, penned 140 years ago and printed verbatim below, present an account of Florida Territory in its earliest days.

Jacksonville, E. Florida
Apr. 20, 1834

Dear Brother,— Now for a letter, as you desired. This city stands on the St. John's River, twenty-five miles from its mouth, on the right bank of the river as you ascend. It is situated on a handsome bluff about 25 feet above the level of the river, sloping in every direction like a turtle shell. The city covers the entire bluff. The first settlement was made about ten years since. It is 40 miles from St. Augustine by land, and the same distance from St. Mary's. The number of houses and stores is about twenty. A fine boarding house is now in progress by Messrs. Blanchard and Rider, formerly from Boston.⁵ It is designed to accommodate sixty or eighty boarders. The proprietors intend to fit it up in a tasteful style. It will be completed in three or four months, and will doubtless afford every convenience for persons resorting to this place for either the improvement of health or for business. There is also a Court House, Custom House, and Jail. The

4. Mary E. N. Hanaford (comp.). *Meredith, N. H. Annals and Genealogies* (Concord, 1932), 266.

5. Clarence E. Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers of the United States*, 26 vols. (Washington, 1956-62), XXV, 20, 561-62, 577, lists A. D. Blanchard, C. Rider, and Daniel B. Rider as signers of East Florida petitions to Congress for mail routes, and H. R. Blanchard as a signer of a document urging the establishment of "Dade Institute of Florida." It is, of course, impossible to identify the men to whom Durkee refers.

Superior Court holds its session here semi-annually. I have formed a slight acquaintance with the Judge. He is a man of high talents, and presides with dignity, and decides his cases to the satisfaction of all the friends of good order and justice.—⁶ Although the number of inhabitants here is quite small, it is necessary to be under the organization of a city government to preserve the peace and prosperity of the place. The Mayor is an intelligent and persevering officer, and is entitled to great credit for his fidelity to his trust. He knows no distinction. Whoever offends against the dignity and quietness of the city is brought under the discipline of this energetic officer. I cannot say too much in his praise. The people I find to be exceedingly hospitable and attentive; and the state of the society generally is undergoing a happy transformation. An invalid, so disposed, may here enjoy himself in hunting wild game of the noblest description and in taking from the river as many fish as he pleases. These employments, with the agreeable excitement they so naturally create, add not a little to the causes of convalescence which I have already experienced. I will speak hereafter of the salubrity of the climate, diet, and general facilities held out to persons laboring under pulmonic difficulties. Thus far my hopes of improvement from change of climate and scenery, suspension of business, &c. &c. have been fully realized.

The St. John's River is navigable for about one hundred miles for vessels of 90 or 100 tons. It is a fine stream, being from three to five miles wide, and having a fall of more than three inches per mile. The influence of the tide is felt for about 70 miles from its mouth. It abounds with the best of fish of various kinds, such as Mullet, Bass, the Trout, Sheephead, Blackfish, Hairfish, &c. The latter resemble what we call the pumpkin seed fish, found in many streams at the North;— they weigh from five to six pounds, and have a tuft of hair sprouting from the gills on each side, running nearly parallel with the body and extending four or six inches beyond the extremity of the tail. I will mention also

6. President Andrew Jackson appointed Robert R. Reid, a former Georgia congressman, May 24, 1832, to succeed Joseph L. Smith as judge of the Superior Court of the Eastern District of Florida. President Martin Van Buren named Reid governor of the Florida Territory, November 1839. *Ibid.*, XXIV, 705; XXV, 489, 657.

7. William J. Mills, from Amelia Island, became Jacksonville's first mayor after its incorporation in 1832. He served from 1832 to 1834. Davis, *History of Jacksonville*, 293.

the Stingery fish, which is one of the most curious specimens of the piscatory tribe I have ever seen. It is flat, and is not unlike the Place fish in its general contour. Its surface is from one foot to three feet broad and its weight, when full of size, is thirty pounds. Its tail is like that of the Muskrat and is sometimes three feet long. Near the extremity is a bearded sting, of a perfectly horny substance, measuring from four to six inches. This sting is used as a weapon of defence, when occasion requires, and serves also as an excellent gear for the fish to seize upon the smaller fry and make them its prey. We have oysters of the large and best kind.

