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C. FAYNE PORTER

THE BATTLE OF THE 1,000 SLAIN

AND OTHER STORIES
SELECTED FROM OUR INDIAN HERITAGE

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For LAUREN and DANA

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PROLOGUE
GIFTS OF THE INDIAN

NEARLY FIVE CENTURIES AGO a hardy old salt named Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain, outward bound for the East Indies. When he made his earth-shaking landfall at San Salvador in the Bahamas, he immediately dubbed the native Arawaks there "Indians," and Indians the residents of the New World have been ever since. Of course they had nothing to do with India, so the term was a misnomer from the beginning. Misconception has been piled on top of misconception ever since, so that today much of our thinking about the first Americans is nebulous.

Ask any moderately good student who has had a course or two in world history to comment on the rise and fall of Carthage, or the invasion of the

Huns under Attila, or the life and times of King Alfred, and he could give a half-way intelligent answer. Ask him about the rise and fall of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, or the Trail of Tears, or the life and times of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perces, and he'd be: (1) completely stumped for an answer, and (2) quite sure that you were strange for asking such a question in the first place.

Now why should this be? Perhaps much of it is because people fall into the grave error of thinking that everything in the twentieth-century Americas came from Europe—that the Stone Age Indian in the New World was a minus factor who had to be moved out of the way before a Western culture could flourish, that he contributed nothing except opposition. Then let's look at the record.

Americans today have something of a reputation for being impressed by statistics concerning money, so try this one: the United States is, of course, the world's leading agricultural nation, but more than half of the cash farm crop of this country comes from products the Indian developed! This makes him certainly the greatest of the Stone Age farmers.

Today's domestic tillers of the soil realize about $3,000,000,000 annually from corn, the most valuable crop grown in the United States. Corn has been called the greatest natural resource of our country, and a bumper corn crop will equal the total value of all wheat, potatoes, barley, rye, rice,

tobacco, beans, and sweet potatoes grown yearly. Science is still puzzled as to how the Indians ever developed it in the first place, because no wild corn has ever been found; it is by now so thoroughly domesticated that it has lost the power of self-propagation in an untended state. It grows only where man plants it and is totally helpless without man's care. Other cereal grains—wheat, barley, rice, oats, rye—will thrive by themselves, but not corn; its origin is shrouded in mystery. Scientists have improved corn, true, *but all of the main types now grown were developed by the time of Columbus.* (This includes popcorn. It was often served sweetened with maple sugar: the tasty confection of crackerjack or caramelcorn, then, is a few thousand years old.)

And let's add the Irish potato, one of the world's most widely grown vegetables. Irish it is not; it came first from the high plateau country of Peru and Bolivia. The world embraced it, and its total production of over eight billion bushels yearly makes it an easy winner on the world scene; its annual value surpasses that of all the gold and silver mined yearly throughout the world. While we're on the subject of potatoes, add the sweet potato and some types of yams as of American origin—the three from different families and representing different kinds of domesticated vegetables.

To this list add tomatoes, the leading crop

canned in the United States today; tobacco, base of a billion-dollar-a-year industry, plus the related uses of nicotine in insecticide and medicine; table beans, both the dry (kidneys and limas) and the string beans or green beans; the castor bean used for medicinal castor oil and a wide variety of commercial needs; the peanut, and its vast range of by-products; the pumpkins and the related squash families; the green or bell peppers and the red chile pepper (not the black table variety, however); pineapples; avocados; eggplant; wild rice; cassava (from which our tapioca comes); native grape strains; strawberries; blackberries; raspberries—and on and on the list might go.

Then, too, quite an industry has been built around what the Indians of South America once called *cahuchi* (the weeping tree). The Indians would make cuts in the bark and gather the "tears" from this tree, which would be compressed into balls and used as toys and playthings. Today we know "the weeping tree" as the rubber tree, and the rubber industry is a giant one: in the United States alone, rubber and rubber goods production is in the five-billion-dollar-a-year class.

Where would the scientific study of biology and medicine be without the prolific and ubiquitous guinea pig, domesticated by the South American aborigines? In the field of medicine, consider curare, quinine, cocaine, cascara, arnica, petrola-

tum, ipecac, and wintergreen, a few of the curative substances understood and utilized by the Indians. So skillful were the Indians in the knowledge of natural remedies that in 1952 Felix S. Cohen could write "... in the four hundred years that the European physicians and botanists have been analyzing and examining the flora of America, they have not yet discovered a medicinal herb not known to the Indians."

