New Port Richey, Florida May 16, 1926

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Your letter of April 27th received.

I thought that I would be able to find a copy of Lakanokee's narrative for you but my search has been fruitless. However I have a copy badly tattered and torn with two pages missing entirely. I have made a transcript from this, with probably some errors, and for the missing pages I had to rely on my memory-- possibly left out something important. However, I take great pleasure in enclosing the results.

Very truly,

Gerben M. DeVries

PS I liked your second article in McCall's fully as well as the first.

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(A copy)

Being now near the end of my days and the only surviving subject of our good Queen Chasco, I, Lakanokee, write this in my eighty-fifth year, that those who in future generations dwell where ebbs and flows this palm hidden river may know their wonderful inheritance and carry out the will of the Supreme Ruler; also that they might not fall into the grevious error of the Calusas, who were before them, in deeming the Divine Sacrifice of the Cross of no avail and persisting in the practice of animal and human sacrifices to Toya; neither to do as did so many of our companions who journeyed with us from Spain. They gave unto God lip service, but in the real Christian virtues they were lacking. Being deceitful, selfish and cruel most of them perished most wretchedly on the sacrifical altar of the Calusas.

Among the soldiers that rebuilt Saint Augustine was a nobleman who by his associates was called Devalla. He was a valiant soldier and set no man under him to so dangerous a task that he himself would not do-- in fact, he preferred the more dangerious undertakings for himself. To the savages, because they had murdered the missionaries, he was a scourge -- vengeful and relentless. When the work of rebuilding Saint Augustine was completed and the neighboring tribes who had not been converted were scattered he took ship for Spain and spent some yeass with his family. As time went on he again became restless and desired to return to the new world. When his wife died he secured permission from the King to form an expedition and help subdue the unconverted Indians in Florida so as to insure safety for colonization. Going to Barcalona he there gathered a following of men like unto himself for this purpose. With him Devalla brought his foster son, Don Phillip, an orphan of his friend, and also his own daughter, Dona Isabella, their servants, and a Priest of the Order of Saint Francis by name of Luis, who I am, as their spiritual advisor and tutor. Don Phillip was a youth of sixteen, and Devalla's daughter, Dona Isabelle, only three years younger. She was a rare flower, almost too exquisite and beautiful for the unknown wilderness-- even though the wilderness was a land of unsurpassing beauty and pleasant surprises. Yet she was lithe and strong of body and well fitted her surroundings, matter not what they be. The expedition having landed at Saint Augustine on the Nativity Day of our Lord we rested there until the following spring. With a select following of three hundred picked soldiers, together with Don Phillip and Dona Isabella, myself, missionaries and attendants, we proceeded westerlay until we came to the river Welaka. This we crossed on rafts made of large trees. Immediately we had battle with the Apalachees and they were scattered after great slaughter. Devalla spared but few captives to carry the burdens-- the rest he put to the sword. In that fighting fourteen of our men were slain and eighty were so grieviously hurt they were sent back to the Sea. We then proceeded southward and came to a land of unsurpassed beauty where there were many lakes-- large and small, and there we established our camps. It was Devalla's intent to work from this place in ridding the country of the heathen since they would not be converted and were a source of danger to the undertakings of our King---after this to go still further westward and destroy a strong tribe of the Calusas who lived on the western sea towards Mexico, Through this land no Spaniard had ever been able to pass without extreme danger. For it had been told how captives had been taken to a large sacrificial mound near the mouth of a palm bordered river and while yet alive their hearts were cut out and still beating placed upon an altar as an offering to the setting sun as it sank to rest in the Sea. Report had also been brought back by survivors of how when one of their camps was surrounded, the women and maidens, whom the soldiers desired above all else because of their beauty, instead of becoming stricken with fear they would while still chanting a song of praise to their god, Toya, fall upon their own daggers. Their warriors, even though bound, would spit upon their captors thus invoking a most horrible death.

At that place where the Calusas had entered their camps, ships could not enter from the west because of shall bars and every expedition that had attempted to enter by small boats, or by foot from the Bay of Espirâtu Santo had been captured by these savages. It therefor was as I have set down, Devalla's plan utterly to destroy this, the greatest tribe left of the Calusas and to level their altar because they made

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made human offerigs to the sun. For the successful conclusions of his plans the King had promised to give Devalla all that territory on the western coast from the waters of Espiritu Santo northward.

But it was not to be that Devalla should set foot on the western coast as a conqueror-- he was brought captive and his was the first breast to be split open. As the sun sank to the bosom of the great waters beyond, amid gorgeous splendor of the clouds, with evening breezes sighing in the fronds of the tall palms at the base of the altar, and while the savage warriors danced and chanted wildly around the place of sacrifice, Devalla's heart lay bleeding on the altar -- an offering to their god Toya. As it grew dark the jauva, or chief priest, of the tribe carried it down to the water's edge and cast it in the fast ebbing tide.

The fall of Devalla and his following came about through a feeling of false security. The inhabitants of the lake country had perished from a pestilence-- being susceptible to the plague, they died in so great numbers that in some villages not a soul remained. The few remaining Indians in other villages were so hopeless they offered no resistance. This was among the Timuquos. Devalla supposed that also the tribes on the western coast had been taken by the plague as had been reported to him -- but in this he judged unwisely.

