

## From Mandarin to St. Augustine



(excerpts from *Palmetto Leaves* pages 206-210)

*The book, **Palmetto Leaves**, was published in 1872. The author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, was living in Mandarin, Florida (near Jacksonville). In this excerpt, she describes her trip by boat and horse-drawn railroad from Mandarin to St. Augustine, Florida in the late 1800's*

Mandarin, May 30, 1872

**T**he thermometer with us, during the third week in May, rose to ninety-two in the shade; and as we had received an invitation from a friend to visit St. Augustine, which is the Newport of Florida, we thought it a good time to go seaward. So on a pleasant morning we embarked on the handsome boat “Florence,” which has taken so many up the river, and thus secured all the breeze that was to be had.

“The Florence” is used expressly for a river pleasure-boat, playing every day between Jacksonville and Pilatka. It is long and airy, and nicely furnished; and one could not imagine a more delightful conveyance. In hot weather, one could not be more sure of cool breezes than with sailing up and down perpetually in “The Florence.” Our destiny, however, landed us in the very meridian of the day in Tekoi. Tekoi consists of a shed and a sand-bank, and a little shanty, where, to those who require, refreshments are served.

On landing, we found that we must pay for the pleasure and coolness of coming up river in "The Florence" by waiting two or three mortal hours till "The Starlight" arrived; for the railroad-car would not start till the full complement of passengers was secured. We had a good opportunity then of testing what the heat of a Florida sun might be, untempered by live-oaks and orange shades, and unalleviated by ice-water; and the lesson was an impressive one.

The railroad across to St. Augustine is made of wooden rails; and the cars are drawn by horses. There was one handsome car like those used on the New-York horse-railroads: the others were the roughest things imaginable. In the height of the season, when the cars were crowded, four hours were said to be consumed in performing this fifteen miles. We, however, did it in about two.

To us this bit of ride through the Florida woods is such a never-ceasing source of interest and pleasure, that we do not mind the slowness of it, and should regret being whisked by at steam-speed. We have come over it three times; and each time the varieties of shrubs and flowers, grasses and curious leaves, were a never-failing study and delight. Long reaches of green moist land form perfect flower-gardens, whose variety of bloom changes with every month.

The woods hang full of beautiful climbing plants. The coral honeysuckle and the red bignonia were in season now.

Through glimpses and openings here and there we could see into forests of wild orange-trees; and palmetto-palms raised their scaly trunks and gigantic green fans. The passengers could not help admiring the flowers: and as there were many stops and pauses, and as the gait of the horses was never rapid, it was quite easy for the gentlemen to gather and bring in specimens of all the beauties; and the flowers formed the main staple of the conversation. They were so very bright and gay and varied, that even the most unobserving could not but notice them.



**A Street in St. Augustine**