The bosom of the river is literally covered with wild ducks, pelicans, wild geese, and Alligators. I have seen the St. John's completely darkened with myriads of ducks, for several miles, and would other circumstances permit, one might take a walk upon their brown backs from one shore to the other, a distance of three or four miles, without wetting his feet, so compact and numerous are these beautiful creatures.— When they rise to fly the noise of their fluttering wings may be heard at the distance of half a mile. Fine sport it is to shoot them, as you may well imagine.

The Alligators keep up a continual roar. In the morning by day break I am frequently awaked from my sleep by the uproarious voices of these amphibious rascals. Their noise may be heard three or four miles, and bears a strong likeness to that of the Lion. The Alligator swallows pitch pine knots in the fall of the year; at which season he prepares to deposit his huge carcass in his den or cave for the winter. The mouth or entrance of the cave is always beneath low water mark, and its termination above high water mark. An Alligator was killed a few years since, and a glass bottle it is said, was taken from his capacious maw,— another was captured and on dissection a cannon ball was found in his stomach. One side of the ball had a smooth, polished surface, from the action of the gastric liquor. The ball I believe, is now deposited in one of our northern museums. These substances are swallowed by the animal to prevent the walls of the stomach from collapsing during the cheerless season of its dormant state. From what I have been able to learn of the habits of Alligators, I cannot discover that they possess any peculiar sagacity. They

have little or no brains. Every animal is in the utmost trepidation at sight of them.— They build their nests of reeds, twigs, leaves, &c. piled up three or four feet on the marsh grounds, and their eggs (which are a third larger than a goose egg) to the amount of half a bushel, and thickly inlaid and covered over with the same materials. The female stations herself at a short distance, to defend them from intruders, and if any creature chances to approach this spot of her future progeny, she exhibits symptoms of inconceivable fury. Thus she maintains her almost sleepless vigils until the influence of the torrid sun liberates her from the solitary task of giving birth and freedom to the embryo brood. The young ones will give fight the moment they are released from the shell, and often when they are threatened with danger they will seek a hiding place by running down the mother's throat. The other day I shot five of them. I apprehend our antipathy is mutual; I doubt not but those which my faithful rifle shall spare, will hold a general convocation and jubilee as soon as they learn that I have departed from their territories.

April 27.— Today I killed a large Alligator— his weight was over four hundred pounds— put the ball in at one eye and it came out at the other. On dissecting him I found a curious arrangement of the blood vessels of the heart, and four musk bags, two of which lie under the angle of the lower jaw. This musk is used for medicinal purposes here, and a good substitute for that obtained from the beaver. They shed their teeth every year.

The Alligators destroy a great many hogs and cattle, and are very saucy and dangerous to people in small boats. A gentleman more than 70 years of age from the country, came to my boarding house a few days ago. In descending the river in his canoe, a large Alligator made towards him just as he was opposite Jacksonville, and seized upon the bow of the boat with his jaws, and at the same time struck with his ponderous tail and shivered it into many pieces. The old man pulled for the shore and fortunately escaped unhurt.

CLIMATE. — June 15.— I have cooked eggs in twenty minutes, by exposing them to the heat of the sun in the sand; and at the same time, with the thermometer at 106°,— I felt quite comfortable in the open air, and reclining under the dense umbrage of the trees, which were fanned by the pressing breeze. I have suf-

ferred more from the heat at the north when the glass ranged from 85 to 90 degrees than I have experienced here with the maximum just named.

The thermometer seldom rises above 85 or 90 degrees to remain any time.

Fresh breezes commence almost every morning at about eight o'clock, and continue through the day. The most prevalent and by far the most agreeable winds travel from the Gulph of Mexico in a south easterly direction to this place. They are warm and extremely grateful and exhilarating to the body, and although I am in latitude 30 degrees north subject to the intense rays of the sun, I do not experience any inconvenience from what you might suppose would be a close and sultry atmosphere; but its lively fanning motion at all times, renders it not only tolerable but agreeable. The winds from the north east are also healthy— those from the north west are less so;— the latter however are of short duration, and rare in their visitation.

