



## **Picturesque America; or, the land we live in**

a delineation by pen and pencil of the mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, water-falls, shores, cañons, valleys, cities, and other picturesque features of our country ; with illustrations on steel and wood, by eminent American artists

**Bryant, William Cullen**

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St. Augustine, Florida.

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## ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY HARRY FENN.



St. Mark's Castle, St. Augustine.

THE quaint little city of St. Augustine, Florida, the oldest European settlement in the United States, is situated on the Atlantic coast, in a narrow peninsula formed by the Sebastian and Matanzas Rivers, on the west side of a harbor which is separated from the ocean by the low and narrow island of Anastasia. It lies about forty miles south of the mouth of the great river St. John's, and about one hundred and sixty miles south from Savannah, in Georgia.



St. Augustine was founded by the Spaniards in 1565, more than half a century before the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, and was from the start a place of note, and the scene of interesting historical events. Its founder, Don Pedro Menendez, was one of the most eminent men of Spain, and a famous commander during the reign of Philip II., by whom he was sent to Florida at the head of an expedition comprising thirty-four vessels and two thousand six hundred persons, to colonize the country and suppress a Huguenot settlement made in 1564 near the mouth of the St. John's. He landed at St. Augustine on August 28, 1565, established his colony, and then marched

to exterminate the Huguenots, which he effected with great vigor and cruelty, putting to death all his prisoners, "not because they are Frenchmen, but because they are heretics and enemies of God." Two years later, this massacre was avenged by a French adventurer, Dominique de Gourgues, who, with a small force of volunteers, attacked and captured the Spanish forts on the St. John's, and hanged his prisoners, "not because they are Spaniards, but because they are traitors, robbers, and murderers." De Gourgues, however, made no attempt to retain his conquest, but, after his deed of retribution was accomplished, sailed back to France.

Menendez was absent in Spain during this attack by De Gourgues, and did not return until the affair was over. He continued for some years longer to rule the colony, but finally returned to Spain, where his reputation for ability was so high that he was made captain-general of the navy, soon after which he died, at the age of fifty-five. His career in Florida, though stained with cruelty, was distinguished for energy and perseverance, and to him, undoubtedly, is due the credit of establishing the first permanent settlement in the United States. His selection of St. Augustine as a site for his chief town showed his good judgment. The situation was peculiarly favorable. The harbor, while affording ample accommodation for vessels bringing in supplies for the garrison, was inaccessible to those of a larger class, and was thus tolerably protected from the attack of a hostile fleet; while landward the estuaries and marshes defended it from the Indians. A still more favorable feature in the location of Menendez's garrison was its great healthiness. Surrounded by salt marshes, free from miasmatic exhalations, the pure and balmy sea-air preserved the colonists from those fevers so fatal to the first settlers on our Southern coasts.

In 1586, Sir Francis Drake, the famous English fillibuster, returning from an expedition against the Spanish West Indies, appeared off St. Augustine, and so terrified the Spaniards that they abandoned the fort and the town to him without any attempt at resistance, and fled to the shelter of the forts on the St. John's. Drake took possession, and pillaged and burnt the town, carrying away considerable booty. The principal public buildings of the place at that time were a court-house, a church, and a monastery. After the departure of Drake, the Spaniards returned and rebuilt the town, which, however, grew so slowly that in 1647 there were within its walls only three hundred families, or fifteen hundred inhabitants, including fifty monks of the order of St. Francis.

In 1665, a party of English buccaneers, commanded by Captain John Davis, made a descent upon St. Augustine with seven small vessels, and pillaged the town. The garrison, though consisting of two hundred men, do not appear to have resisted the attack, which, it is probable, was made from the south by boats.