In fact, the Indians whom the first settlers found had a far better conception of what constituted good health and how to maintain it than did the settlers themselves. They were a scrupulously clean people, unlike the Europeans who first came to their shores. Columbus took back the news of how often the Indians bathed, and one of the first dictates set down by Queen Isabella of Spain was to the point, if misdirected: "They are not to bathe as frequently as hitherto."

Columbus took back another idea which he got from the Arawaks, one which would become synonymous with ships that sail the sea and the men who sail them. That idea also concerned a tree, called the *hamaca*, whose bark was used to make a swinging bed, hung by vine ropes between two supports. This, of course, became the hammock, dearly beloved of old sailors and do-it-yourself gardeners.

American soldiers who coursed over the world in

World War II were greeted by small fry (and some fry not so small) in the most remote and inaccessible corners of the earth with the same classic query: "Got any gum, Yank?" Chewing gum, along with cigarettes and chocolate candy, became the *wampum* for Yanks everywhere. Cigarettes were of American Indian origin, as was chocolate—and chewing gum. The Indians used numerous tree gums for chewing as well as the Central American *chicle*, which is the "chewy" base of all gum made today.

As a small boy from the remote hill country of Northern California, I used to thrill to the cry of the "peanut-butchers" at carnivals and circuses and ball games. I can see them yet, with their red-and-white hats and their precious wares in a tray slung from around their necks, and I can hear their stirring cry of "POPcorn, PEAnuts, CRACKerjack, CHEWing gum! POPcorn, PEAnuts, CRACKerjack, CHEWing gum!" To a country boy with a few small coins clutched tightly in a sometimes not-too-clean hand, they represented all that was opulent and desirable in the world. I did not know then, as I know now, that they were hawking small-boy delights that had tempted countless generations of Indians before me. Perhaps it would not have seemed important to me then anyway, but I think it would have.

The white comers to the New World found

themselves in an environment and in a land so foreign to them as to be almost incomprehensible. There was only one way in which the white man could survive, and that was by emulating the Indian who knew and understood the land and its ways. So the newcomers took nearly all that the Indian had to offer—they took his means of transportation like the canoe and the snowshoe, they took his buckskin dress for life on the frontier, and they took his foods like cornbread and persimmon bread and hominy and succotash and the corn tortilla of the Southwestern Pueblo dwellers. As an interesting aside here, the poor starving Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, with the centuries of supposedly superior occidental learning behind them, refused to eat the plentiful clams of that area because they thought them to be poisonous. We can thank the Wampanoags of Massachusetts for introducing the Pilgrims to the fine old Indian tradition of the clambake.

They took, too, the Indian's names for the rich and varied land upon which he lived. Probably in every county in the United States today (exclusive of Hawaii) there is an Indian place-name—of a stream or a mountain or a city—whispering of the time when another people lived and worked and played here. The sonorous roll of the old Indian names is indelibly stamped into the fabric of the land—Mississippi and Monongahela, Narragansett

and Natchez, Savannah and Seattle, Tishomingo and Taos, Winnemucca and Wichita—and half of our fifty states bear names which stem from Indian words.

All of these things we have talked about thus far have been tangible. Still unanswered is the question: What kind of people were those Indians? They came from widely varied backgrounds, and any statement would have to be a very general one. The Indians represented over two hundred and fifty different tribes in the United States alone, speaking a hodge-podge of languages and possessing widely divergent customs and cultures and habits. As scholars have pointed out, Rome and Carthage struggling for supremacy in the Mediterranean were far more alike in their modes of life than were, say, the Iroquois of New England and the Paiutes of Nevada.