DIET. — All I can say about the diet is that we have three times a day, *hog and hominy*— *hog and hominy*. These always taste well. The hominy is eaten with the cane syrup, which is used as a condiment. This diet keeps the system regular, and it is to the appetite what a hone is to a razor or rather what filthy lucre is to the miser— the more one eats the more he craves. It always sets quietly upon the stomach, and is easily digested. Wild game and fish we have when we please, but nothing is like the hominy and syrup.

Jacksonville, E. Florida
June 18, 1834

Dear Brother,— I shall continue to furnish you with the substance of my observations relating to this section of the country, and your curiosity is satisfied and you say *enough*.

The banks of the St. John's river are generally very shoal, except occasionally a steep bluff, which is thickly studded with live oak, the majestic magnolia; sweet, sour and bitter oranges, and the lemon— all covered with moss, hanging down in dense and beautiful festoons. Other fruits, found here, besides those I have mentioned, are the best of Grapes, Figs, Citrons, Peaches, Plumbs and berries of various and the richest kinds.

Vessels and boats almost daily pass up and down the stream. The steamboat arrives here once a week from Charleston, via Savannah, Darien, St. Mary's and Jacksonville to Palatka 75 miles up the river.

The land back from the river is one perfect level. Its wood-growth consists chiefly of pine of middling size but of superior quality. It is a beautiful ride to mount a horse and travel 10 or 15 miles through the "pine barrens" as they are termed,— there is no undergrowth to intercept your vision. The bounding deer can be seen at all times in droves of 40 or 60.— The huntsmen may take as many as he chooses. They are sometimes killed in the night by carrying a lighted torch. They will approach sufficiently near to be shot. The tiger, wolf, wild-cat, bear and wild boar are plenty and are often killed. The deer, it seems, often engage with each other in a fatal contest. I send you two pairs of large bucks' horns. They are inseparably interlocked, showing the manner in which the infuriated animals expired on the field of battle. They met and fought and died— in union of heads, but twain of heart.

I have not see a primitive rock or stone since I arrived. I have found a few specimens of pyrites of iron in the bed of the river and in the creeks. I am told that the limestone rock is found at Alochaway, seventy-five miles from Jacksonville. I went a short time since 12 or 15 miles into the country where I found a knot of men at work digging a foundation for a saw and grist mill. They had descended 15 feet and fell upon a stratum of oyster shells. They had penetrated about four feet into the shells, but did not find lower boundary or surface. This was 13 miles from the river and 25 from the ocean. The laborers informed me that beds of these shells were found in like positions all over the territory; thus demonstrating that the sea once covered this tract— There are several ancient mounds which I shall visit soon. I have seen some bones and utensils that were found in them. They are very interesting specimens and I intend. them for you. Several medicinal springs have been found in the interior; their properties are principally chalybeate, and have attracted considerable attention for their healing efficacy in rheumatic affections. They are frequented by people from Georgia and other sections.

As to the fertility of the soil in this country, it cannot be said to be above that of mediocrity in the northern states, although

people can obtain a living herewith less labor than is required with you. The chief productions here are corn, rice, peas, beans, cotton, the sugar-cane and some others already mentioned. The planters traffic more or less in venison and furs; lumber trade is profitably followed by some and also the moss.

The planters are accustomed to set fire to the extensive pine barrens once or twice every year. This practice has prevailed for many years, and its effects, I am satisfied, are detrimental to the soil and of course to the interests of the possessors. The crops of grass are thus diminished from year to year— the original roots are partially destroyed; but the chief injury consists in the destruction of the grass itself; which, if suffered to remain unmolested, would decompose upon the spot and impart much fertility to the soil. Not a few plantations have been abandoned because they ceased to supply the herds of cattle &c. with the necessary amount of fodder, which failure is to be attributed to the above named cause. The planters, however, do not appear to understand the reason of the failure they complain of, and will be likely to pursue their accustomed way until it is interdicted by legislative enactments, which ought to be made and enforced without delay — otherwise the farming interests will be subject to still greater injury, and the country at length become depopulated or at least much retarded in its increase and prosperity.

