

STICKLE, ESTELA SUE. TRAIL OF TEARS.

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Mary D. Derward, Field Worker
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A REAL AMERICAN TRAGEDY
By Estella Sue Stickle

Walking, walking, walking. Unrelieved walking.

Days of walking. ~~Weeks of walking.~~ ~~Months of walking.~~

Continuous walking. Monotonous walking. Maudening walking.

Pain, hunger, illness, death, and yet -- they must keep walking, walking, walking.

Nights of exposure. Nights of disturbed rest.

Nights of tense vigilance. Rain, cold, winds, and yet they must sleep, for tomorrow they must keep walking, walking, walking.

Thus came bands of hapless Indians over the "Trail of Tears" to Oklahoma. They were the Indians of the Five Civilized Tribes, who had been driven from their homes in South; driven from them because of a broken promise of the white man. The promise had been that these Indians should live unmolested in their southern reservations -- forever; but the white man evidently forgot the meaning of the word "forever." Yes, he did forget, for if he had remembered the awful meaning of that word -- "forever" -- he would have thought twice before committing such a violation against

a pledge of honor, of state, of nation. If he had remembered at all, he would have remembered that such violations are recorded -- forever.

The white man forgot his promise. He had reasons for forgetting his promise. When he had granted the southern reservations to the Indians, the land seemed useless to him; but the Indians had fared well in their homes. They had cultivated their fields, had built villages, and were happy. The contentment of the Indian was too much for the white man; too much for his egotism, his selfishness, his greed. If red men could profit from the land, why should not the white man, the man of super-civilization, take it away from them?

It was the white man's insatiable hunger for land, for wealth, that caused him to forget his promise and drive the red man farther west.

A Government order was sent to the Indians of the Five Tribes, demanding that they leave their homes and migrate to lands farther west; lands which did not look so attractive to the white man; lands which were to belong to the Indians -- forever.

The red man resented this order. Already had his race

suffered from too many injustices at the hands of the white man.

The Indian warriors donned their war garments, took their weapons, and went out to fight for their tribal rights.

Arlic Yahola, a Creek woman, was one of the Indian wives who were left at home. She anxiously awaited news of her husband and his comrades. She waited patiently, keeping watch over her family until the report came. The red man had been defeated. Once again had Justice made an omission in balancing her scales.

Arlic Yahola's husband never came back.

With the defeat of the red man came the confirmation of the Government order for the Indians to leave their homes. Arlic Yahola and her sister Polly began to prepare, together with the rest of their tribesmen, for the journey westward.

Her prized personal belongings and dishes Arlic Yahola buried under a cliff, with the hope - vain hope! - that some day she might return. Her lards and meat, which had been prepared for winter, she lowered into a well, in order that they might keep fresh until the return she hoped for.

was reeted firmly in her home land, the land that was her ~~and~~ lawful heritage. When the bugles were blown to signify that the long march was to start, Arlie Yahola fainted; the strain had been too great. When she came to her senses she was being ~~beaten~~ -- beaten by American soldiers.

Arlie Yahola, her three children, and her sister Polly set out for the long trip overland, with a small Indian pony as their only beast of burden. And so now they formed a part of that sad, historic train that moved from Georgia to Indian Territory over the "Trail of Tears," which in reality was no trail at all.

The Indians did not cherish any hopes of their new home, a home that was ~~to be~~ theirs -- forever. They were not skeptics, but they knew the meaning of the word "forever," and they also knew the fierceness of the white man.

Arlie Yahola and Polly traveled on foot in order that the three children might ride. They walked hundreds of miles -- wearisome miles.

The only food that the little family had was potatoes, baked over a camp fire, and Indian sour corn bread, and even this plain fare was not plentiful. Many times the two women endured ~~pains~~ of hunger in order that the children might eat.

Many times they lay awake, footsore and weary though they were, to protect the children from an unannounced attack by wild beasts.

They made countless sacrifices for the young of Arlie Yahola, but their efforts were in vain. One by one the children died on the way. They did not reach the promised land. Their small lives had not been sufficiently tempered by the fire of life for them to withstand the blows of such hardship.

At last Arlie Yahola and Polly came to the end of the "Trail of Tears." They stopped in a section of what is now Oklahoma near the present site of Tulsa.

Arlie Yahola later married a white man, who was Scotch by descent, and to whom she could speak only through an interpreter. This man had at one time been numbered among the American soldiers who were employed by the Government to quiet insurrections in the South. Every second part of Arlie Yahola's fate.

Fortunately, however, she was happy in this new marriage, and had three children, one of whom is living today. Her happiness, though, was not to last for long. About fifteen years after her arrival in Oklahoma she passed into

the --"forever!"

Perhaps it was best that she did not live longer, to see the white man again break his promise, when he opened Indian Territory for white settlement.

Polly never married; she lived to see the Indian lands given over to the white man, and then, at the age of nearly one hundred years, she too, passed into the "forever" -- the inviolable forever.

And thus closes one chapter of the history of the American Indian; a chapter that contains a tale that is typical of many others.

I have a personal interest in Arlie Yahala and Polly. Arlie Yahala is my great-grandmother. She has given me a great heritage: The small descent that I claim from her race.

Thus is the story of the American Indian: At first the white man killed the red man; next, he drove him westward; now that there is no west to drive him to he is gradually assimilating him. The story approaches its close.

I see these noble men, these real Americans, standing upon a precipice, looking down into an abyss. The white race is closing in upon all sides. Soon the red man will

be forced off the cliff. They will vanish, materially,
but their valiant souls will continue to live -- forever! *

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