

The Florida Beach



CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON

Our drift-wood fire burns drowsily,
The fog hangs low afar,
A thousand sea-birds fearlessly
Hover above the bar;

Our boat is drawn far up the strand,
Beyond the tide's long reach;
Like a fringe to the dark green winter land,
Shines the silvery Florida beach.

Behind, the broad pine barrens lie
Without a path or trail,
Before, the ocean meets the sky
Without a rock or sail.

We call across to Africa,
As a poet called to Spain:
A murmur of "Antony! Antony!"
The waves bring back in refrain.

Far to the south the beach shines on,
Dotted with giant shells;
Coral sprays from the white reef won,
Radiate spiny cells;

Glass-like creatures that ride the waves,
With azure sail and oar,
And wide-mouthed things from the deep sea caves
That melt away on the shore.

Wild ducks gaze as we pass along:
They have not learned to fear;

The mocking-bird keeps on his song
In the low palmetto near;

The sluggish stream from the everglade
Shows the alligator's track,
And the sea is broken in light and shade
With the heave of the dolphin's back.

The Spanish light-house stands in haze:
The keeper trims his light;
No sail he sees through the long, long days,
No sail through the still, still night;

But ships that pass far out at sea,
Along the warm Gulf Stream,
From Cuba and tropic Carribee,
Keep watch for his distant gleam.

Alone, alone we wander on,
In the southern winter day.
Through the dreamy veil the fog has spun
The world seems far away;

The tide comes in-the birds fly low,
As if to catch our speech.
Ah, Destiny! Why must we ever go
Away from the Florida beach?

