

for a man's salary and traveling expenses to negotiate with the Indians. The comptroller ruled, however, that a medical bill was an emergency which we had a right to take from the money, but wouldn't allow us to expend a cent of the money for anything else. That money was only to be expended for that purpose. Out of that \$4,200 there was \$1,000 of that put back in to meet these emergencies, which was my own personal salary; and I carried on that work at my expense, because you people would not give me any money to do the work with. I took my own money to keep those Indians going.

STATEMENT OF MRS. MINNIE MOORE WILLSON.

MR. SEARS. Give your name and how long you have lived in Kissimmee?

MRS. WILLSON. Mrs. Minnie Moore Willson, and I have lived here 25 years.

MR. SEARS. Mrs. Willson, I believe you are the author of the first, if not the only, book on the Seminoles of Florida?

MRS. WILLSON. The Government authorities say I am the only authority on the present Seminole Indian.

MR. SEARS. Of course, a great deal of the information contained in your book are facts that you have gotten from studying history?

MRS. WILLSON. Very little of it. Most of it has been gotten from the Indians themselves.

MR. SEARS. But some of it was obtained from history?

MRS. WILLSON. Yes; as recorded in Washington.

MR. SEARS. A greater part of the information contained in your book was obtained from the Indians, and at least a part of it is what some people would call legendary; that is, handed down from Indian to Indian?

MRS. WILLSON. It was handed down, but it is absolutely correct history.

MR. SEARS. Having known you since I was a small boy 8 or 10 years of age, of course, some of the questions I ask you I know of my own knowledge, but I am anxious that others may also know of conditions. Is it or is it not a fact, Mrs. Willson, that for the past 20 years or more that you have been interested in the Seminole Indians and that different members of the various tribes or clans have visited you at your home?

MRS. WILLSON. Yes; some times as many as six at a time.

MR. SEARS. It was from these that you obtained a large part of your information, having gained their confidence?

MRS. WILLSON. Almost entirely from the Indians who have visited me at my home.

MR. SEARS. In your book have you a vocabulary of the phrases and sentences of the Seminole Indians?

MRS. WILLSON. Yes; about 800.

MR. SEARS. These were gotten from the Indians direct?

MRS. WILLSON. Yes; and at the beginning it sometimes took a day to get a single word.

MR. SEARS. That was at the beginning of your work with them. After you had obtained their confidence you had no further trouble in getting them to talk to you?

Mrs. WILLSON. It was at the beginning of my work that I had so much trouble in getting information. If you knew the trouble I had the first time I tried to get their religion, or what they call their religion, you could appreciate the trouble I had and how they had to believe in me.

Mr. SEARS. Can you give me an idea of their religion as obtained from them?

Mrs. WILLSON. They believe in a Supreme Being and also in Christ, who came on earth to save and make good Indians; that they met him at Cape Sable, Fla., and that three Indians carried him around on their shoulders, at which time he sowed the Koonti seed, which was God's gift to his red children. Their code is not to lie, cheat, nor steal, and to think with God.

Mr. SEARS. Do you know anything about the treaty of 1832?

Mrs. WILLSON. I know a great deal about it, but you must remember the treaty of 1823, called the Camp Moultrie treaty (Camp Moultrie is located about 4 miles south of St. Augustine, Fla.), which was violated by the Government. Afterwards the treaty of 1832 was entered into. Before the signing of the Camp Moultrie treaty 70 of the chiefs met and talked for 12 days, and then only 33 signed it. This treaty was supposed to last 20 years. According to this treaty the Indians were to be given 5,000,000 acres of land in Florida, and were to be granted absolute protection from all persons whomsoever coming upon their land. The Indians endeavored to carry out their part of the treaty, and had their own Indians punished who violated the terms of the treaty. This treaty was finally violated by the Government, and in 1832 another treaty was entered into.

Mr. SEARS. Mrs. Willson, you need not go into the details of the treaty of 1832, because myself and most of the Members of Congress, especially members of the Indian Affairs Committee, are familiar with the terms of same. I would like to know whether or not most of the Indians signed the treaty of 1832 and whether or not a majority of the Indians indorsed said treaty?

Mrs. WILLSON. There were only 15 Indians who signed in Florida, and these were mostly subchiefs. Seven of these were sent West to look at the Arkansas Territory, now known as Oklahoma.

Mr. SEARS. Legend teaches us that these were gotten drunk.

Mrs. WILLSON. I know nothing of this; I simply know from the Indians that same was signed through coercion.

Mr. SEARS. When these Indians returned, what was their report?

