

*The Moving Picture Girls Under the Palms*  
*or*

*Lost in the Wilds of Florida*

By

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Chapter 8: St. Augustine



“Oh, isn’t it beautiful!”

“The most gorgeous place I ever saw!”

Alice and Ruth were standing in the doorway of the hotel to which the moving picture company had been taken. They were looking out into the ladies’ court—into a sun-lit and palm-girded garden, wherein a fountain played, the water falling with a musical tinkling.

Birds flitted here and there amid the bright flowers, but to the moving picture girls the palms seemed the most wonderful of all. Such palms!

“I never realized that the great Creator could make anything so beautiful,” murmured Ruth, reverently. “And, Oh! Alice; to think that we can enjoy it!”

“Yes, isn’t it wonderful, after all the storm and stress of the fire, to be in this lovely, calm place?”

“And the best part of it is that we’re getting paid for it!” observed a voice behind the two girls. They turned, with a start, for they had lost themselves in a dreaming reverie, to find Russ and Paul smiling at them. It was Paul who spoke.

“It does seem a shame to take the money under these circumstances,” added Russ, with a laugh.

“It’s like a vacation,” agreed Alice. “Oh, but isn’t it just—just too—”

She was evidently searching for a fitting simile.

“Alice,” warned Ruth, gently. She was endeavoring to wean her sister from the habit of using slang expressions; but Alice always boasted that she liked to take “short cuts,” and that slang—that is, her refined variety—offered the best method of accomplishing this very desirable object.

“Oh, I was only just going to say—scrumptious!” laughed the younger girl. “You don’t mind that; do you, sister mine? This is really the most scrumptiously scrumptious place I’ve ever seen!”

“I’m afraid you’re hopeless,” was the smiling retort.

“Well, it’s certainly swell—that’s my word for it,” answered Russ, with a frank laugh.

Indeed, Mr. Pertell had not spared expense in taking out his moving picture company. And he had a method in going to one of the largest and finest hotels in St. Augustine. He intended to stage some scenes of one of the Southern plays there, and having his actors and actresses right in the hotel made it much more practical.

“Let’s take a walk,” proposed Russ. “There’s nothing to do to-day.”

It was the morning after their arrival and Mr. Pertell was not quite ready to proceed with making films. The fire aboard the Tarsus, and the necessity of taking another vessel, had rather upset everyone, so a day or so of rest had been decided upon.

“Where shall we go?” asked Alice, readily falling in with the proposal. “You’ll come, won’t you, Ruth?”

“I think so—yes.”

“There are lots of places to see,” suggested Paul. “This is the oldest city in the United States. I’ve got some guide books up in my room, and a lot of views. We’ll pick out some points of interest and visit them.”

“We’ll have plenty of chance to see the sights,” remarked Russ. “I understand there are to be a number of films made in the city and vicinity, so you’ll probably have to act out around Fort Marion and at Fort Mantanzas, as well as in the slave market. I’ll be with you in a minute. I just want to get my little hand camera, to make a few snapshots.”

While waiting for him and Paul to return, the girls slipped up to their room a minute.

“Just to freshen up,” as Alice put it, though really there was no need in her case, nor on the part of Ruth, either. The day was perfect—like summer—and the girls, knowing they were coming to the land of the palm and orange blossom, had brought suitable dresses.

Ruth wore white, with a mere suggestion of trimming in blue, and with her fair hair and blue eyes she was a picture that made more than one man—elderly as well as young—turn for a second look.

The darker beauty of Alice was well set off by her dress of light tan pongee with maroon trimming, and her sparkling brown eyes were dancing with life, and the love of life, as she came out to join her sister and the young men.

“Primping, as usual,” mocked Russ, but with a laugh that took the sting out of his words.

“Naturally,” agreed Alice, determined not to let him “fuss” her.

They strolled out under the beautiful loggia, through an avenue of palms and many tropical plants, and breathed deeply of the perfumed air.

“Oh, it is perfect—just perfect!” sighed Ruth. “I think the Garden of Paradise must have been in Florida.”

“There you go!” cried Alice. “First you know you’ll want to go off and live the simple life under a palm tree, with bananas for lunch and oranges for dinner. And when your—er—your hero—we’ll say, comes riding on that milk-white steed I so despise, you’ll be so thin that he won’t know you.”

“Thank you!” returned her sister. “But a svelte figure is much to be desired these days.”

“Not that you’re getting stout!” declared Alice. “Really it is I who ought to diet on bananas and—”

“Orange blossoms,” finished Paul.

“Thanks,” and she bowed gracefully to him.

“Well, Paul, where is it to be—you’re the guide?” asked Russ, as they emerged on King street. “Where’s your map?”

“I have it. What do you say we go out to the old city gates, and then to Fort Marion?”

“Wherever you say,” agreed Alice. “It is all new to us.”

They soon reached the north bend of St. George street and stood before the old city gates. These once formed part of the northerly line of defence of the ancient city.

“Built in 1743,” declaimed Alice, as she read from the bronze tablet set in the masonry by the D.A.R. “My, how long ago that seems; doesn’t it?”

“A mere trifle!” replied Russ, airily. “Get together there, and I’ll snap you,” he invited. “If you think that’s old we’ll go to the Fountain of Youth a little later, and renew our youngness.”

“Oh, is that really here?” cried Ruth, with such sudden interest that they all laughed.

“Yes, my ancient sister, it is,” said Alice. “Dost wish to quaff a cup?”

“Merely for the novelty of it—yes,” answered Ruth, and she too, laughed. Her cheeks were the color of bridesmaid roses, and Russ, as he looked at her, wished—

But there—What’s the use of being mean and telling on a good chap?

The pictures taken, they strolled on. At Fort Marion, on the banks of the Mantanzas River, they found much of interest; but agreed to explore it more in detail at another time.

“You’ll have to be filmed here, anyhow,” Russ told the girls. “There’s an important drama, with several scenes, laid here.”

“Are we in it?” asked Ruth.

“Yes, the whole company; and Mr. Pertell said he’d have to hire some supers, too.”

By this Russ meant that the manager would have to engage extra persons to impersonate the unimportant characters in the play, as is often done in “mob” scenes in the theaters.

“Now for the orange grove, and then—the Fountain of Youth!” cried Paul, as they came out of the old fort.

“What a delightful combination!” exclaimed Alice.

“Youth—and—orange blossoms!” and she clapped her hands, her eyes shining.

“Be careful,” warned Ruth in a low voice, as the young men went on ahead.

“Why, sister of mine?”

“Don’t talk so much of orange blossoms.”

“Pooh! I’m not thinking of getting married!”

“Oh, Alice!”

“Well, wasn’t that what you meant?”

“Not at all, I only meant—”

“I don’t believe you knew what you did mean. Come on, we’ll be lost!” and she caught Ruth by the arm and hurried on after Russ and Paul.