The personalities discussed in the text of this book will reveal at least a few of the characteristics which might be called representative of some of the Indians. But more revealing of their day-to-day life and attitude is a statement by one of the great early students of the plains tribes of this country. That man was George Catlin, who traveled among them and lived among them in the period from 1830–1836. Catlin was a gifted artist; he captured on canvas many of the important leaders and many of the little-known ceremonies among better than

two-score of the plains tribes from the Canadian border southward into the territory then held by Mexico. The presentation of the Indians as they were was his life's work, and when he published his *Last Rambles Amongst the Indians of the Rocky Mountains and the Andes* (London: 1868), he could say:

I love a people who have always made me welcome to the best they had . . . who are honest without laws, who have no jails and no poorhouse . . . who never take the name of God in vain . . . who worship God without a Bible, and I believe that God loves them also . . . who are free from religious animosities . . . who have never raised a hand against me, or stolen my property, where there was no law to punish either . . . who never fought a battle with white men except on their own ground . . . and oh! how I love a people who don't live for the love of money.

1. FATHER OF OUR CONSTITUTION? HIAWATHA, THE MOHAWK

(15th–16th century)

"WE, THE PEOPLE of the United States, . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." With these solemn words serving as a preamble, there was instituted in the United States in 1788 the greatest experiment in democratic government in mankind's long and painful march toward self-determination. An idea was born which would flare through Europe, serve as a trigger to the French Revolution, and lead to the rise of a man named Napoleon Bonaparte; it would become a beacon of inspiration to South American countries in their struggle for freedom from Old World oppression; and it would stand until the present day as a symbol to the teeming masses of downtrodden men

around the world, wherever they bend under the rule of force.

The great men of those first years of our government have been made into heroes of almost legendary stature, and rightly so. Men like Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, and Hamilton seldom appear in one generation. They lived in a challenging time, they met that challenge, and in so doing formulated a democratic system of rule "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Of course we can trace threads of our Constitution back through history—statements of far-thinking philosophers, political writers, and men of religion kept indicating that in some place in some time there would be a culmination of man's dreams in which he would be given the great privilege, as well as the responsibility, of governing himself.

What was the genesis of this revolutionary idea? Some scholars have said that it was the natural fruition of western civilization—and perhaps it was. Some have said that it had its origin in the city-state of the Greeks—and perhaps it did. Some have said that the planners of those dramatic years were primarily influenced by an English philosopher named Thomas Hobbes, who died in 1679—and this may well be true. Relatively few serious researchers have gone into another fascinating possibility—that these men were equally influenced by an Indian political organization which de-

veloped before Thomas Hobbes was born and which flowered a short distance from where the revolutionists sat and deliberated upon "the course of human events."

An examination of this Indian organization shows that it had no groundwork and that it leaped almost full-fledged from the mind of a man born into the cruelty and savagery of a Stone Age culture which set the highest values on "Destroy thy neighbor." This man, long legendary among his own people, has since become legendary in the English-speaking culture through an unfortunate blunder and in an entirely different sense. His name was Hiawatha.

To most of us today, the name *Hiawatha* calls to mind "Can you tell me whence these stories, Whence these legends and traditions . . ." Longfellow, the venerably bearded nineteenth-century poet, was posing a question about which he, himself, was more than a little uncertain. This confusion on his part has been compounded since, to a point where it is doubtful that the popular mind will ever sort it out properly.

Briefly, early scholarship had tended to identify some of the beliefs of the Iroquois and the Algonquin peoples as being the same. They were two completely separate language family groups, and their relationship with each other was usually that of skull-cracking. But Longfellow had read some

Chippewa legends (the Chippewa were from the Algonquin group) in which the central folk-hero was mistakenly identified as Hiawatha, and on this he based his poem. Actually, the flesh-and-blood Hiawatha was from the Iroquois family, probably a Mohawk by tribe, and his was the hand which guided the founding of the Five Nations of the Iroquois. The Five Nations, or the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, was the strongest governing force in red America north of Mexico. Let us look at the Iroquois and at Hiawatha, the times and the man.

Who were the Iroquois? They had probably come across the Mississippi from the west originally; their traditions sometimes whisper of a faroff link with the plans-dwelling Pawnees. Driving into the central Appalachians and displacing the Algonquins as they went, they moved from there both north and south. The southern branch would become the Cherokee Nation and would locate in the Carolinas; the northern would hold most of New York and Pennsylvania against all comers. They were ferocious fighters, the northern Iroquois particularly. And when they had completely subjugated the northern Algonquins and had run out of any real competition, they turned brother against brother and engaged in the most vicious kind of warfare against members of their own blood. Conceivably they would have weakened themselves to a point where the Algonquins could have handled

them with no trouble had it not been for the efforts of one man. That man of vision, perhaps of genius, was Hiawatha.