Most of the planters raise large herds of cattle— The pasture grounds are not enclosed by fences.— Their horses and hogs are permitted to roam in the forests without restraint— their owners sometimes not seeing them once in a twelve month. The horses are generally very lean and perform but little service. I saw a living skeleton of a horse the other day with several crows preying upon the flesh upon his back which had been denuded of its skin to some extent. The poor animal was greatly emaciated and tormented, nature apparently would have soon passed him over as a lawful plunder to these saucy marauders. I told the owner of the beast that if he would give me permission I thought I could persuade those taloned blackamoors to dismount by giving them a good salutation from my rifle; but the man declined and the experiment was not made. Perhaps the offer would have been quite as merciful in me had I proposed the horse for a mark instead of the crows.

The *Rattle-Snake* attains a much greater size here than at the North. It is sometimes as large in circumference as a man's thigh, and seven or eight feet in length. The virus is much more fatal during the month of August than in the early part of the season. Its color is a lively green, and in very hot weather I have seen it trickle down in copious drops, when I have irritated the animal with a stick. There are times when the whole body seems to be surcharged with the virus, and he may be seen for hours together biting at every object, and enraged at the rustling of every leaf.

The Rattle-Snake finds a superior foe in the deer and the Black Snake. Whenever a buck discovers a rattle-snake in a situation which invites attack, he loses no time in preparing for battle. He makes up to within 10 or 12 feet of the snake— then leaps forward and aims to sever the body of the snake with his sharp bifurcated hoofs. The first onset is most commonly successful: but if otherwise, the buck repeats the trial until he cuts the snake in twain.— The rapidity and fatality of his skillful manoeuvre leave but a slight chance for his victim either to escape or to inject its poison into its more alert antagonist. The black snake also is more than an equal competitor against the rattle-snake. Such is its celerity of motion not only in running, but in entwining itself around its victim, that the rattle-snake has no way of escaping from its fatal embrace. When the black and rattle-snakes are about to meet for battle, the former darts forward at the height of his speed, and strikes at the neck of the latter with unerring certainty, leaving a foot or two of the upper part of his own body at liberty. In an instant he encircles him within five or six folds:— he then stops and looks the strangled and gasping foe in the face to ascertain the effect produced upon his corsetted body. If he shows signs of life the coils are multiplied and the screws tightened— the operator all the while narrowly watching the countenance of the helpless victim. Thus the two remain thirty or forty minutes— the executioner then slackens one coil, noticing at the same time whether any signs of life appear— if so the coil is resumed and retained until the incarcerated wretch is completely dead. The moccasin snake is destroyed in the same way.

Jacksonville, E. Florida
June, 1834

This section of country abounds with several species of small animals and insects, not found at the North. Cameleons are numerous. They are a most beautiful little creature. The body is about the size and length of the little finger— the tail from four to six inches long— slender and prehensile, so that they can entwine it round the small twigs of trees and shrubbery, like the Ape. The head is shaped somewhat like that of a small snake, but is more pointed. Their legs (four in number) are an inch and a half long, and terminated by five unciform claws. They subsist on flies, spiders, &c. Their motion is exceedingly quick. They are harmless and easily domesticated. They frequently make their appearance at table during meal time, and will watch every motion of those who are eating, and seem to say “ we would have a bite.” The most natural complexion of the skin is ash-color. The lungs are very capacious, and the different degrees of their inflation produce the varieties of color upon the skin, for which the cameleon is remarkable. The transition from one hue to another is very rapid, when the animal is put in quick motion. I believe the common idea that it can at pleasure assume the color of the substance it is placed upon is not correct.

I can tell you a tolerably tough story about our grasshoppers. They are three or four inches in length. Their wings are comparatively small, but in other respects they are well proportioned. I have seen them pitch a regular battle with hens, when the latter have attempted to kill and eat them. The grasshopper places himself in an erect position like some brave militia officer, and valiantly resists every offensive movement made by his greedy antagonist, handling his claws with artful dexterity, and rarely affording his adversary occasion to *crow* over his defeat. His chief security, however, consists in the crustaceous armour with which he is invested— a peculiarity which belongs to this tribe of insects in Florida, and which will sufficiently explain the difficulty of overpowering them. They are also gorgeously bedecked with variegated hues, and in this particular will vie with any creature that ever entered the field.

Turtles of various kinds and species are numerous. The

people understand to perfection the art of converting them into soups. Scores of Aldermen might come here and fare sumptuously at a cheap rate, and without molestation or complaint.