Mrs. WILLSON. Their report was that it was a cold western country, and that their hearts cried out "no"; that their horses were stolen by the Pawnees; and that they would be compelled to associate and mix with their enemies, the Creek Indians, with whom they had had trouble in Georgia and had moved to Florida in 1750 in order to avoid. When they returned the principal chiefs met and determined that the subchiefs had no authority.

Mr. SEARS. That led to the Seminole War?

Mrs. WILLSON. It was not until two years after this that the treaty was ratified and approved. Even the whites distrusted the validity of the treaty, as well as the Indians, and it was not until April, 1834, that it was approved, under Jackson's administration.

Mr. SEARS. The few Indians that were carried out West were carried there by force, were they not?

Mrs. WILLSON. Practically by force; yes.

Mr. SEARS. Is it not a fact that a bounty was offered for the Indians that could be forced or carried to what is now known as Oklahoma?

Mrs. WILLSON. For every living Indian that could be captured and carried to Oklahoma a bounty of \$500 was offered. There is no need for me to go into this at length, because if the Members of Congress, and especially the members of the Indian Affairs Committee, are interested they can get many, if not all, of the facts from the book published by myself, two copies of which are in the Congressional Library at Washington.

Mr. SEARS. Of course, Mrs. Willson, history records the capture of Osceola and this has been gone into by the committee, but on account of your familiarity and long study of the subject, will you briefly state whether Osceola was captured or trapped?

Mrs. WILLSON. He went under a flag of truce to have a parley with Gen. John Jesup, and while under this flag of truce, a flag recognized by all civilized nations, with arms thrown down, Osceola was captured. They simply surrounded him with a body of men with bayonets drawn. History records the after life of Osceola and his death of a broken heart.

Mr. SEARS. Mrs. Willson, as you know, the Indians do not vote and, in fact, do not recognize any of our laws. You may also know it is a question whether they are permitted to vote or not. Into that phase of the question we need not go. My fight for the Seminole Indians has been largely due to your efforts, the efforts of the good ladies of Florida, and what is known as "The Friends of the Seminole Indians," hoping to obtain justice. Is it not a fact that some years ago the Indians practically owned the whole of the State of Florida, which was admitted by the Government because of the treaties to which you have referred and that from time to time the Indians have been driven southward?

Mrs. WILLSON. Yes; according to the Camp Moultrie treaty the Indians were to "Relinquish all claim or title to the whole Territory of Florida, with the exception of such district of country as shall be allowed them."

Mr. SEARS. When you first came to Kissimmee, is it not a fact that large numbers of Indians visited Kissimmee and had camps adjacent thereto?

Mrs. WILLSON. Yes; within 20 miles.

Mr. SEARS. The closest camp to Kissimmee now is fully 100 miles or more, is it not?

Mrs. WILLSON. Yes; fully 150 miles or more.

Mr. SEARS. Have these Indians, so far as you have been able to learn from history given the Government any trouble in retiring from time to time from their lands to other lands?

Mrs. WILLSON. They have given no resistance whatever. They simply say, "Indian no fight white man any more."

Mr. SEARS. From your own personal knowledge of the last 25 or 30 years, have you found in your research any history where the Indians of Florida have given the Government trouble since the

Government ceased to try to force them to go to what is now known as Oklahoma?

Mrs. WILLSON. Absolutely none since 1843, when they agreed to "occupy certain areas in the southern peninsular of Florida and to forever abstain from further aggression upon the whites." Since that time they have been most peaceful.

Mr. SEARS. Have the whites been as faithful to the above treaties repudiated by the Government?

Mrs. WILLSON. No; when the whites want the Indians' wigwam, he says "I bought this land and wigwam," and the Indian quietly moves on.

Mr. SEARS. Is it not a fact that the Indians have been driven southward as far as it is possible, and with the present growth and development of Florida, unless something is done for them there will be no place for them to go in a few years?

Mrs. WILLSON. Yes.

Mr. SEARS. Do you or do you not believe not only the State of Florida but the United States Government should do something for these Indians?

Mrs. WILLSON. I do, and soon.

Mr. SEARS. How many of these Indians are there now?

Mrs. WILLSON. Six hundred almost to the count, according to Billie Bowlegs, who is the census taker for the tribes.

Mr. SEARS. Mrs. Willson, do you not believe it would be a good idea for the friends of the Seminoles in Florida, if Congress should be in session next May, June, or July, by voluntary contributions, to send to Washington such Indians as Billie Bowlegs, some Indian squaw or girl, possibly one other Indian of the older type, and Tony Tommy, representing what can be done for the Indian when assistance is given, in order that Congress may really see what the Seminoles are. My idea being, Mrs. Willson, that the friends of the Seminoles, as above stated, by voluntary contributions, perhaps with the assistance of the railroads, carry these four or five Indians to Washington, a part of them wearing the turban and native dress, which they now wear and have always worn, accompanied by Tony Tommy representing the modernized Indian, and also accompanied by some white man who has their confidence. I do not desire to influence your answer, but it has been my purpose to do as above stated in order that the Members of Congress may distinguish between Indian graduates of Carlisle, to whom help has been given, and the Seminoles of Florida, to whom no help has been given. Do you believe that this would be a good idea or not?