Because he lived among a people who had no written language, the essence of the man Hiawatha must be extracted from the intricately constructed legends which have arisen around him. Deriving history from legend is a precarious business, but the main body of facts which we do know about the Iroquois square with the legends. The League of the Iroquois made up the balance of power in the New World; while France and England played their game of "America, America, who's got America?" the chief reason for the eventual victory of England was this very simple fact: although the French got along far better with most Indians than did the English, England was able to hold the Iroquois. So the Ho-de-no-sau-nee was, from the advent of the white man, a principal factor in the shaping of the destiny of a continent. And since it was a vital force and we have no other explanation for it, legend is the only source from which we can draw enlightenment.

Those historians who have gone into the matter do not agree too closely on a probable date for the founding of the League; it has been set on the early end at about 1450 and at the other extreme at about 1570, with perhaps a shade more logic pointing to the later date. This much is certain—by the time the colonists came, the Iroquois were a

tightly organized social and political unit, with rules and regulations governing relations with each other as well as with outside groups and with a complex, democratic form of constitution symbolized in the great wampum belts of the confederacy. For a century and a half the colonists would live side by side with a people governed by a strict constitution; when it came time for them to make up a set of procedures of their own, where more logically could they look than to the Ho-de-no-sau-nee?

Legend tells us that before the time of the federation of the Iroquois, the closely related tribes were locked in a desperate and bitter intertribal warfare which threatened their continued existence; all anthropological evidence concurs. Matters within the individual tribes were scarcely better; blood feuds were common, and the male members of whole families were wiped out in these grim struggles. Like all primitive people with a warlike bent, the Iroquois had the highest respect for personal bravery. That this bravery often bordered on foolhardiness was only natural, since the greatest veneration came to the warrior who lost his life in conflict.

This respect for bravery carried over to any foe who was particularly valiant, and the next step taken by the Iroquois was a logical one to the primitive mind. It brings up a point which is not known to, and little suspected by, the average

Indian buff—that several Indian tribes, and particularly the Mohawks of the Iroquois group, were cannibalistic. If a brave enemy fell in battle, a Mohawk could gain the bravery of the dead warrior by eating his heart; if the enemy had been known for his strength or fleetness of foot, those qualities would come to the victor through eating the arms or the legs of the vanquished. From ritualistic cannibalism such as this, it was another short step to eating people just from habit and this, too, the Mohawks did. It was before this brutal and bloody backdrop that Hiawatha formed the Iroquois Confederacy; it was not a task for the easily discouraged nor for the faint of heart.

The old Iroquois creation myths say that Teheronhiawagon, the Master of Life, had created man to live at peace with his brothers. The Master of Life had further promised that, when the need was great enough, he would send a man among them to insure that the peace of Teheronhiawagon would be carried out. And as a Buddha, a Christ, or a Mohammed has stepped forward in a time of crisis, so, too, in this time stepped forward a vigorous and dedicated religious and political Mohawk leader, wearing the skins of the forest animals and having no knowledge of the existence of a world other than that small portion of New York state which he had traveled afoot and by canoe. He was a medicine man and a speaker with the spirits, and

by the Mohawks he was called Hy-ent-wat-ha, The Comber-Out of Snakes. We know him as Hiawatha.

A hero needs an antagonist, and as the wise and noble Hiawatha gained power among his people as a maker of medicine, his antagonist appeared: Atotarho, a ruthless and powerful leader of the Onondagas. Atotarho is often represented in the legends as the Evil Brother of the Master of Life himself, a strange and misshapen being who had snakes for hair like the Greek Medusa. The Onondaga personification of evil had a spy system second to none, and as Hiawatha grew in good works, Atotarho set out to destroy him.

The old stories whisper how Wanutha, the beloved wife of Hiawatha, was felled with an arrow wrought by the magic of Atotarho, and how one by one his family, all daughters, were taken from him until finally only Tonedawa, the youngest and closest to Hiawatha, was left alive. The legend of the death of Tonedawa is a particularly touching one in which, although Atotarho was the dark figure who caused it, the actual killing was done by the people who respected and revered Hiawatha.

