

# CRYSTAL RIVER NEWS.

CRYSTAL RIVER, FLORIDA, AUGUST 18, 1905.

## THE CRYSTAL RIVER COUNTRY

### THE GARDEN SPOT OF CITRUS COUNTY AND THE MECCA OF HOMESEEKERS.

#### The Topography of This Section—Some of the Charming Scenes—The Town of Crystal River is the Home of Prominent People in the Business and Scientific World.

When tired of the cold, icy blasts of the North go South; when you go South go to Florida; and when you go to Florida go to Crystal River, in Citrus county.

"Go West, young man; go West," said Horace Greeley. "Go West and grow up with the country." But that was when the West was mostly a great unutilized waste, and the "young man" did not exactly strike a picnic when he got there. When we say "Go South" we do not invite people into a country as yet unutilized and uncivilized, but into a country where the primitive roughness has already been eradicated; where churches and good schools are already established, where there are good soils awaiting man's industry, with a temperate and healthful climate to make that industry pleasant as well as profitable; where there are yet many natural resources waiting for capital and brains to develop them, and where, be you rich or poor, there are a hospitable and congenial people ready to extend the hand of welcome, provided you be but honest, industrious and law-abiding.

When we particularize and say "Come to Crystal River" it is because we know that Crystal River and its vicinities offer as many, if not more, varied opportunities to the laborer, agriculturist and capitalist than any other section in the South. It is not a farming country exclusively, nor yet a healthful and pleasurable winter resort only, nor but a country of mills and mines; but it affords a happy and profitable combination of the three—and following in the wake of the three come many other industries which spring up because of them.

#### SCENERY.

For those who demand attractions beyond the merely practical, Crystal River has scenery as grand, romantic, as uplifting as ever inspired a poet or saved a soul. There are vistas far-reaching and grand, where tall straight pines form aisles through which one instinctively looks for alars and waves beyond. The soft zephyrs whispering among the branches above, and the aromatic incense which perfumes the atmosphere makes the imagination revel in solemn, cathedral-like thoughts; 'tis verily a place for wordless but heartfelt prayer.

Leaving the pines one enters, perhaps, plots of scrub-palmetto, or "prairies" where the broad-leaved palmettos interspersed with wild flowers of varied hue and kind, give one the impression of an extensive open-air conservatory.

Then comes the hammock lands, where the bay and magnolia, the cedar and oak, the tall cabbage palm and many other trees of tropical verdure try to out rival each other in splendor and growth; yet which are entwined in a seemingly affectionate brotherhood of vines and trellised flowering plants altogether too varied to mention. In this cool, shady silence birds twitter and busy themselves with love and housekeeping affairs; the timid deer rests from the chase from the hounds, the possum and the coon hold high revelries, the wild turkey struts about in happy ignorance of Thanksgiving Day, the mocking birds trill their happy song or mimic their feathered neighbors, and even at high noon the

owl wakes up and wonders what it is all about.

A walk through the hammock brings one to the river—the beautiful, gently flowing tidal Crystal River.

We walk up one of the great "Indian mounds" on its bank so as to get a more extensive view, and perhaps catch a glimpse of the great Gulf of Mexico into which Crystal River flows. Nearby are the great excavations where treasure-seekers in the cause of science and history have disturbed the bones of a fast vanishing race. The mound on which we stand shows evidence of having at some remote date been the wigwam home of some great chief of the red-man's tribe. Naturally one ponders on that mystic past, and in imagination again peoples the spot with the silent stoe forms of this picturesque race. The wigwam, the council fires, the calumet, the light canoes, all are pictured before us; and the gentle flow of the river below helps to make the picture a vivid one. Even the most unimpressible must pay a silent tribute to this brave, but vanquished, race. Ages hence, may not, perhaps, a race gifted with higher intelligence than our own stand here as we now stand, and wonder at the crude customs of our time?