Mrs. WILLSON. It could not help but impress any just and humane American citizen.

Mrs. SEARS. Do you believe, with the Florida delegation in sympathy with your movement, there being no funds to meet this, that yourself, Mrs. Frank Jennings, of Jacksonville, Fla., and Vice President J. E. Ingraham, and others interested in the work, could make arrangements to take such a delegation to Washington?

Mrs. WILLSON. I am in absolute accord with your suggestion, but the Indians have been deceived so many times by the whites it might be a hard task to perform, and while I have no authority to speak for the society, I believe funds sufficient could be raised to carry out

your suggestion, and I will take the matter up with members of the society. I might take up more of your time, but as I have stated before anyone desiring to get the facts can do so by reading my book, and I therefore do not think it necessary, nor do I desire to burden the record with a long statement. I simply wish to add that something should be done, and I believe will be done for the Seminole Indians of Florida.

Mr. HAYDEN. We are greatly obliged to you. I shall take the liberty of inserting in the record certain extracts from your book which I am sure will be of interest to the committee.

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THE LEAST KNOWN WILDERNESS OF AMERICA, THE EVERGLADES OF FLORIDA.

By Minnie Moore-Willson, Kissimmee, Fla., author of "The Seminoles of Florida."

With the sealing of the compact with Spain in 1821 we read the death sentence of Seminole independence—a very Illad of tragedy in American history.

Years of war and broken treaties followed until the American Nation, with its unhalloved spoils, drenched with the blood of this distracted, primitive people of the Everglades, became the conquerors. Florida was strewn with the mangled bodies of innocent red patriots, where shattered hamlets and stricken camp fires blackened the once peaceful Indian country.

Thousands of Seminoles were forced by the mighty power of the American Government to give up homes, lands—life itself—and be exiled to a cold and unknown western land.

To-day the heart of every civilized nation on the globe turns to brave little Belgium. The patriot of America, the real American, whose soul and heart shrink from the tainted and corrupt dealings of the vampire and land grafters, must not close his eyes, but let him look—yes, with horror—at the other screens of this Everglade moving picture, for we have within the bounds of this American Continent "a little Belgium of our own."

A PEOPLE WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

Expedition after expedition failed to corral the little band of Indians left in the 'Glade country in 1841. To-day the 600 Seminoles of the Everglades are the descendants of this heroic band—a people without a country. Too honest to steal, too proud to beg, eking out a pitiful existence in the land of his nativity. Why? Because the same monster greed that has driven the American Indian across a continent has entered the sacred homes of Florida's Indian population.

Are we treating these patriots, these people who cling so desperately and so devotedly to the homes of their fathers, any better than did officers 75 years ago?

To-day the American flag is standing for right, justice, "peace with honor," and upholding the dignity of the greatest nation on the globe. Nation after nation has had its wounds bound up, has been fed and clothed and helped. America has been eyes to the blind, an almoner to the poor, a protection to the widow and orphan; and yet, in 1843, under the sacred emblem of this same starry banner, the Seminole made a peace compact with the United States Government, under the direction of our President. The Seminole was "to occupy certain areas and to forever abstain from all acts of aggression upon his white neighbor." The Seminole has never broken that treaty! He believes and knows that the land of Okeechobee is his by right of treaty, and he can not understand the merciless driving force of the white man.

UNITED STATES PURCHASE OF FLORIDA FROM SPAIN.

The camera man now turns his reel and shows a historical record almost a century old, taken from the archives of Spanish and American documents, "America's purchase of Florida from Spain," which stands out in clear type and startling is the reading on the screen: "The preservation of the rights of the Seminoles to lands in Florida was made a part of the stipulation of transfer by the Spanish Government to the United States in 1821."

The State accepted the gift of the "Swamp and overflowed" lands of Florida from the National Government, with the Indian population as a part of that transfer; therefore the obligation passed to Florida.

Has she kept a single letter of this Spanish-American compact in her treatment of the Seminole Indians and their rights and titles to homes in the Everglades?

M'KINLEY'S HUMANE POLICY.

In the quickly shifting screen of this silent photoplay of Florida's history, the magic lenses of the camera bar censorship, and the daring film maker from the safety of a periscope, as it were, shows records that jibe rather badly with honorable State laws.