In 1702, Spain and England being at war, an expedition against St. Augustine was organized in South Carolina, by Governor Moore, of that colony. It consisted of six

hundred whites, and as many Indian allies, and its plan of operations comprised a march by land of one portion of the force, and an attack by sea of the other. The land force was commanded by Colonel Daniel, the naval force by Governor Moore himself. The forces under Colonel Daniel reached St. Augustine before the naval part of the expedition appeared, and easily captured the town, the governor, Don Joseph Cuniga, and the inhabitants, taking refuge in the castle, which was well supplied with provisions, and contained a considerable garrison. Governor Moore, with the fleet, soon after arrived, and invested the fortifications, but, not having siege-guns of sufficient calibre,



St. Francis Street, St. Augustine.

could make no impression on the walls of the fort. Colonel Daniel was sent to Jamaica to procure heavier guns. While he was yet absent, two Spanish vessels appeared off the harbor. Governor Moore, fearing that he was about to be attacked by a superior force and his retreat cut off, hastily raised the siege, destroying such of his munitions as he could not remove, and barbarously burning the town. He retreated by land, abandoning his vessels from fear of the Spanish squadron, whose appearance had alarmed him. Shortly afterward, Colonel Daniel returned from Jamaica with mortars and heavy guns, but found Moore gone, and was himself nearly captured. The expedition returned to Carolina in disgrace, but without the loss of a man. It cost the colony of

South Carolina six thousand pounds, and led to the issue of the first paper money ever circulated in America.

In 1727, Colonel Palmer, an energetic officer, made a raid into Florida with about three hundred Carolina militia, and carried destruction by fire and sword to the very gates of St. Augustine, which, however, he dared not attack, though he sacked a Yemassee village about a mile north of the city.

In 1740, war again existing between Spain and England, an expedition against St. Augustine was organized by the famous General Oglethorpe, then Governor of Georgia. He obtained assistance from South Carolina, and from England a naval force of six ships. About the first of June his forces reached



St. Augustine Cathedral.

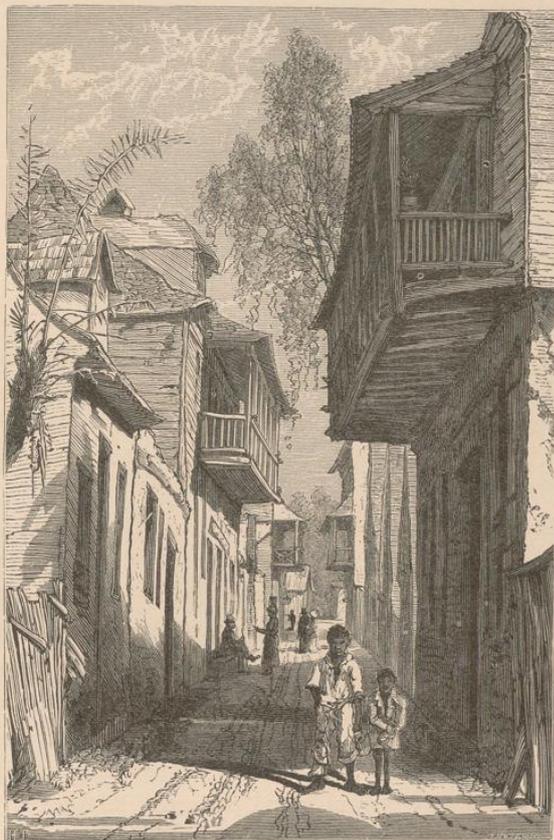


The Convent-Gate.

St. Augustine, which was defended by a not very numerous garrison commanded by Don Manuel de Monteano, the Governor of Florida, a man of energy and resolution. After a siege of five or six weeks, carried on chiefly by bombardment from Anastasia Island, Oglethorpe became satisfied that he could not take the place, especially as his fleet had withdrawn in apprehension of bad weather, and he accordingly embarked his troops and sailed away on July 9th.

Two years later, the Spanish Governor of Florida, the energetic Monteano, having received reinforcements from Cuba, sailed from St. Augustine with thirty-six vessels and three thousand men to

attack the English settlements in Georgia. He met with some success at first, but was finally baffled, partly by the force and partly by the *finesse* of Oglethorpe, and returned to Florida. In the following year, 1743, Oglethorpe made a raid into the Spanish dominions to the gates of St. Augustine, advancing with such celerity and secrecy that



A Street in St. Augustine.