One day, the legend relates, Tonedawa was playing with some of her friends in a clearing in the forest when a strange murmur arose among the people of the village. Turning her eyes skyward toward where all were pointing, Tonedawa saw,

flying there, Hagoks, the strange and mysterious medicine eagle of the Iroquois, a great bird with brilliant plumage.

The warriors all seized their weapons and discharged a rain of arrows at Hagoks, whose feathers made strong and wonderful medicine. Pierced by an arrow, the brilliant bird fell to the earth at the feet of Tonedawa, who stood transfixed.

The warriors came down upon the bird in an angry mob, fighting like animals with each other over the sacred feathers of Hagoks. When the sun-bird had been stripped of its plumage and the throng started to break up, they saw that, in their blind rush, they had trampled to death the beautiful young Tonedawa, last and dearest of the flesh of Hiawatha.

As a result of the tragedies which befell those close to Hiawatha, others who were ready to believe the teachings of the zealous reformer were unwilling to stand up and be counted among his followers. So Hiawatha became an exile, a wandering preacher and teacher through the lands of the Iroquois.

Homeless and friendless he went, talking of a confederation of the tribes of the Iroquois, where no man's hand would be turned against his brother. Many knew that what he spoke was true, and that the peace of Teheronhiawagon was long overdue. But the dark medicine of Atotarho held them from the way of Hiawatha. And then, when the

Mohawk was floundering in the black waters of discouragement, the Master of Life raised up a prophet for Hiawatha, and the name of the prophet was Deganoweda.

Around the figure of Deganoweda have grown strange stories—that he was the son of a virgin birth; that his mother feared the "power" of her child and tried several times to kill the infant but always he reappeared magically and in the best of health. The introspective and brooding mysticism of Deganoweda sent him, like Hiawatha, into the forest to travel and to spread the belief of his great vision, in which he had seen the Tree That Lights the World.

When the two met they complemented each other in their crusade for the changing of a way of life for the Iroquois. That indefinable part of the Indian makeup which has responded in many places and in many times to the mysticism and spiritualism of a crusade leader was awakened by the message of Hiawatha and Deganoweda.

Also closely identified with the work of these two was the figure of Jigonsasa, the Peace Queen of the Neutrals. The Neutrals were a tribe of Iroquoian stock who lived on the neck of land between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, and kept themselves aloof from their more warlike southern and eastern brothers. Their country was traditionally a land of sanctuary, hence their name.

Jigonsasa was believed by the Iroquois to have

been descended directly from Ataensic, the Sky Mother, and figured in influencing the ro-yah-ners, or ruling women, of the tribe. The society of these people was strongly matriarchal; family kinship and clan lines were traced through the mother, and the ro-yah-ners held the power of appointing sachems and of removing them from office at their pleasure.

One by one the powerful tribes of the Iroquois joined in the crusade for peace until finally only the Onondagas, under the evil Atotarho, stood in the way of complete unity. The beautiful myths of the conversion of Atotarho are richly entwined with the symbolism of a deeply spiritual people. His twisted and misshapen body was transformed, his monster's claws became the feet of a man, and the snakes were brushed from his hair by the personal medicine of Hiawatha. This act marked the greatest triumph of Hiawatha and was symbolic of the triumph of good over evil; from it, of course, comes the meaning of his name, The Comber-Out of Snakes.

Thus the greatness of the Five Nations came into being; Atotarho, the great antagonist, became the first Chief Sachem; and a union of the Mohawks, the Cayugas, the Senecas, the Oneidas, and the Onondagas was effected. This was the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, or the People of the Longhouse.

With the crowning of Atotarho as Chief Sachem

came the impressive oath of office, today set down in the Constitution of the Iroquois:

We do now crown you with the sacred emblem of the antlers, the sign of your lordship. You shall now become a mentor of the people of the Five Nations. The thickness of your skin shall be seven spans, for you shall be proof against anger, offensive action, and criticism. With endless patience you shall carry out your duty, and your firmness shall be tempered with tenderness for your people. Neither anger nor fear shall find lodgment in your mind, and all your words and actions shall be marked with calm deliberation. In all your official acts, self-interest shall be cast aside. You shall look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view, not only the present but the coming generations—the unborn of the future Nation.

