

Florida's Gift To America

Special to  
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Under the caption, "Florida's Gift To America", Mrs. Minnie Moore Willson of Kissimmee, Florida, is supplementing the work done in New York City a few months ago, relative to a Memorial Sanctuary in the Everglades of Florida.

Mrs. Willson is the Author of the "Seminole of Florida" and other works centering around the Everglades, is now at the Grand Hotel.

Because of her years of interest in the Seminole Indians, Mrs. Willson has made a close study of all features of the Everglades.

"When I came to New York", said Mrs. Willson to a representative of the "I get that vital spirit of accomplishment that pervades in this magnetic metropolis.

"To secure 100,000 acres for a wild life preserve", said Mrs. Willson, "seems an easy proposition, because the eyes of the world are focused on Florida today and the conservation of forests, of wild life, of beauty spots, is taking hold of thinking people with such tremendous force that a sanctuary will become an asset to Florida as well as to the entire continent."

Mrs. Willson is no novice in such work, having secured through legislative action in Florida 100,000 acres in the Everglades for the homeless Seminole Indians - and has thus saved from extinction a people whose ancestors have lived in America for uncalendared years.

"In the monumental gift of the Everglades to the State of Florida, by the Federal Government, continued Mrs. Willson, "the United States gave away her most priceless possession; she gave away an area of 5,000 square miles - the ancestral home of an aboriginal people bound by a treaty right - signed by the President of the United States - a treaty as sacred as ever was made between Great Britain and

America, if Uncle Sam's word is as good as a Seminole's! She gave away the retreats of the forest animals and the homes and breeding places of millions of birds -- not only the homes of Florida's natural birds, but the <sup>winter</sup> homes of the migratory birds of the North American continent. She gave away America's unexplored treasure house, a mystical and historical wonderland, a tropical jungle teeming with wild life - in short, an empire of prehistoric wonder - the only thing of its kind on the globe. For Florida to make a return gift of 100,000 acres, to be used as a Wild Life Sanctuary, - 100,000 acres - less than 15 miles square, a wee bit of the 5,000 square miles that Florida received as a gift from the United States, seems easy. This to become a memorial Sanctuary, to be used as a home for Wild Life, where the migratory birds of the whole North American Continent may find winter homes - a safe retreat for Florida's native birds, for the forest creatures and as a rendezvous for the Seminole Indians. All America is responsive, seeing as she does, a wild life region unequalled on the globe.

#### The Everglades ?

The Florida Everglades - a radiant Paradise, fashioned and formed away back before time was computed. Once a part of the great Ocean, until tempestuous storms and circling winds forced the sand from the ocean depths, and a great dam was built, excluding the ocean, leaving an inland sea, which is the present Everglades, an aquatic wilderness, a very treasure house filled with secrets, yet to be disclosed by the scientist or the explorer.

All Forests do not have Food and Florida's Sanctuary has been the feeding ground and home of countless millions of birds and animals for uncalendared years. America's migratory birds have found

a winter home and a retreat where food has always been abundant. The wild animals, from the black bear with her chubby cub, the gentle doe and her little spotted fawn, the raccoon, the fox, the opossum, the cunning otter, the squirrel, the fishes in the channels - all found retreats and food.

Away back 10,000 to 50,000 years ago, there lived in this land of mystery, animals probably mammoths, the remains of which are now exhibited in Natural museums.

Centuries rolled on - and man came, the aboriginal American. First, were the tribes that have been extinct for hundreds of years - and later came the Seminole Indians - who, along with the birds and the animals found peace and plenty. The forests and marshes and prairies furnished varieties of food, for all these living creatures. Centuries had passed, and neither forests, nor life had been depleted - food still remained in plenteous proportions.

Neither deadly overflows - nor scarlet fires destroyed this many century old Sanctuary, and life went on as planned by the great Creator. Great Britain is planting 39,000,000 trees, while Florida with ax and fire destroys millions of these forest sentinels. May we not save a future planting by protecting our forests today. The lamented nature poet, Joyce Kilmer, just before he made the supreme sacrifice "over there", wrote, "Poems are made by fools like me, But only God can make a Tree".

And again

#### The White Gunman Came.

Then, less than two decades ago, came the white man with his gun, who slaughtered these defenseless creatures - just to kill, to watch with criminal heart, the dying agony of the helpless bird as she protected her nestlings, and the animals as they stood at defiance,

to save their young.

Red Men Custodians.

During all of these centuries, the red inhabitants had been custodians of this Jungle Sanctuary and no change had come upon this great mysterious Morass.

