"A fool for luck," he explained, not jocularly, not seriously.

It took imagination and business sense to see profitable labor in this unprepossessing wilderness. I tried to get at the vividness of his vision and at the faculty his friends said he had of seeing a work in its utter completion even before commencing it.

"When you thought about it, in the old days, could you close your eyes and see the railroad finished?"

"Yes." He spoke in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Please understand me. Don't let me *suggest* it to you. Did you actually vision to yourself the whole thing? I mean, did you, or could you, really close your eyes and see the tracks? And the trains running? And hear the whistles blowing? Did you go as far as that?"

"Yes."

"How clearly?"

"Very clearly."

"Did you merely think you might get settlers to come, once they had a railroad, or did you actually assume it? Or did you again close your eyes and see the men in the field working? Did you really vision the thing as clearly as that?"

"Yes."

"Did you build the railroad because you thought it would pay some day?"

"No."

"Why then?"

"I thought then, and know now, that nowhere else in this country can a man get more pay for his labor than here. You know, we grow no staples; only luxuries. And luxuries are bought by people who can afford to pay good prices. Then, a man can keep busy here nearly the entire year; the planting of one crop follows the harvesting of another, according to the season. The railroad enabled people to come here and work, and ship their produce, and get paid for it."

"It wasn't to make money for yourself?"

"If it wasn't for Florida, I'd be quite a rich man to-day."

"Will you tell me why you did this work here?"

"Yes; I'll tell you. The hardest problem a man has is how to help people. This desire to help others comes when a man has more than enough for his own needs. I have come to the conclusion that the best way to help others is to help them to help themselves." He said it with a matter-of-fact earnestness, as one might allude to an indisputable fact. And I knew he was not merely speaking for publication.

"When you saw so clearly what your work would mean to the East Coast of Florida, didn't the vision thrill you?"

"No."

"How did you feel?"

"Just as I do now."

"You don't seem to care to talk about yourself."

"I prefer to let what I have done speak for me."

"By their works ye shall know them," I suggested.

"Yes; that's it," he said eagerly; as eagerly as he ever says anything.

"And is this self-obliteration, what some might call self-repression, natural or acquired? How do you come by it? What was your early life?"

It was a great deal to ask of a man in his eightieth year in his own home. He answered this even more freely than the other questions:

THE TOP NOTCH OF RESERVE

"I suppose it is inherited. I was born in Hope, near Canandaigua, New York, in 1830. I realize how this country has grown when I remember that in the year I was born there were exactly twenty-four miles of railroad in all the United States. My father was a Presbyterian clergyman. When I was fourteen I realized that, with his small salary, it was all he could do to take care of himself, to say nothing of my mother and my sister. So I went to the edge of what was then called the Western Reserve, to Bellevue, in northern Ohio. I worked there. Some years later my father and mother joined me. After a while he retired from the ministry.

"My mother died in 1861. I was then thirty-one. The local paper published the customary obituary notice, and I got several copies and sent them to friends back in New York State, who had known mother. I told my father about it and asked him if there was any one else to whom he thought I ought to send a copy of the paper. He thought a long time—quite a long time. Finally he said: 'Yes, you might send a copy to Mrs. So-and-So,' somewhere out in Indiana, I think. I did so; and asked him if he thought of any one else. Again he