The Calusas had learned of the intent of our expedition to destroy them and planned to waylay the invaders. A large force was sent eastward under the command of the great war chieftian, Mucoschee. Finding the vigilance of Devalla's command relaxed and the soldiers given over to brawling among themselves, they stealthily crept up by night to the guard and overpowered them and captured all, including the two children. Of fighting there was not much because of the surprise of the attack and the great number of savage warriors. Devalla was wounded in the thigh and five of the soldiers slain. We were all made to march westward several days' journey through marshes and over hills, and just a year to the day from leaving Saint Augustine with pomp and ceremony we arrived at the western sea-- and the first sacrifice was Devalla's as I have set down. Sacrifice followed sacrifice; for every time the sun went to rest in the sea bleeding hearts were placed upon the heathen altar until only three remained-- Don Phillip, stoical and unafraid, Dona Esabella, bewildered yet calm, and myself. Us they did not offer to their god, Toya, ---month followed month and year followed year, and still we were spared . After the first feeling of horror and grief wore away we began to realize that we were being considered as a part of the tribe.

By his feats of strength, prowess and endurance, Don Phillip found favor in the eyes of the young men. He showed them many things in the way of playing games. While the Calusas were a grave and dignified people they enjoyed after their work or hunting to have games and amusements,--games of throwing a round ball covered with fish skin and hitting it with war-clubs,--running, jumping, swimming and wrestling --and their wild dances accompanied by wierd chanting and beating of drums made of wood. They also had two ceremonies during the year of releasing the birds commemorating their escape as a people from some far off land,to the south. Dona Isabella, by her grace, beauty, and sympathy, won the hearts of even the most relentless savage; they likened her unto their river and because of this they called her "Chasco". The maidens of the tribe also had games and dances in which Chasco took part.

When I saw that they had no evil intent towards us, but with great fear and trembling, I talked to the old men of the tribe as to their heathenish practice of sacrificing to the setting sun; and growing bolder I proclaimed to them the true devotion of salvation and right living. To this they gave respectful heed. When I had finished, Hirriguа, their jauva, arose and said,--

"Oh, Lakanokee, bearer of the Cross, what matters it how one dies? Were it not better that the setting sun should see the last heart beat of so cruel a man as your former chief than that he should be tied hand and foot and given as a prey to the slimy saurian of the marshes? Your brothers gave salutations to the Cross you carry but where is their salvation? Have they not betrayed the cause of the One whom you say died on that Cross? Was not the sentence of death already upon them? Was it not proper that we should offer to the giver of light a fit sacrifice and at the same time execute the will of Toya? Have not our people the virtues of which you boast? We deny

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not the truth as you have spoken, oh, Lakanokee, and the virtues that you and the two children possess, but did not your former companions offer up their victims to their god of greed and conquest? The cross you say stands for faith and hope and love of all men of all tribes and peoples. The tree of Toya, that is, the tree of the Trident Palm, says that we shall always live and that the river of light and pleasing shadows shall not fail us; it reminds us of the hope we have that with each day the sun shall return to his glory and give joy and gladness to the people; it teaches us to be kind to each other, to comfort and heal those who have great sorrow. Whether the emblem of those virtues you have spoken of be a cross or three palms growing from one stem, we are agreed, oh, Lakanokee, that those who dwell here must hear the voice of the Great Spirit as He whispers through the palms. It is because of this that your lives have been spared."

As the Chieftian Muscoschee and all the council agreed with him I dared not at t that time say more. Seeing that we had long since given up hope of escape they no longer guarded us --no longer did we care to escape -- for here we dwelt in a place of great enchantment and the magic spell increased as the days passed. I was able to teach the Indians many things about the growing of maize, beans, squashes and other vegetables. Also the river was full of fish and the woods full of bear, deer, large birds and other game. The women of the tribe wove an excellent cloth of the fibre of palm leaves, which were first dipped in some strong liquid. The cloth was like linen and was colored most gorgeously. In the cool time of the year the women wore mantles of this cloth; and so also did the men wear such mantles fastened over one shoulder. They also wore a short tunic of deer skin decorated with pearls and shell.

As I have set down, they worshiped Toya, or the sun, which they claimed represented the Great Spirit. Every morning as the sun rose, with their bodies uncovered to the rays of light, they would stretch out their hands in adoration and chant a hymn of praise; and also as when the sun was at its highest gave they this salutation; as even drew on most of the tribe would gather near the sacrificial mound. Just as the sun was about to set, their jauva would slay an animal and place its beating heart upon the altar and all would chant a prayer beseeching that Toya would return to give his light. When the sacrifice was a human heart only the warriors drew near unto the altar. After our companions had been sacrificed they brought in no more captives of our race, but did sacrifice warriors captured from other tribes.

This tribe had come out of the south many years before the memory of even their oldest men and they stopped here for the making of canoes; --the enchantment held them. They drove out the Timuquas and took the land for themselves.

A strange people were the Calusas, terrible as warriors but most faithful to their families and to those of their tribe. Each worked for the well-being of his family and all worked for the good of the tribe. A high sense of honor was there among themselves and towards each other their conduct was most noble. These virtues attributed they to the Great Spirit as represented by Toya whose emblem was the Palm of Toya-- three palms growing out of one stem. This tree were we not permitted to behold until after we had been taken through the ceremony of adoption. They tolerated not disparagement of this their tribal land on the palm hidden river. If any member so far forgot himself as to belittle his surroundings he was forwith taken before the chieftain or before the jauva, divested of his tunic and clothed in the skin of an allegator and given the name of that reptile. In this condition he was conducted eastward two days' journey and told never to return.

Near the end of the fourth year of our captivity Jauva Hirrigua sent word that I should come to his lodge--that he had something of importance to tell me. I found him dressed in his richest ceremonial robes, such as were worn only when human hearts were placed on the heathen altar. Seeing this and believing that he had prepared himself to make such sacrifice, I fell on the ground before him and begged that this thing he should not do--that even the sacrifice of animals was displeasing to the Great Spirit. He would have stopped my importunities but I would not be silenced. What I said to him that day I now remember not for I thought it had been decreed that one of us should be offered up to their god Toya as I knew they had no captives from other tribes. At last Hirrigua took me by the hand and stood before me. With tears,

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