Our reverie is broken in upon by the "chou chou" of a launch or two laden with merry pleasure seekers, or perhaps merely towing a great raft of red cedar to the mill, or towing in barges full of the crude material wanted at the fiber factories. Then, perhaps, a large steamer comes along, and with masterful "blast" demands the right of way from all smaller craft.

More gently come the white-winged sailing boats. Schooners, sloops, sharpies, "cat riggers"—boats of all sizes dot the scene with their white sails, whilst here and there sturdy oarsmen send their light skulls skimming about among them. Yonder is a happy quartette of negro fishermen running their nets around a school of the unwary fish. Yet loudly and insistently proclaiming: "Wen de gin'ral roll an called I'll be dar." Farther on in the shade of the overhanging trees sits an assiduous sportsman, holding a glistening rod with reel of the "very latest," intently waiting—one might almost say "listening"—for a bite. His guide, with gaff hook ready, his black face shining, his ivory in generous evidence, his eyes ablaze with excitement, watches as eagerly as does his master for "dat dar big 'un whin's gwine tuh be cotched dis time fish sho." And, as if in derision of all this invasion of man and civilization, the great tarpon leaps high up out of the water but a few feet from the boat of the Isaak Walton; the smaller fry leap merrily over the nets of the darkies, and the waters glide to and fro with the tide, regardless of the obstructions of wheels and steam. Man, after all, remains subservient to the commands of a higher power, the God of nature.

We leave the waters of Crystal River and glide in among the numerous islands of Salt River. At "low tide" we may take a shot at the flocks of ducks and heron; we may corner up a couple of dol-plains in some bayon and give them a

taste of lead and watch them then frantically giving huge rolling leaps towards the deep waters of the Gulf; or we may try to gather the fruit of the cactus, the prickly pear, which resents being interfered with as much as its near neighbor, the Spanish bayonet resents an attempt to rob it of its huge stalk of creamy, bell-like flowers. Perhaps we may spy an alligator swimming along lazily. Or we may see his more lazy mate lying asleep on a mudbank. It is fun to wake her up—at a safe distance.

FARM PRODUCTS.  
The chief ones are cane, corn, sweet potatoes, melons, peanuts and the usual

bushels per acre as do the rich prairies of the West, the price per bushel right in the local market is often treble that in the West.

Hammock lands are best for corn, producing about thirty bushels to the acre. The islands on the immediate coast, being rich in muck and shell may yield more.

Sweet potatoes are a staple crop, yielding on pine lands about 50 bushels per acre on an average, with little attention after planting. Sweet potatoes sell for forty to sixty cents per bushel in the home markets. Farmers who are very far from markets sometimes use sweet



THE CRYSTAL RIVER SPRINGS.

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By M. M. STRATNER.

'Neath green, wide-spreading oaks all gaily moss-festooned;  
'Mid sweet Aeolian strains to nature's chords attuned,  
In revelry they met—those fairie folks of yore—  
A-glee with fairie wands and magic lairie lore,  
To greet with welcome song their much-loved lairie Queen,  
Who deigned, this witching night, to grace the woodland scene.

"What boon is it that I this night may gr... to all?  
What favors could ye that might in the... of all,  
Which fav'ored mortals may love... more,  
Far from the world of strife and all that may annoy?"

Thus spake the gracious Queen. Her subjects gathered nigh,  
In homage kissed her hand, and thus they made reply:

"The boon we ask is great; we beg the brightest gem  
Of those that cluster in thy brilliant diadem  
Of haloed lights upon thy fair and queenly brow—  
The boon we ask is great; but wouldst, O Queen, deny us now?"

At once the snow-white hands removed the jeweled crown,  
Let fall the brightest gems of Fairyland renown.  
Not one, but more, she cast within that lairy ring,  
And wished to each the pow'r yet greater gifts to bring.

Next morn the sun arose to smile on land and sea,  
And where the fairie Queen had held her revelry;  
'Forsooth!' he cried, "What change is this that hath been wrought?"

