

latitude 78° 32' north and longitude 69° 08' west of Greenwich.

For fuller details the interested reader may be referred to the issues of *Terrestrial Magnetism and Atmospheric Electricity* for March-June and September, 1923.

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### ALICE C. FLETCHER

IN the year 1881 there appeared on the Omaha reservation, in Nebraska, a white woman. She visited the Indians in their homes and began to make friends with them. At first they were not disposed to talk, but after a time it occurred to one to ask: "Why are you here?" She replied: "I came to learn, if you will let me, something about your tribal organization, social customs, tribal rites, traditions and songs. Also to see if I can help you in any way."

At the suggestion of help the faces of the Indians brightened with hope. The Indian continued: "You have come at a time when we are in distress. We have learned that the 'land paper' given us by the Great Father does not make us secure in our homes; that we could be ousted and driven to the Indian Territory as the Poncas were. We want a 'strong paper.' We are told that we can get one through an act of Congress. Can you help us?"

The little woman replied: "Bring me your 'land paper' and come prepared to tell me about your home and the size of the land you have in cultivation. Come soon." The news spread and the Indians came. Each one uttered the oft repeated cry: "I want a 'strong paper' which will make my home secure, so I can work without fear of being ousted." For days the little friend worked hard writing each man's story of his struggle to live by cultivating the soil. This part of the work being done, she then took up the hardest task, that of framing a petition to be signed by the Indians and sent to Congress, which was something new in her experience.

Here was a woman with a courageous heart, full of true sympathy for humankind, sympathy which found expression, not in well phrased words, but in well planned action. This brave, unselfish woman was Alice C. Fletcher, whom the Omahas learned to love.

The petition was signed and on December 31, 1881, sent to Senator Morgan of Alabama. On January 12, 1882, he wrote that on the 11th he presented the petition and it was recorded. Later a bill was introduced in the Senate for allotting lands to the Omahas and for the issuance of trust patents to them. Miss

Fletcher came to Washington to help push the bill through. It passed both houses, was approved August 7, 1882, and became law.

In April, 1883, Miss Fletcher was appointed special agent to carry out the provisions of the law. When she was about to begin her work the older members of the tribe came together for consultation as to how they could best express their gratitude for what she had done for the tribe. They decided to perform for her the ancient calumet ceremony, although it was not customary to give it informally. A notice was given to the people to come, and on the day appointed many came and assembled in an earth lodge. The calumets were set up in their sacred place, and when Miss Fletcher entered as the honored guest the house became silent. Three men arose and took up the symbolic pipes (the calumets) and the lynx skin on which they rested; then, standing side by side, they sang softly the opening song. At the close the three men turned, and facing the people, who sat in a wide circle, sang a joyful song as they moved around the circle, waving the sacred pipes over their heads. Song after song they sang for their friend, of the joy and happiness that would follow when men learned to live together in peace. When the evening was over they told Miss Fletcher that she was free to study this or any other of their tribal rites.

Miss Fletcher carried on her ethnological researches among the Omaha, Pawnee, Winnebago, Sioux, Nez Perce and other tribes. She published many papers descriptive of the life and ceremonials of the tribes she studied. The most important of these papers are: "The Omaha Tribe," which was published in the Twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology; "The Hako: A Pawnee Ceremony," which accompanies the Twenty-second Annual Report of the Bureau; and "Indian Story and Song from North America," published by Small Maynard & Company, in 1900. Many of the ceremonial songs collected by Miss Fletcher have been used as themes by American composers, notably by Cadman, Farwell and others. She held the Thaw Fellowship, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, from 1891 to the time of her death, but had been an assistant in the same institution at a still earlier period. She was vice-president of Section H, A. A. A. S., in 1896; president of the Anthropological Society of Washington in 1903; and president of the American Folk-Lore Society in 1905.

This great friend of the Indians was born in Cuba on the 15th day of March, 1838; on the evening of April 6, 1923, she passed away in her home, in Washington, D. C.

FRANCIS LAFLESCHÉ