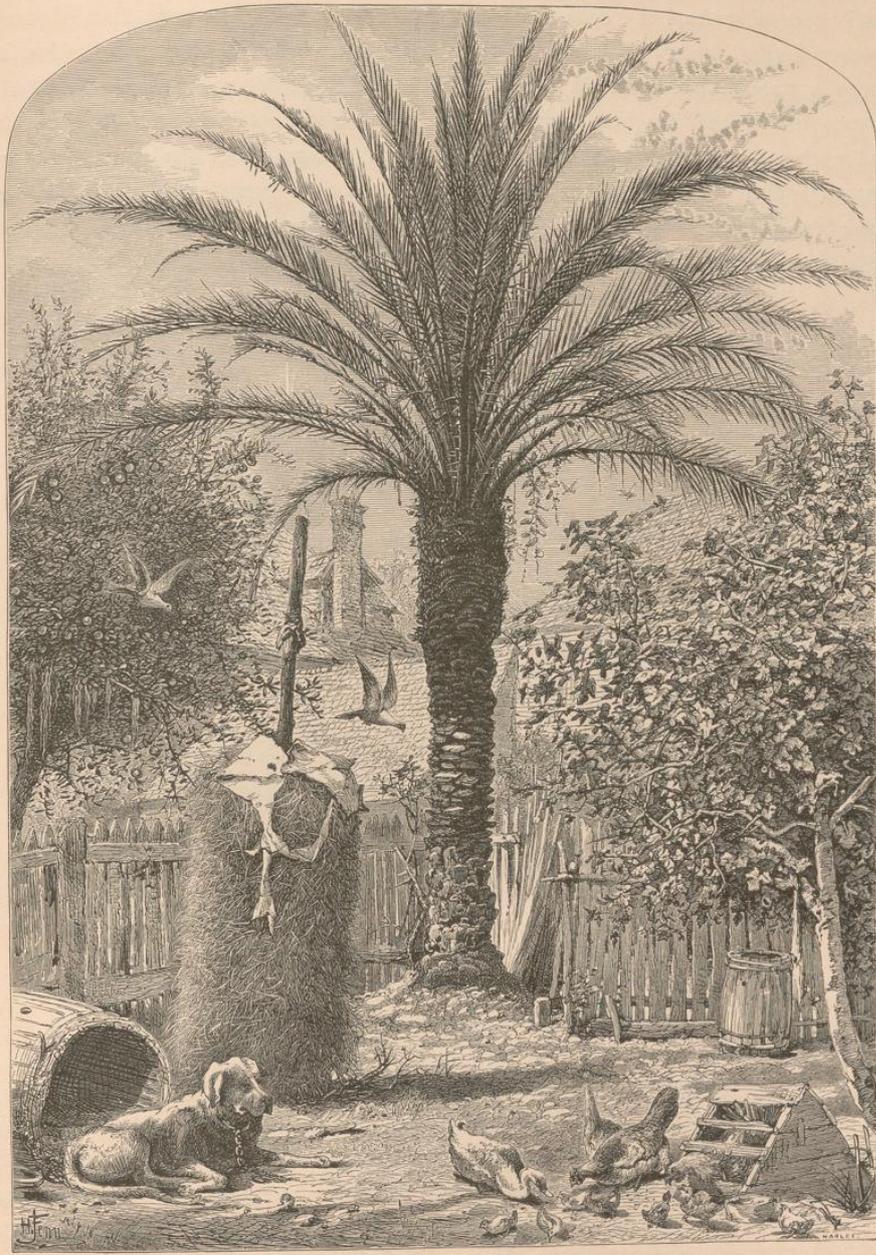
the Indians attached to his force captured and scalped forty of the Spanish troops under the very walls of Fort St. Mark's, the chief defence of the city.

