

1890 along as best they could, unaided, without instruction, sympathy or the necessary materials for doing the plainest kind of work, content to live in squalor and ignorance, unless some kind womanly heart put something better into her life.

The women have been and are yet, too much the slaves, doing much of the work, belonging to the man, which tends to make them careless and indifferent in their own sphere.

Letter of Filds Mission
The men have progressed because of their contact with white men, and because they have had efficient and liberal teaching, and we predict that not until the women too have had the same, with the true ideas of civilization be inculcated and deeply rooted. It is only when the husband and wife are pretty nearly equal that domestic felicity and thrift abide, but so long as the wife is made the drudge, so long will the home be simply a place where they can abide when no other place can be found to shelter and afford food.

During the seventeen years of my life work among this people I have observed many things and noted some gratifying changes; and I truly believe, that had the Society of Friends continued their good work begun then, by a lady whose duty it was to teach the Santee women how to "look well into the ways of her house," that there would be no further need of a Filds Mission for the Santees, and the whole atmosphere of the people would be far above what it is at present, or will be in twenty-five years, unless the women are taught that they too have a sphere entirely their own, but not independent of the mutual benefit as man and wife.

The Society of Friends realizing that 'tis never too late to mend have again taken up this humane work, not exactly where they left it, fourteen years ago, for there has been a slow growth, and the mothers of today are more readily reached and many are eager to enlarge their scope of domestic knowledge, because of their association with the Government and mission homes, and because the general level of both sexes is above what it was then.

Six months ago I was commissioned by your Society to experiment with the Santee women, knowing that the results would depend chiefly upon the methods and means used.

The potent charm of the plan, to my mind, was the personal labor to be expended right in their homes, and thereby entering the routine of their daily lives, touching and unfolding all the better and nobler

1890 instincts within them, and with all the tact I possessed to teach them how to use the slender resources in hand and creating in them a desire for better and more varied materials, by which to improve their material condition.

I went into the homes finding most of them very meagerly furnished, and in some cases the houses contained nothing more than a stove and two chairs, with a small pine box to hold the dishes. In a very few, I found very comfortable furniture, but so poorly arranged and such an air of squalor and disorder as to make one feel that there was a "fivel in a swine's snout."

Letter of Filds Mission
Here the question met me, "What can I do to improve the general condition of these homes?" In making my round of introductory calls to every family on the reservation I explained to the women in their own tongue, the object of my visit, and commented upon their way of living, and asked them if they did not wish to be taught how to keep their homes neat and tidy, and what to do when their children were ill.

I was usually met with a hearty response in the affirmative, but immediately followed by their saying, "We have nothing to work with. I have no soap. I have no blacking and no brush. My floor is unpainted, and it is so rough that when I try to go at it with a cloth my hands get full of splinters." I was prepared to meet the want of soap and blacking, and encouraged them to clean their floors with a broom and cloth by telling them that I would confer with the Agent about the paint for the floor, and as a result a number of them have painted their floors, and I think every floor will be painted before winter comes upon us. I have found that the soap and stove blacking have been well used, and wherever the family possessed a cupboard the newspapers which I gave them were adorned with fancifully cut figures and neatly put on the shelves. I talked with the women about hanging curtains to the windows and I gave a number of packages of flower seeds out and at many of the houses my eyes have been gladdened by the sight of a bed of blooming flowers and a mass of vines at the windows. We cannot hope to accomplish much in the line of floral culture until the people can be induced to build such fences about their houses as will keep out the cattle and dogs.

Only a few houses are now destitute of window curtains, and many are waiting to intercede with the Agent for cupboard, and new and better tables. They ask me if I cannot give them pictures for the walls and for the little accessories that go so far to make a house