Chenier Au Tigre

THE Louisiana Gulf Coast is well known to many of us as a wintering resort: we look forward to days when we may paddle our pirogues along winding bayous, when we may wade waist deep across the endless marshes or wander to our heart's content along the sandy ridges bordering the Gulf of Mexico. These highlands, crowned with their wonderful moss-festooned live oaks, the palmettoes and mesquite, are the homes of a kindly people, for the most part descended from the Acadians who were banished from their homes in Nova Scotia so many years ago; they have set up their little communities, apart from the world and carry on, much, I have an idea, as did the inhabitants of Grand Pré in days gone by. At any rate, Longfellow's lines: "Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight," remind me more of Louisiana than the cold shores of the North Atlantic.

It has been a long time since I first visited Chenier au Tigre in Vermilion Parish, that five mile strip of beach with its grand growth of gnarled oaks, and became acquainted with the people who dwell there in peace and comfort. And for many years, more than I like to think about, I have been returning to enjoy the kindnesses of the hospitable Sagregas, Simmes and Mrs. Simmes. I wonder how many hundreds of visitors have put their feet beneath that loaded table and were thankful for the kind providence which has blessed the people of Southern Louisiana with such a wealth of seafoods which is theirs for the gathering; and were glad to have such kindly hosts to impose upon?

I like the Chenier in the early spring when the mesquite is in new leaf and the whole world smells of fresh growing vegetation. Prickly pears are massed along the exposed sandy ridges and their yellow wax-like blossoms are opened in the sunlight with petals invitingly outstretched to welcome the bees which are so seriously attending their own affairs. The mesquites are alive with small perching birds which have just arrived from South America; the winged strangers work busily through the dense vegetation, in search of food—they linger for days in the hospitable region, as they gather strength after their arduous flight across the Gulf—and then they pass on to their northward nesting grounds. All along the beach where the warm on-shore winds send waves rippling over the sands, are many species of shore birds. The black bellied plover...
White-faced water lilies crowd marsh ponds—miles of flowering gardens which are rarely seen by man. But possibly the boat-tailed grackles, the gallinules and the rails appreciate the beauties of the flowering water plant.

Then, after the heat of the summer is past, a few ducks make their appearance in the fresh water ponds, and wedge-shaped flocks of geese come pouring out of the northern sky to seek food and safety in the wide savannahs near the Chenier. The arrival of the geese is not a sign of cold weather to the northward; they have not been driven south by frozen ponds and shortage of food for there are thousands of miles of suitable country between their breeding grounds and Louisiana. They simply take leave of their summer homes in far off Baffin Land at a given time, and the thousands upon thousands of Blue, with a sprinkling of Snow Geese, make an almost direct flight to the Louisiana Gulf Coast. Few gunners have an opportunity to ambush them en route for they fly day and night, rarely coming within gun shot of the earth until they reach the shores of the Gulf.

The Blue Goose is exceedingly abundant in

Blue Geese. Photograph Taken on Land of E. A. McIhenny. Credit—Chicago Academy of Sciences.