By the Treaty of 1763, which established peace between Spain and England, Florida was ceded to the English in exchange for Havana, which had been taken by an English fleet during the war. This cession was very distasteful to the Floridians, and nearly all of them removed at once to Mexico and the West Indies. To offset this depopulation, great efforts were made in England to promote emigration to the newly-acquired terri-

tory, the fertility and salubrity of which were highly lauded in pamphlets, books, and newspaper articles. An association was formed in London, at the head of which was Dr. Andrew Turnbull, a Scotch gentleman, having in view the settlement of the large and very valuable body of land lying near Mosquito Inlet. They proposed to accomplish this purpose by procuring settlers from the south of Europe and the Mediterranean islands, especially from Minorca, who, living in a similar climate, might successfully transplant and cultivate the productions of that region on the rich lands of Florida. Accordingly, in 1767, fifteen hundred Greeks, Italians, and Minorcans, were brought over and settled at New Smyrna, on the Mosquito Inlet, ninety miles south of St. Augustine. There they remained till 1776, when their number was reduced by sickness to about six hundred, and this remnant, complaining of ill-usage on the part of the proprietors of the colony, abandoned New Smyrna in a body and made their way to St. Augustine, where lots were assigned to them in the northern part of the city, where their descendants still reside, and constitute an important and very interesting part of the population.

The British kept possession of Florida about twenty years, and then, in 1783, receded it to Spain in exchange for the Bahama Islands. St. Augustine, at that time, contained three thousand inhabitants, a description of which we copy from a "History of Florida," by Mr. Geo. R. Fairbanks—the latest and the best work on this section of our country:

"All the gardens in the town were well stocked with fruit-trees, such as figs, guavas, plantains, pomegranates, lemons, limes, citrons, shaddocks, bergamot, China and Seville oranges. The city was three-quarters of a mile in length, and about a quarter of a mile in width. It had four churches, ornamentally built of stone (*coquina?*) in the Spanish style. One was pulled down during the English occupation, the steeple of which was preserved as an ornament to the town. One of the churches was attached to the Convent of St. Francis. Their houses were all built of stone, their entrances shaded by piazzas supported by Tuscan pillars or pilasters. Upon the east the windows projected eighteen inches into the street, and were very wide and proportionably high. On the west side the windows were commonly very small, and there was no opening of any kind to the north, upon which side they had double walls, six or eight feet asunder, forming a kind of hall for cellars and pantries. Before most of the entrances, which were from an inner court, were arbors of vines, producing fine and luscious grapes. None of the houses were supplied with chimneys or fireplaces. For the purposes of warmth, stone urns were filled with coals, and placed in the rooms in the afternoon to moderate the temperature in weather sufficiently cool to require it. The governor's residence had piazzas on both sides, also a belvedere and grand portico, decorated with Doric pillars and entablatures. At the north end of the town was the castle, a casemated fort, with four bastions, a ravelin counterscarp, and a glacis, built with quarried stone, and constructed according to



SCENE IN ST. AUGUSTINE.—THE DATE PALM.

the system of Vauban. Half a mile to the north was a line, with a broad ditch and bastions running from the Sebastian Creek to St. Mark's River; a mile from that was another fortified line, with some redoubts, forming a second line of communication between a staccata fort upon St. Sebastian River, and Fort Moosa, upon the St. Mark's River. Within the first line, near the town, was a small settlement of Germans, who had a church of their own. Upon the St. Mark's River, within the second line, was also an Indian town, with a stone church built by the Indians themselves, and in very good taste. These lines may be still distinctly traced. The churches spoken of, outside



The City Gate.

the city, as well as Forts Moosa and Staccata, have long since disappeared, but their sites are known.

“During the English occupation, large buildings were erected for barracks, of sufficient extent to quarter five regiments of troops. The brick of which they were built was brought from New York, although the island opposite the city afforded a much better building-material in the coquina stone. The lower story only of the British barracks was built of brick, the upper story being of wood. These barracks stood at the southern extremity of the town, to the south of the present barracks, and the length and great extent of the buildings fronting on the bay added greatly to the appearance

of the city as viewed from the harbor. The city, in English times, contained many gentlemen of distinction, among whom were Sir Charles Burdett, Chief-Justice Drayton, Rev. John Forbes, the Admiralty Judge, General James Grant, Lieutenant-Governor Moultrie, William Stark, Esq., the historian, Rev. N. Frazer, Dr. Andrew Turnbull, Bernard Romans, Esq., civil-engineer, James Moultrie, Esq., and William Bartram, the naturalist.

