

Why have the Lands of our fathers been taken from us?

Madam President and Women of the Winter Park Club:

I come before you today to plead for a people who cannot speak for themselves -- the helpless, hungry, ^{and} homeless Seminoles of Florida. Listen! and you may hear, as it is echoed across the mysterious Everglades, the Seminole's wounded cry, "Why have the lands of our fathers been taken from us?"

As a preliminary, I believe, you, who are so interested in the cause of the Seminoles, will be glad to hear some of the latest news from our Everglade Indians. It is difficult to give, in a short time, the life story, with its tragedies, of a nation which is as old as American civilization, antedating Columbus' ^{by hundreds of years,} discovery.

To begin with, I will give you three or four pictures of life and conditions in this Everglade country. I have had three view-points within the last month, ^{each} from parties ^{each} having different reasons for visiting this ^{Everglades} country.

The first information was from a United States ^{government} Civil Engineer; and while he did not give his opinion officially or ^{for publication} still as a guest in my home he talked freely on drainage conditions, remarking that a hundred or more years must elapse before successful drainage can be accomplished in the interior, with many millions of dollars yet to be spent and many experiments to be made until the right way has been worked out; that with his brother surveyors, they had decided that the ^{Everglades} country ^{is} still in a formative state, and not ready for drainage. So much for this.

Next, it was a pleasure to have a visit from a representative of the National Indian Rights Association, who was accompanied by a wealthy philanthropist. These men were sent down to look into the helpless condition of the Seminoles, and before coming to

Kissimsee had been in close consultation with the Departments at Washington -- the Interior, the Indian, and the War departments. In company with my husband they made a trip through the 'Glades, and if you will allow me, I will try to give you ^a picture that is full of dramatic interest, as well as tragedy.

At the first Indian camp, the three men of the pale face tribe were met by the Seminoles, and received most graciously. A new palmetto thatched wigwam was cleaned out and turned over to them for the night. The Indian men carried wood for the camp fire, the women brought water, and the little children brought sweet potatoes to be cooked for their supper. When our white friends had finished their supper, the Indian men came down with their pipes of peace and listened to the plans for their future, and talked over the hunting experiences of many years ago. As we see the picture, as reported to me, seven camp fires were gleaming, and the tall trees were silhouetted against the sky; ~~while~~ the little Indian children played backward and forward, their little brown legs ~~trunkling~~ ^{trunkling} through ~~from the light cast by~~ ^{around their wigwam homes} the lurid flames of the camp fires.

The next day, the kaleidoscope turns, and ~~our visitors~~ ^{our visitors} went to ~~visit~~ ^{visit} the white school. In this school, sitting with the very small children of the ~~County School~~ ^{County School}, were six full grown Indians.

They were clean, tidy, dressed in the white man's clothes, and had ~~been attending school two months before the Indian Commissioner~~ ^{asked to be admitted to the public school} ~~known of it.~~ ^{of their own volition} Their father had gotten the inspiration twenty years ago, and the Oklahoma Indians who visited them two or three years ago had ~~given~~ such encouragement that they felt they wanted to try the white man's school. ^{methods.}

The next day, these Indians had been compelled to give up the white man's way, ~~because of hunger~~, and had gone back to their costume. ^{ad fruit life} One Indian girl was out hunting the oxen; another one was fishing in a small slough, and had caught four small fish, about six inches long. This seemed to be the only food for that family that day. They broke camp and have ^{now} gone into other wilds, ~~and we~~ ^{but}

^{we} have not been able to learn where they have hidden. ~~The whites had so encroached that these Indians were unable to make support for themselves on this, their old camping ground.~~

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At another Indian settlement containing about five wigwams, our party felt that they would find some old friends; and going a distance of a quarter of a mile they were pleased upon their approach to see a driven well, ^a good looking horse, and some chickens and hogs. As they got closer they found this settlement occupied by poor whites, none of whom were at home that day. On asking the Indians why the whites were there, the Indians told them that one day they had gone on a hunting trip and on their return found their wigwams and gardens occupied by these white squatters, and they were told to "move on."

At another camp, the poverty seemed to be very great. In their child-like way they ^{samples} had tried to raise chickens and hogs and a garden; but as the white men told the story, they ~~say they can't~~ ^{only} get this ^a pitiful picture ^{comes before} in their minds. The dogs ~~were in a~~ ^{stagnant} condition ^{the} small hogs could scarcely walk, and the chickens ~~were~~ so hungry that they kept around the feet of the white men, hoping that some food would be thrown to them.

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Before I close this moving picture scene of ~~an~~ aboriginal's Everglade life, I will just add -- and while in a way it is amusing, yet there is food for thought -- Willson Tiger, in conversation remarked, "Me no think we want to be civilized. Indian get civilized, we think he get like white men -- Lie, steal cheat. Big Sleep Comes, we want to go to Happy Hunting Ground; see my Grandfather; see Great Spirit. Me no think white man go to Heaven. ~~One white man good, one thousand white men lie too much.~~"

quasi Indian

You, as women of the F. F. W. C., I know will be glad to know that the sympathetic interest in these people is aroused to an enthusiasm. This is an age of humanitarianism and like the waves made by the flashing of a bullet through the air, the interest has reverberated from heart to heart until it is felt from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Do you wonder that I feel so deeply for these innocent, child-like people of the 'Glades? Their friendship is like pure gold.

Hodges, the Seminole Herd

Florida is making his tory every day. We are spending money and time on the preservation of historical spots, and yet this Seminole race, as living ~~people~~ ^{people} whose history is as old as America, fails to be kept correct because of newspaper fakers. It has been printed and repeated on many occasions through-out the state, that the young Indian boy, Tony B. M. Tommie, who is attending the white man's school at Ft. Lauderdale, has been made chieftain of the tribe. As this is absolutely incorrect and against all tribal laws of the Seminole nation, and is also bad for the interest of the boy and the influence he may have in years to come as a leader of his people, I hope that as women of the Federation, we can have this false statement corrected on every occasion when it comes up.