

A FLORIDA SKETCH-BOOK

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A Florida Sketch-Book by Bradford Torrey

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A FLORIDA SKETCH-BOOK.

IN THE FLAT-WOODS.

IN approaching Jacksonville by rail, the traveler rides hour after hour through seemingly endless pine barrens, otherwise known as low pine-woods and flat-woods, till he wearies of the sight. It would be hard, he thinks, to imagine a region more unwholesome looking and uninteresting, more poverty-stricken and God-forsaken, in its entire aspect. Surely, men who would risk life in behalf of such a country deserved to win their cause.

Monotonous as the flat-woods were, however, and malarious as they looked, — arid wastes and stretches of stagnant water flying past the car window in perpetual alternation, — I was impatient to get into them. They were a world the like of which I had never seen; and wherever I went in eastern Florida, I made it one of my earliest concerns to seek them out.

My first impression was one of disappointment, or perhaps I should rather say, of bewilderment. In fact, I returned from my first visit to the flat-woods under the delusion that I had not been into them at all. This was at St. Augustine, whither I had gone after a night only in Jacksonville. I looked about the quaint little city, of course, and went to the South Beach, on St. Anastasia Island; then I wished to see the pine lands. They were to be found, I was told, on the other side of the 'San Sebastian. The sun was hot (or so it seemed to a man fresh from the rigors of a New England winter), and the sand was deep; but I sauntered through New Augustine, and pushed on up the road toward Moultrie (I believe it was), till the last houses were passed and I came to the edge of the pine-woods. Here, presently, the roads began to fork in a very confusing manner. The first man I met—a kindly cracker—cautioned me against getting lost; but I had no thought of taking the slightest risk of that kind. I was not going to *explore* the woods, but only to enter them, sit down, look about me, and listen. The difficulty was to get into them. As I