And then! Commercialism entered this American Sanctuary and today, in the name of "development" forests are being destroyed, the muck land areas have been burning for a period of years, with an estimated loss running into millions of dollars, the animals, the birds and the fish have been caught as the flames swept these areas and this territory, once priceless, to the Continent, in its primeval setting, has become in many places a scene of desolation. As to its commercialization - it still ~~remains~~<sup>meets</sup> a question mark, and an ultimate success - to be answered years hence.

With the destroying of such a sanctuary, as we read from undisputed statistics, that "in the United States alone, the annual loss from insect pests runs into billions of dollars - do we not see that the "Winged destroyers", to the insect enemy of agriculture, outdistances all the lands that may be reclaimed?

Moreover, the lure of the "great Out Doors" awakes the spiritual in the heart of man, as he draws a peace and soul uplift from the silent magic of the forests and where the soul may be aroused from its lethargy to a reconciliation with his fellow man and with his God. The value of the Everglades, as a great Nature preserve cannot be estimated in dollars and cents. The value is boundless and inexhaustible. Desecration in the name of development is a criminality, unpardonable, against the present day American citizenship, as well as the coming generation of the Anglo Saxon.

Florida, today calls for the same pride of State that led to the saving of the beautiful spots in California - in the Yellowstone of Wyoming, and the Grand Canyon of Colorado, to save from further destruction the priceless Everglade Preserve.

\$500,000,000 for Animals.

The protection of wild life is growing with tremendous momentum, as is proven by the news from Washington of the "establishment of a \$500,000,000 trust fund to be used for the prosecution of persons cruel to animals, and for the protection of game in all parts of the world - as provided for in the will of Anson Hanson, scientist".

Florida holds among her records, titles to a territory, inhabited with life, where the "manna of the wilderness" never fails. Florida cannot continue to destroy these sequestered retreats, without destroying lives of vastly useful creatures, lives which cannot be replaced or atoned for. A great State like Florida, holding such a priceless heritage, needs to "stop, look and listen", and to save NOW her natural preserve and not wait until the eyes of the world look with reproach upon the Flower State, because of the destructive forces to life and beauty in her Everglade territory.

With gratitude to an over ruling Providence, Who watches over "two sparrows as they fall", and Who says in the greatest of all Books, "Thou shouldst not have entered the Gate of my People in the day of their (calamity) nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their distress", we believe that this over ruling God is watching over the destiny of his Creatures - His children and His lesser life and for the reason, the ten thousands of acres yet left in primeval form, may yet be saved.

Unspoiled Landscape.

This mystic region - as yet unspoiled by civilization as the

Great Landscape Gardener made it, where beauty, romance and mystery  
teem with wild life, where silvery fish swim in the hidden channels,  
where the birds sing in rapturous delight, where the forest creatures  
slip through the shadows, where the foot paths are glittering water  
ways and palms and cypress trees overbend, as if to hide these paths, -  
which are in reality the secret channels - the "car lines" for the Red  
man's dug out canoe.

Radiant Paradise.

This heart of the "Big Cypress", is the potential part of  
the Vanishing Wilderness - is a portion of the Everglades of Florida,  
which Floridians must save from desecration.

The citizens of Florida own these acres of Jungle and water  
and to make such a gift lies in the heart of all Florida, to save this  
primeval region for the use of the original and real owners, the  
silent Seminole Indian and for the use of God's lesser creatures, these  
little wild children of the Jungle that love as much as do the human  
family.

This will be a world famed tribute to Florida, an asset  
because of its scenic beauty, a Preserve where the amazing secrets  
of centuries may be studied in the moss laden trees - and in the  
deep cavernous water ways, in the wild life, in brilliant flowers and  
tangled vines, in the radiant life of the flitting, ethereal butterfly  
colonies - all this and more and still more may be studied in this  
Landscape still standing as fashioned by the Creator of the Universe -  
Shall we not save this radiant Paradise, shall we not make friends  
with the one time custodians of the region - the Seminole Indians, and  
learn from them the legends - the folk lore and history, of the ances-  
tral people of the old Florida.

All this may be saved - to be enjoyed today by the present

generation, and bequeathed as a heritage to the unborn millions.

Let us perpetuate this ornithological Eden, where birds and forest creatures lived in those sunshiny days away back in the dim dawning of time, long before Man was created.

TO DEDICATE A PART OF THIS MYSTERIOUS JUNGLE OF WATER AND LAND, TO THE AMERICAN NATION, WOULD BE OF GREAT HISTORICAL VALUE; IT WOULD BURNISH THE SHIELD OF THE FLOWER STATE TO A RADIANCE THAT WOULD SHINE BEFORE THE EYES OF THE WHOLE CIVILISED WORLD.

"WHAT PRICE FLORIDA?" THE VOICE OF FLORIDA CITIZENSHIP!