"Some few English families remained after the evacuation by the British in 1784, and the entire settlement of Greeks and Minorcans, who had come up from Mosquito from Dr. Turnbull's colony. As they were all Roman Catholics, and were accustomed to a language resembling the Spanish, they were not affected to any great degree by the change of rulers.

"It is a sad thing for an entire people to be forced to give up their homes and seek an asylum in some foreign land; and melancholy was the spectacle presented on all the routes leading to the harbor designated for the embarkation of the English inhabitants of Florida—families separating perhaps forever, long adieus between neighbors and friends who had together shared the privations and pleasures of the past, leaving behind them places endeared by the most sacred associations, and containing, perchance, the precious dust of the departed. Homes embowered among the orange-groves, and made pleasant by the fragrant blossoms of the honeysuckle, the rose, and the acacia; a land where Nature had lavished her choicest beauties, and created a perpetual summer—such was the land upon which the unfortunate residents of Florida were obliged to turn their backs forever."

In 1821 Florida passed by treaty from the dominion of Spain to that of the United States, and since then there is little in the history of St. Augustine that demands particular notice.

The most conspicuous feature in the town is the old fort of St. Mark's, or San Marco, which is built of coquina, a unique conglomerate of fine shells and sand, found in large quantities on Anastasia Island, at the entrance of the harbor, and quarried with great ease, though it becomes hard by exposure to the air. It is quarried in large blocks, and forms a wall well calculated to resist cannon-shot, because it does not splinter when struck.

The fort stands on the sea-front at one end of the town. It was a hundred years in building, and was completed in 1756, as is attested by the following inscription, which may still be seen over the gateway, together with the arms of Spain, handsomely carved in stone: "Don Fernando being King of Spain, and the Field-Marshal Don Alonzo Fernando Herida being governor and captain-general of this place, St. Augustine of Florida and its provinces, this fort was finished in the year 1756. The works were directed by the Captain-Engineer Don Pedro de Brazos y Gareny."

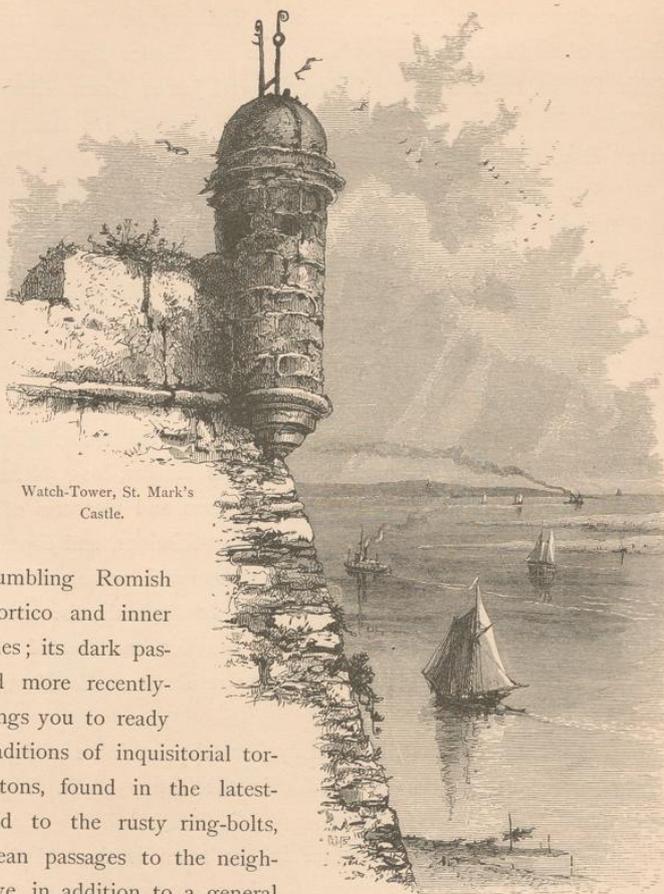
While owned by the British, this was said to be the prettiest fort in the king's dominions. Its castellated battlements; its formidable bastions, with their frowning guns