'Tis bubbling springs there are where yester-eve was naught  
But common earth and grass! And ne'er has there been seen  
Such rainbow hues of scintillating, silv'ry sheen!  
Methinks some diamonds rare must here have been dissolved,  
While 'bout them fairie forms in rhythmic tread revolved."

(He knew not that he'd guessed the truth about the springs;  
This query to his brow still off a wrinkle brings.)

The fairies laugh in glee at good Old Sol's amaze,  
But keep themselves a-shield from his too ardent gaze.  
They fain would haste the speed, so his day's work were done;  
The time to them is long—those hours 'twixt sun and sun—  
'Tis when the dew-time stars light up the lairie rings,  
Their forms come dancing o'er the Crystal River Springs.

garden of vegetables. Forage plants of several varieties thrive exceedingly well, making stock raising and dairying profitable. Stock and hog raising is still done on the wild grasses alone, but the best farmers are fast discarding such farming. Cotton does well, but other industries—or rather the good sense of the farmers who believe in variety farming—have crowded out cotton.

Cane may be called the "money crop." This crop is as "sure" as any crop can be, and the demand for the syrup made from it is never exhausted. It will be but a matter of a few years when there will be sugar refineries established; then there will not be a more profitable product than cane. The farmers now sell their syrup in the local markets at about an average of fifty cents a gallon.

Almost all lands produce good cane, but the pine lands are preferred. Though the rich hammock lands produce larger stalks, they contain more water, necessitating more boiling in the making of the syrup.

Corn, while not yielding so many

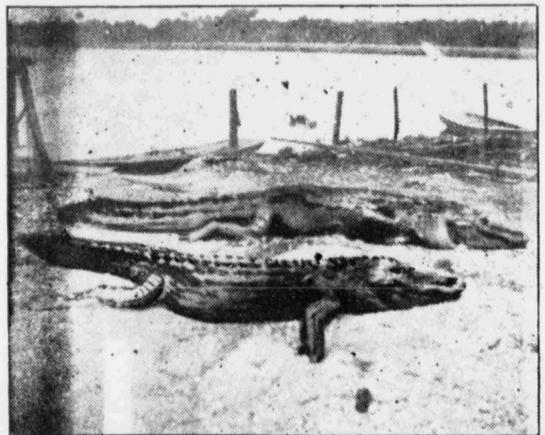
potatoes for fattening hogs. Any of these lands are right for sweet potatoes, but sandy lands are best.

Melons! This is the land of melons; and that is all there need be said about melons.

Peanuts are raised mostly for fattening hogs. The crop is planted, and when matured the hogs are turned in on them to "root hog or die." Some may die, but it is because even hogs sometimes die because of having too much of a good thing.

For forage, the beggar weed, the velvet beans, the cowpea, the Bermuda grass and the millet take the lead. All these and some others grow luxuriantly, and all are fine either to fatten heaves or to keep milkers up to the standard.

For the truckster the hammock lands are best; and when you have a good farm of hammock land near to the Crystal River depot go in and win. Plant any and all sorts of vegetables for the local market, but for shipping try celery, cabbage, cauliflower, tomatoes, lettuce,



A COMMON SIGHT ON CRYSTAL RIVER.

beans, eggplants, cucumbers, onions and Irish potatoes.

#### FRUITS.

These are, first, the orange of course; but lemons, grape-fruits, peaches, pears, plums, Japan persimmons, scuppernon and the Thomas grapes and strawberries do well. In fact since the great freeze, which injured so many orange trees, fruit growers have turned their attention to these other fruits and were surprised to learn that they could raise them quite as profitably as they could the orange.

Fig growing too should be more extensively engaged in; and there should be established kilns and curing houses so as to preserve the fruit to commerce. There is no reason why we should import figs which have been handled and cured in Smyrna by the Lord knows whom, and we do not know how, when we may just as well have our own figs raised at home and cured by home people and clean home hands. California is making a success of fig culture—why should not Florida do so as well?

The fig does best on damp, shelly lands near the coast. The trees bear abundantly, require little attention and can be grown on lands almost unfit for anything else.