I have been not a little diverted in observing the movements of the Eagle, the Fish-hawk and other birds of prey towards those of their fellows, which from some misfortune, are placed in circumstances of defencelessness, and thus affording an illustration of the conduct occasionally seen among members of the human family. The other day I shot at a fish-hawk and broke his thigh bone. The enfeebled member of course hung down and dangled about the moment the bird took flight.

A flock of other birds mistaking the broken leg for a snake, which they supposed he had caught for his own use, gave violent chase, and continued to pounce upon the Fish-hawk and jerk his leg, until he was so exhausted that he was obliged to give himself up and let them amputate his limb, which they carried away in clamorous triumph.

The growth of timber in Florida consists of Live Oak, Pine, Mahogany, Magnolia, Cabbage-Tree, Cyprus, Chinchopin &c.

The live oak is a source of great profit. It is customary for a man to collect together fifty or sixty "live oak cutters" as they are termed, and encamp in the forests where they usually remain from autumn until spring, busily employed in felling the trees.— The timber is properly trimmed and hewn, conveyed to a creek with teams,— the logs are then floated down in lighters to the St. John's river where lumber vessels are in waiting to transport them to N.Y. city, Philadelphia, Boston, &c. I have known one hundred of these "cutters" to land here at one time from New York.

Next in point of importance is the ranging timber, or yellow pine. This tree surpasses in height all the other trees found in these forests, but its size is inferior to the pines at the north. It is however much more durable, and large quantities are transported. Its specific weight is nearly equal to that of the oak. Its fibers are densely compacted, and the whole trunk completely saturated with pitch. Its strength is such that the planters manufacture cart-tongues, axle-trees, &c. from it. There are other terebinthinate trees found in these forests. The mahogany is wrought into furniture like that brought from the West Indies,

although by no means so elegant. The cabbage tree is the Queen of the forest. Its height is sixty or one hundred feet. Its beauty surpasses my powers of description. The perfume from the musk bags of Alligators pervades every spot of the woods where I have travelled. The inhabitants soon become accustomed to it, and it is quite agreeable to the olfactory organs as a smelling bottle in a sultry day.

The Legislative Assembly have passed an Act granting permission for the construction of a Rail Road from this place to Tallahassee, the territorial seat of Government. The expense is estimated at \$3000 per mile. Timber suitable for the purpose is found in abundance in the extensive country through the proposed route. When the Rail Road shall be completed, it will in a great measure supercede the necessity of vessels sailing round the Gulph of Florida— thus affording good facilities for internal communications— be the means of saving much property and many lives— materially enhance the value of the land, give a general impulse to business in the interior and serve to improve the population in their habits of industry as well as in a variety of other ways.⁸

Jacksonville, E. Florida
June, 1834

Dear Brother,— A few days since, I took with me two young slaves, furnished by a friend, for the purpose of visiting an ancient Indian Mound on the St. John's River, twelve miles below Jacksonville. It stands on a conical bluff fifty feet high, and containing about two acres, skirted on the east by the river. The mound is circular,— covering one third of an acre, and rising like a dome from the bluff to the height of forty feet, so that the summit of the mound cannot be much short of one hundred feet from the level of the river. It is thickly covered with trees and shrubbery

8. The "Florida Peninsula, and Jacksonville Rail Road Company" was chartered February 15, 1834 at a capitalization of \$1,000,000. It was to run from "Jacksonville to Tallahassee, a distance of about one hundred and forty-five miles in a straight line to be there connected with the Tallahassee and St. Marks Rail Road, also chartered at the present session." Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIV, 976-77. See also Davis, *History of Jacksonville*, 74; *Laws of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida passed at twelfth session, January 6 to February 16, 1834* (Tallahassee, 1834), 81-87, 93-99.