The swamp-land grant of 1850 gave to Florida the "Overflowed lands," but did not include the islands and hammocks within the 'glade boundary, because they were not overflowed land. Therefore would the title to those "old homes of the Indians," now recorded in the names of certain corporations and private individuals stand the "acid test" of a legal investigation?

But, wait, the photoplay has now reached a gripping climax. The lights are growing dim; dark shadows weave themselves on the screen; an oppressive silence hovers over us as we watch, as if some sinister thing impended. Ah! A cog has slipped! It is the year 1888. The Florida Legislature is in busy session. A "Seminole land bill" comes before Florida citizenship. It has passed and signed by the governor. The land tallied almost to the acre with the survey as selected by the United States Government for the Seminoles!

Alas for the tragedy of this chapter! Alas for the wiles of the politician and the unholy, unpardonable graft of the speculator. The bill, so inspiring to humanity, contained a clause—in these days of everglade jests called a "joker"—which reads, "Providing that nothing in this act shall be construed to make the State of Florida or the board of trustees of the internal improvement fund of Florida liable to make good the title to any lands embraced in this act that have heretofore been conveyed or certified to any person, persons, or corporation."

Townships 54 and 55, 48, 49, 50, etc., had been "acquired" by a person, persons, or corporation, and the Seminoles again became the victims of infamous politics.

Like the eagle, as he swoops down upon the lamb feeding at its mother's side, so commercialized graft with "land-grabbers" outfit swept down upon the inheritance of the red children of Florida and, violating every moral, humane, and brotherly law of a Commonwealth, even gathered the crumbs that fell from Florida's bounteous table.

Between the time when President McKinley's special Government commission carefully selected these lands in 1898, an interval of less than a year, this particular tract disappeared from the list of the public domain and went into private ownership.

Was this high treason? Did Florida violate the sanctity of her voting citizenship by permitting this "land-grabbing" act? Would you know who shuffled the cards? If we allow a "political grab bag" to disregard the will of the people; if we, as a State, will permit the overturning of honesty and justice, then we must not weep over the unfortunate conditions of Everglade drainage. An anxious public still waits for the answer to the riddle of the Okeechobee sphynx, who alone holds fast the key to this "Egypt of America."

A PEOPLE WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

Slowly, as if breaking through a mist of gloom, the last screen breaks into view. It is the climax of Florida's pitiful Indian drama. We see the patient heroes of the dark wilderness huddled together in hopeless misery. Dusky red mothers weep as they press their little ones to their throbbing breasts.

The wigwams are deserted; the embers of the dying camp fires are turning a dull, ashen gray. The last meal has been eaten.

Listen and you will hear the merciless cry of the white spoils taker, "Move on, move on!" Like a death knell it echoes through the dark forests. The little group of original Americans, so true to their friends, so pitifully child-like, are now standing upon the brink of oblivion. With heavy hearts and eyes of grief they turn their faces toward the land of the Southern Cross. Slowly and silently the bewildered little band moves onward.

Like animals, sorely stricken, creeping to their lair, these red mothers and little children follow the slow tread of the stoical braves.

And so the curtain falls! Can we, dare we, as men and women of Florida and America, withhold the help we can give to this stricken and oppressed people of the Florida Everglades—the long-persecuted remnant of the once powerful Seminole Nation?

Mr. HAYDEN. I also desire to insert the following editorial from the Tampa Tribune:

Mrs. Minnie Moore-Willson, of Kissimmee, the great friend and champion of the Seminoles, and the author of a number of books and papers in their behalf, has had published an interesting booklet entitled "The Least Known Wilderness in America." It deals with the Everglades of Florida.

Mrs. Willson dedicates her book: "To you who feel a thrill of patriotic pride in lending a helping hand to the downtrodden and the oppressed." She describes the 'Glades in detail, the flora and fauna, the history of the Seminoles who inhabit the region, which she flashes in a series of scenario-like incidents, and the present situation. She calls the Everglades region, with its neglected Indian population, "A Little Belgium of Our Own," and makes a strong appeal for recognition of the rights of these people. Her plea is one for humanity, and she puts it in burning words that must find a hearing and an echo.

Mrs. Willson summarizes "The Seminoles' Needs" as follows:

One hundred thousand acres of the Everglades.

The live-stock industry being their natural vocation, this is not too much land for their future needs.

The National Government will gladly help fence and start these Seminoles in the cattle industry.

Industrial schools taught by educated Seminoles from Oklahoma, whereby soil tilling and better home making may be learned from our new American methods.

With this help Seminoles will develop into the highest type of American citizens.

Mr. HAYDEN. The committee will now adjourn.

(Whereupon, at 7.45 o'clock p. m., the committee adjourned.)