Bananas do well on the coast lands, but they have scarcely been given a trial as a money crop.

It may not be amiss to mention the mulberries. But not for its fruit alone is the mulberry tree valuable, but for the more practical uses to which its leaves may be put, namely in the feeding of silk-worms. They feed on mulberry leaves, and the silk reeled and tested is as fine as that either of France or China. The worms here are remarkably free from the diseases from which they suffer in foreign countries to such a great extent is this true that France pays high prices for American silk worm eggs. The government has been recently trying to establish "test plants" or "cocooneries;" but surely the time will come when this great undeveloped industry, so especially adapted to Florida, will receive the attention it deserves. When it does, and "cocooneries" and silk culture are established facts, Crystal River will send in its fair quota of raw silk. And then the mulberry tree will flourish even better than the proverbial "green bay tree."

#### CLIMATE.

The general climate of Florida has been so much written about that little more need be added. Yet it may be borne in mind that Crystal River is right on the Gulf coast. There is an immense area of salt water to the west and south, which insures a breeze, cooling, invigorating all through the hot summer months. Residents who have moved here from the North say they have never felt the depressing and scorching heat here as they had in their former homes. Such a thing as sun-stroke is unknown. The summer days bring cooling showers generally accompanied by just enough electricity to purify the atmosphere.

As to the winters, it is enough to state that hotels and boarding houses and even private residences are full every winter with people who flock here from the North, because of the pleasant out-of-door life they may lead here during the winter months.

#### THE POSSIBILITIES OF CASTOR BEAN CULTURE.

It has long been a matter of questioning wonder to us why Florida does not go heavily into the business of raising castor beans. In Kansas castor beans are the staple money crop, bringing from \$1.25 to \$1.50 per bushel. There they need good soil and careful cultivation, and then grow but to a medium size; here, on the very poorest soil, with no cultivation whatever, the castor bean grows to such a size that children climb them and play among their branches. The seed clusters are of an enormous size, and seem to keep on growing and maturing almost the whole year around.

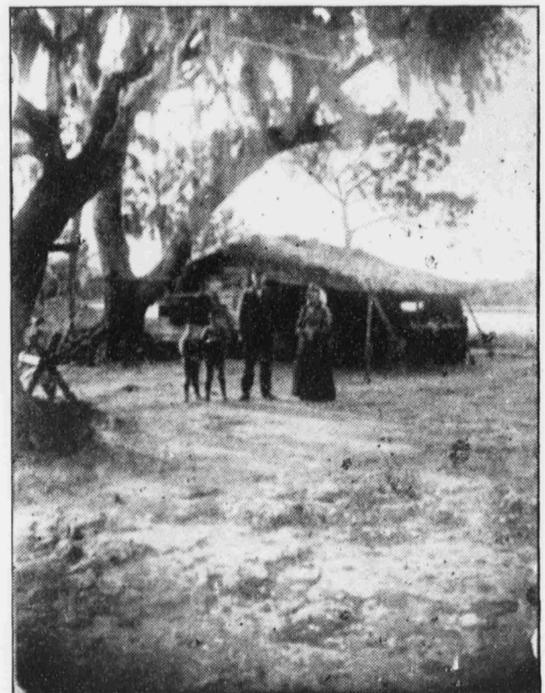
They grow from year to year, as it is seldom that our frosts are severe enough to cut them down in the winter. The possibilities of castor bean culture are great, but like many another industry, if one has happened to "think it over,"

#### TOBACCO.

While tobacco has, as yet, not been grown as a staple in the immediate vicinity of Crystal River, it has been cultivated sufficiently to prove that the soils and climate are all they should be to make tobacco culture an easy success. The nearness of Tampa, one of the best tobacco markets in the world, is a point not to be lost sight of by anyone who may wish to engage in this industry.



"THE ROCK" ON CRYSTAL RIVER.



RUSTIC, THOUGH HAPPY, HOME ON CRYSTAL RIVER.