its lofty and imposing sally-port, surrounded by the royal Spanish arms; its portcullis, moat, draw-bridge; its circular and ornate sentry-boxes at each principal parapet-angle; its commanding lookout tower; and its stained and moss-grown massive walls—impress the external observer as a relic of the distant past: while a ramble through its

heavy casemates—its crumbling Romish chapel, with elaborate portico and inner altar and holy-water niches; its dark passages, gloomy vaults, and more recently-discovered dungeons—brings you to ready credence of its many traditions of inquisitorial tortures; of decaying skeletons, found in the latest-opened chambers, chained to the rusty ring-bolts, and of alleged subterranean passages to the neighboring convent. We give, in addition to a general view of this fort, at the head of our article, an

illustration of the quaint old watch-tower, overlooking the sea, and a glimpse of the interior, showing a stairway crumbled away out of almost all resemblance to its original form, and beneath an elliptical arch the entrance to the dungeons we have referred to. Here only a few years since, in a cavity revealed by the sinking of the parapet above, were found two skeletons hermetically walled in. The traveller curious in these old fortifications will be disposed to visit the ruins of a fort about twenty miles south of St. Augustine, on Matanzas Inlet. Of the history of this structure nothing is known. It is entirely different in form of construction from St. Mark's, and was probably erected about the same time.

Several other buildings in the town are worthy of notice for their quaintness or antiquity. The cathedral is unique, with its belfry in the form of a section of a bell-shaped pyramid, its chime of four bells in separate niches, and its clock, together form-



Watch-Tower, St. Mark's  
Castle.

ing a cross. The oldest of these bells is marked 1682. The old Convent of St. Mary's is a suggestive relic of the days of papal rule. The new convent is a tasteful building of the ancient coquina. The United-States barracks, recently remodelled and improved, are said to have been built as a convent, or monastery. The old government-house, or palace, is now in use as the post-office and United-States court-rooms. At its rear is a well-preserved relic of what seems to have been a fortification to protect the town from an over-the-river or inland attack. An older house than this, formerly occupied by the attorney-general, was pulled down a few years ago. Its ruins are still a curiosity, and are called (though incorrectly) the governor's house.



Interior of St. Mark's Castle.

The "Plaza de la Constitucion" is a fine public square in the centre of the town, on which stand the ancient markets, and which is faced by the cathedral, the old palace, the convent, a modern Episcopal church, and other fine structures. In the centre of the plaza stands a monument erected in honor of the Spanish Liberal Constitution.

The old Huguenot burying-ground is a spot of much interest; so is the military burying-ground, where rest the remains of those who fell near here during the prolonged Seminole War. Under three pyramids of coquina, stuccoed and whitened, are the ashes of Major Dade and one hundred and seven men of his command, who were massacred by Osceola and his band. A fine sea-wall of nearly a mile in length, built of coquina,

with a coping of granite, protects the entire ocean-front of the city, and furnishes a delightful promenade of a moonlight evening. In full view of this is the old light-house on Anastasia Island, built more than a century ago, and now surmounted with a fine revolving lantern.

The appearance of St. Augustine to the visitor from other parts of the country is as quaint and peculiar as its history is bloody and varied. Nothing at all like it is to be seen in any part of the United States. It resembles some of the old towns of Spain and Italy. The streets are quite narrow; one, which is nearly a mile long, being but fifteen feet wide, and that on which a principal hotel stands being but twelve feet, while



Ruins of a Spanish Fort at Matanzas Inlet.

the widest of all is but twenty-five feet. An advantage of these narrow streets in this warm climate is that they give shade, and increase the draught of air through them as through a flue. Indeed, some of the streets seem almost like a flue rather than an open way; for many of the houses, with high roof and dormer-windows, have hanging balconies along their second story, which seem almost to touch each other over the narrow street; and the families sitting in these of a warm evening can chat confidentially, or even shake hands with their over-the-way neighbors.