Poetry and myth we might tend to dismiss as the creations of highly imaginative savage minds, but there is incontrovertible evidence that behind the Ho-de-no-sau-nee lay a logical, clear, incisive mentality which created a dramatic and revolutionary change in the social system of the Iroquois. An observer need take but one look at the structure which evolved within the lifetime of Hiawatha to realize that here was a giant figure in the field of socio-political unity.

Very revealing is the fact that, in the federation as it was created and as it has been handed down

to the present day, the name of the man chosen as the head of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee must carry the title of Atotarho! What kind of politicking did Hiawatha indulge in to win Atotarho's support of his plan? Did he offer his Onondaga opponent the honor (a rather empty one, by the way) of being head man in exchange for the membership of the Onondagas in the Five Nations? It seems reasonable to think that this is the way it was done, rather than by combing the snakes out of Atotarho's hair.

The Onondaga village, being centrally located in the Iroquois territory, was also made the seat of government; the Onondagas became known as The Keepers of the Council Fire. The sacred fire was tended carefully by the women and was always kept burning. The Mohawks, easternmost of the Iroquois, were the Keepers of the Eastern Gate; next were the Oneidas, the People of the Great Stone; the Onondagas; the Cayugas, the People from the Place of the Locust; and on the western extreme were the Senecas, the Keepers of the Western Door. Together they comprised the People of the Longhouse, and their longhouse stretched from the Hudson River on the east westward to Lake Erie.

To the Iroquois, who were used to living in the great communal houses, this theme of the longhouse was more than a symbol—it was an actuality. One of the clearest statements of the tribal

closeness comes from a Seneca sachem Do-ne-ho-ga-wa (Keeper of the Western Door) who, together with the scholar Lewis H. Morgan, published in 1851 the *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee or Iroquois.* He says: "We constitute but one house, we five Iroquois nations, we build but one fire, and we have through all of time dwelt under one roof." The words of this Seneca sachem we should consider as dependably accurate—he earned a name for accuracy. After all, he later served as military secretary to Ulysses S. Grant in the Civil War and he was at Appomattox on that Palm Sunday of April 9, 1865. It was the Keeper of the Western Door "who, at Grant's orders, made interlineations in the penciled original and then transcribed in a fair hand the document that ended the Civil War." He was perhaps better known in the white world as Brigadier-General Ely Samuel Parker.

Within each tribe, selection of the representatives to the Great Council rested with the ro-yah-ners, the wise women. Each tribe had its appointed number of representatives, or sachems; the Senecas, eight; the Mohawks and Oneidas, nine each; the Cayugas, ten; and the Onondagas, fourteen. These fifty sachems, wearing the antlers of their office, met in the great Longhouse of the Onondagas and pondered the grave decisions which were necessary concerning both intratribal and intertribal problems. To reach a decision the delegates voted as representatives of a tribal unit and not as

individuals. The Onondagas, as moderators, would cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie.

War between the fraternal tribes of the organization was outlawed, and the separate tribes were forbidden from individual warfare with nonmembers. If a tribe felt that it had reason to take up the warclub it had to show just cause at a general council, and if the vote were affirmative the Five Nations were obligated to fight as a single tribe.

Probably more important from the point of view of the humanitarian were the reforms effected within the tribes. The vicious blood feuds which had shaken the Iroquois were categorically outlawed; if a member was killed, a stiff fine of ten yards of wampum was assessed against the killer, but the relatives of the victim had to accept payment of the fine in place of a revenge slaying. The practice of cannibalism was forbidden and was apparently stamped out immediately except for certain ceremonial practices.

All of the rules and regulations which governed the body politic were worked into the elaborate wampum belts of the Iroquois. The intricate figures within them were devices which served to prompt the memories of the sachems who could "read" the wampums. The belts were kept by the Onondagas, and were guarded as carefully as we guard the original copy of our Constitution today.

With the acceptance of the laws of Hiawatha, the time of the Great Peace came to the Iroquois. In

place of five bickering bands of forest fighters each seemingly bent upon its own destruction, a federation arose which struck terror into their ancient Algonquin enemies. Standing together they were invincible, and at the art and science of forest warfare they were superb. They practiced that kind of war popularized by James Fenimore Cooper, and despite their high humanitarian ideals among their own people, no Indians were more savage and bloodthirsty against an outside enemy in battle.