from the largest live oak which is an evergreen, to the beautiful hawthorn and the aromatic myrtle, all of which are filled with moss pendant from the branches, and imparting a dark and melancholy air to this rude mausoleum of the dead. Thus it would seem that nature does not blush to mourn for these children of the forest, although they have been persecuted, despised, abused, destroyed, hunted down, and expatriated by all the conquering genius of civilization. About one fourth of the bluff and mound has been undermined and washed away by the constant friction and dashing of the river, and the time will come when the whole pile will be completely submerged beneath the water. On the side adjacent to the water, human skulls, trunks and limbs of all sizes, from the helpless infant to the strong warrior who once gloried in his prowess, may be seen projecting out in a horizontal position, and supporting the superincumbent earth. Many of the bones were in good state of preservation, notwithstanding the unknown centuries which have elapsed since they were here deposited, and I succeeded in tracing out several skeletons nearly entire without difficulty. The manner in which the mound was formed is this:— The original bluff, which is composed principally of sand and clay, was excavated about fifteen feet in depth, and over a sufficient area to form the base of the mound. A tier of dead bodies was then arranged on the bottom, and covered with a stratum of earth twelve or fifteen inches thick, then another layer of bodies, covered with earth in a similar manner until this alternation reached the surface of the natural bluff. Thus the mound continues to the distance of about forty feet above the bluff, gradually tapering till you reach the summit. Over the whole is a stratum of oyster shells very regularly arranged, and about twenty inches in thickness. The upper surface of these oyster shells is covered with a layer of earth fifteen inches deep. Whether this last deposite of earth was made by the hand of time or of man, it is impossible to decide. The trees which spread their branches over this sepulchral spot, and which add not a little to its antique and solemn appearance, are undoubtedly of spontaneous growth. On digging a few feet into the mound, I found that every skeleton was surrounded by earth of a deep florid tinge. This was uniformly the case, and the peculiar tint I believe, must have derived from the iron contained in the

blood, but now united with the silex, &c. These dead bodies must have been ages and ages in accumulating, and perhaps ten times as many ages have passed away since the last burial took place. I found here one bead made of bone half an inch long;— and an axe of stone— the most beautiful I ever saw, although similar in other respects to the same aboriginal utensil found in many parts of New England. No person, living in this section of the country, can give any account, either historical or traditional, respecting these interesting monuments of savage life, or rather I should say, of the savage dead.

A road called the King's road is constructed from Jacksonville to St. Mary's and St. Augustine; and another known as the Government road, extends from Jacksonville to Alochaway and Tallahassee.— The country through which these principal roads pass, is generally somewhat sandy, but they are kept in as good condition as the nature of the soil will permit, so that the traveling is tolerably pleasant.— The Government road is considerably frequented by people who come from S. Carolina and Georgia to visit the Medicinal Springs in the interior. All the other roads of which I have any knowledge, are more single trails leading to the habitations of planters. The feet of the horses are not encumbered with shoes which would be entirely useless. Mules are much used here for journeying. The common practice is in caravans, particularly with the planters who move from one section to another.— They mount their mules and horses and string themselves out in a single file with their slaves in front and mounted. They camp out by night, strike up a light, and after taking their evening refreshment, go out in pursuit of deer. The deer make their appearance from the deep and dense hammocks of live oak (there they remain by day) to graze by night during the absence of the moon. The hunter lights pitch pine sticks, which he places in a flat vessel similar to a frying pan, the handle of which is placed on his shoulders so that the torch is behind him, and kept trimmed and burning by an attendant. The light falls upon the eyes of the deer and is reflected back to the huntsman who judges of the distance between him and the deer by the distance which appears to be between the two eye balls of the deer. When these appear to be about three inches asunder, the hunter judges the animal to be at a proper distance for his rifle

to take effect. In this manner he can calculate on greater success than hunting by day light.

The planters keep immense herds of swine and cattle, all of which run wild. Of the former stock it is not uncommon for one man to own four or five hundred. They run wild and are extremely ferocious. The old ones will make an attack upon you as readily as would a bear when they are molested or when their young are supposed to be in danger.

The cattle are not as large as you find at the north. Their color is almost uniformly white.— Whenever the planter is in want of beef he goes into the forest with his rifle which he levels at any one that may suit his fancy. Pork is obtained in the same manner. In the spring of the year the planters mount their horses and turn out for “a cow hunting.” They sometimes wander ten, twenty or thirty miles before they find them. They will rent twenty or forty cows for as long a period as a new settler may choose, allowing the settler to have all the milk and one third of the stock arising from the increase. The price of a cow and calf is ten dollars invariably. Yours, &c. J.D.