The street-walls of the houses are frequently extended in front of the side-garden—the house-roof, and perhaps a side-balcony, covering this extension—or the houses are

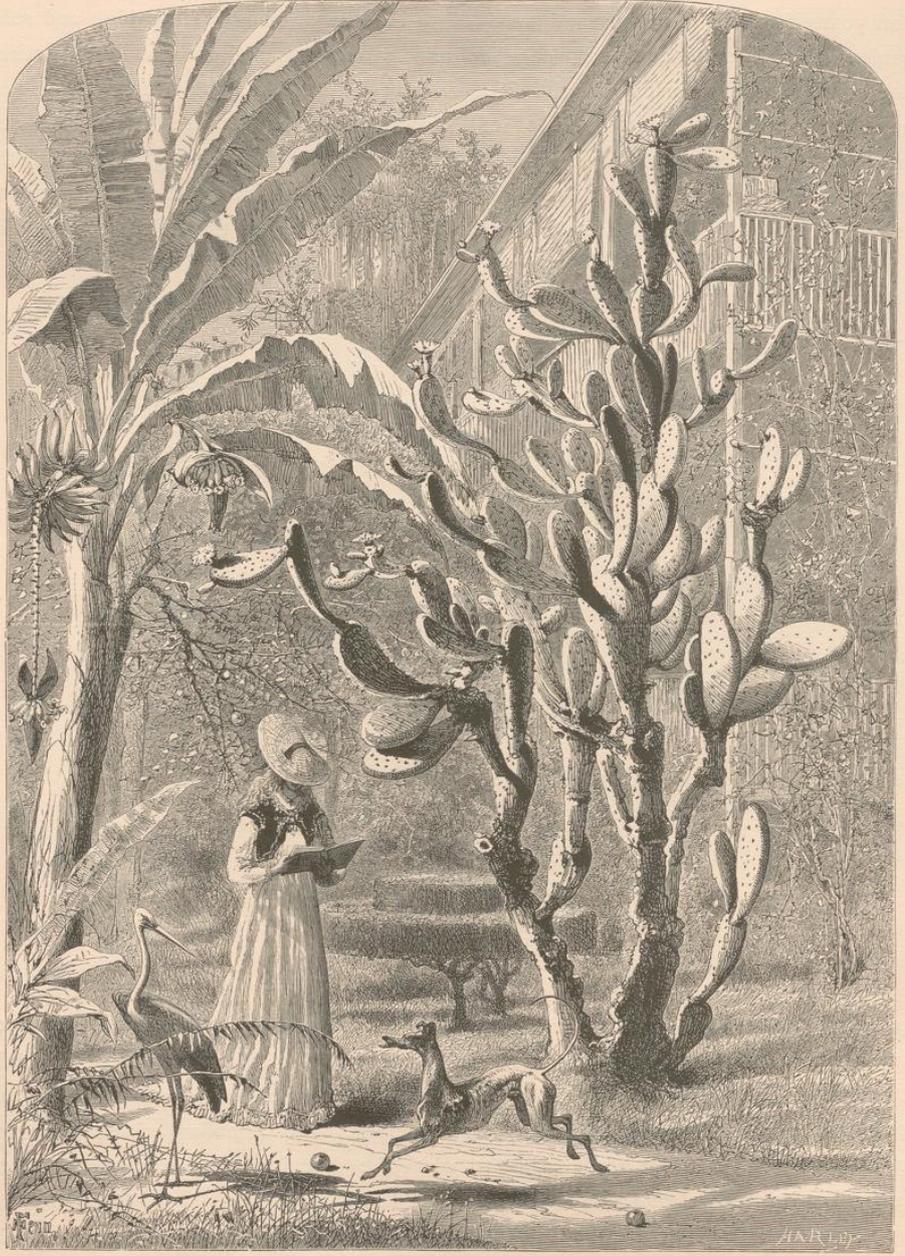
built around uncovered courts, so that, passing through the main door of a building, you find yourself still in the open air, instead of within the dwelling. These high and solid garden-walls are quite common along the principal streets; and an occasional latticed door gives you a peep into the attractive area beyond the massive structure, with perhaps a show of huge stone arches, or of a winding staircase between heavy stone columns, or of a profusion of tropical vegetation in the winter-garden, bringing to mind the stories in poem and romance of the loves of Spanish damsels, and of stolen interviews at the garden-gate, or elopements by means of the false key or the bribed porter. The



