

Angelo Heilprin Explorations on the West Coast of Florida
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SARASOTA BAY.—We were informed that at Hunter's Point, near the northern end of the Bay, we would find a coral rock or formation skirting the shore; I was naturally anxious to determine the accuracy of the statement, inasmuch as no reef formation had been reported from the region so far to the north. The rock in question turned out to be a vast mass of growing *Vermetus* (*V. varians*), which from a short distance actually presented the appearance of a clump of rocks. A limestone of an analogous structure crops out in the meadow a few hundred feet from the shore. The same growth of *Vermetus* reappears at Whittaker's, a few miles further down the bay, where the matted tubes of the gasteropod form organic "boulders" or reefs stretching over acres of territory, one of the most striking features of this part of the coast. A yellow sand-rock, some three or four feet in thickness, appears at this point on the shore margin; its general aspect bears the impress of a recent formation, but I found in it the casts of one or more species of coral of a facies new to me, which, in the absence of other definable organic remains, led me to suspend judgment as to the age of the deposit. The same coral I afterwards identified in a more compact, and much more fossiliferous, limestone occurring on White Beach, Little Sarasota Bay.

On Perico Island, where we landed for the purpose of skinning our alligators, we found vast numbers of the common fiddler-crab of the coast (*Gelasimus pugilator*), which, in apparent concerted action, were hurrying from the sea-border into the interior, passing far beyond the line of their burrows. So numerous were the migrating hordes, that in many places they literally obscured the beach, and the noise of their progression was like that produced by a wind moving a heavy accumulation of autumn leaves. The border of the island was covered with a heavy fringe of mangrove, on whose aerial roots, considerably above water-level, we found the parasitic oyster (*Ostrea parasitica*) clinging in great abundance. The interior of the island supports a stunted growth of saw-palmetto, and the usually accompanying yellow-pine. We found a moccasin coiled on the leaf-stalk of a palmetto, about two feet above the ground—the first ophidian met with on our trip; the animal, although plainly cognizant of our approach, made no attempt to attack, and but a very feeble one to escape, and was consequently secured without much difficulty.

→ At a locality known as Mrs. Hanson's, opposite to which we anchored for the night, I was conducted to a spot where it had been reported a human skeleton lay embedded in the rock. My misgivings as to such a find were naturally very great, but I could not resist the temptation of satisfying myself personally in the matter, even at the risk of appearing over-credulous to my fellow-companions. The rock I found to be a partially indurated ferruginous sandstone, removed but a short distance from