Coquina Quarry, Anastasia Island.

principal streets were formerly well paved or floored with shell-concrete, portions of which are still to be seen above the shifting sand; and this flooring was so carefully swept that the dark-eyed maidens of Old Castile, who then led in society here, could pass and repass without soiling their satin slippers. No rumbling wheels were permitted to crush the firm road-bed, or to whirl the dust into the airy verandas, where in undisturbed repose sat the Spanish dons and dames.

There are two convents in St. Augustine, whose nuns are mainly occupied in the education of young girls. There are among them a number of nuns brought over from France a few years since, who teach, besides their own language, the art of making lace,



A GARDEN IN FLORIDA.

and have also introduced the manufacture of hats from the palmetto and from the wire-grass, which is very strong and durable.

It must not be supposed, however, that St. Augustine is built wholly of coquina and in the Spanish style. There are many fine residences there in the American style. A profusion of tropical plants, and shrubs, and trees, ornament their grounds. Here the orange flourishes, and is abundant and delicious; several fine groves invite the visitor's inspection. The fig, and date, and palm, and banana, are all seen here, as also the lime and lemon, which grow to a great size, and the sweet and the wild olive; the citron, the guava, and the pomegranate, are all indigenous. The grape, and the peach, and the water-melon, also grow here with great luxuriance.

Among our illustrations the reader will find a garden-scene (see page 189), which, eminently characteristic of St. Augustine in many of its features, is specially noticeable on account of a splendid specimen of a date-palm, flanked on one side by a fig and on the other by a lemon tree. To Northern eyes the picture is rendered amusing by the Lilliputian proportions of a Florida hay-stack, which, being too weak to stand alone, is wound around a stout bludgeon. The peculiarity of the trunk of the palm is, that it has the same diameter at the top as it has at the base. Its long shaft is ornamented with a capital about six feet high, clothed with branches some fifteen feet long, the leaves of which are arranged like the feather part of a quill. These palms, so essentially tropical in their character and appearance, vary from the vegetation of northern climates in every intrinsic quality as well as shape. The heart of the palm is pith; the heart of the northern tree is its most solid part. The age of the palm is legibly written upon its exterior surface; the age of the northern tree is concealed under a protecting bark. The northern tree, though native of a cold, inhospitable climate, is adapted to give shade; the palm, with its straight, unadorned trunk and meagre tuft of leafy limbs, gives no protection to the earth or to man from the burning tropical sun.

In "A Florida Garden" we have, with surroundings of a more refined character, other specimens of Southern vegetation. The cactus on the right of the picture is an exceptional development of this singular plant, which is usually a humble occupier of the soil. Its habit is to push a few leaves upward, and then shed them one after another, something after the fashion crabs dispose of an offending claw. Each discarded leaf, however, sets up growing for itself, and thus the cactus, in a modest way, usurps large tracts of favorable soil, forming an undergrowth more impenetrable to man and beast than walls of wood or iron. But our cactus in the garden has been led by the skilful hand of the cultivator upward, and, by removing every exuberant bud, developed into proportions quite foreign to its customary experience. At the left of the picture we have, in the banana, another phase of tropical horticulture, with its broad leaves, that unfold in a single night from a long, slender stem, and its pendent clusters of fruit.