The Algonquins shook with fear at the thought of standing against the league; it is interesting to observe that we know the Iroquois today by a corruption of the Algonquin term for them, *Iriakiow*, meaning "rattlesnakes." But the legends speak of the yearning of Hiawatha to extend the Great Peace far beyond the forest home of his own people and to carry the message of the universality of man to all of those who fought against the Ho-de-no-sau-nee. His dream was of disciples to carry the message eastward into the rising sun and westward into the setting sun—to preach and to teach a red gospel of peace, and to carry the principles of the peace of Teheronhiawagon to all men wherever men lived.

Hiawatha and Deganoweda, if we can believe that legends are woven around a kernel of truth, coursed southward and westward for hundreds of miles, bearing the white wampums of peace and urging other tribes to consider brotherhood in

place of barbarism. Hiawatha's sacred white canoe appeared upon the waterways of the Ohio country and southward to the Carolinas. (If the real Hiawatha had a real white canoe, it must have been of Algonquin make. The Iroquois were never builders of the white birch-bark canoe, but worked principally with red elm instead. Their canoe makers were decidedly inferior to the craftsmen among their Algonquin enemies; an Algonquin canoe was prized highly.) But the theme of Gawao, the White Canoe, runs strongly through the legends and is inextricably bound up with the various versions of Hiawatha's passing.

According to one of these tales of the death of Hiawatha, ten winters had passed since the meeting of the first council. Deganoweda had already preceded him into the world which exists above the stars and the Great Peace was firmly established; Hiawatha's work was done. One day as he set out in Gawao to journey among his brothers, his mind turned to thoughts of the extension of the Great Peace to all the tribes of red men.

As he meditated, the spirit of death touched him lightly on the shoulder and he knew that he was called by Gadowaas, the Soul-Keeper. The great belt of Gadowaas made up the Milky Way, so the Iroquois believed, and as each soul traveled on its last journey to the place above the Star-World, a star would be fastened to the belt of the traveler to light his path. Then, the journey safely completed,

the star would be returned to its place in the belt of the Soul-Keeper.

When it was the appointed hour for the journey of Hiawatha, Gadowaas chose his brightest star and fastened it carefully to the belt of Hiawatha so that the whole world would know that a great soul was passing. Safely arrived in the place above the stars, Hiawatha was at last joined with the Master of Life Teheronhiawagon, with his Great Fathers, and with his soul-brother Deganoweda. Best of all was his reunion with his family, particularly his dearest daughter Tonedawa and the wife of his flesh, Wanutha.

So, say the old tales, Hiawatha was gathered to his ancestors. He had walked among the People of the Longhouse and he had showed them the way to the Great Peace. His role in the creation of the league was a sacred one—too sacred for his name and title to pass down to ordinary mortals. But the all-pervading spirit of Hiawatha sat at every meeting of the full council after his death, and the presence of both Hiawatha and Deganoweda was always recognized. At the meetings of the Iroquois council held today in Canada, the chief sachem is still called Atotarho and the empty seats are still reserved for Hiawatha and for Deganoweda.

The acceptance of the high principles of the Iroquois by the neighboring tribes was perhaps never given a fair chance because of the intrusion of the Europeans. The whites got their first in-

formation about the Iroquois from the Algonquins who were not yet converted, and that information consisted of dark warnings as to what the Europeans might expect from the people called "rattlesnakes." Since the whites were looking for the vicious side of the Iroquois nature, the Indians graciously obliged by showing them that side.

While the English settlers were clinging to the New England coastline in the first half of the seventeenth century, the French were probing deeper into the wilderness along the St. Lawrence River. It was there that the Iroquois first looked down the white man's gun barrel, and the Ho-de-no-sau-nee would never forget that the French were the first to fire upon them. This hatred of the French made them the natural allies of the English, an advantage which the British exploited fully.

As the French and English conflict flowed first one way and then the other, with a comparative handful of men engaged in a fluid struggle for the possession of the eastern half of the continent, the position of the Iroquois remained constant. They were the mortal enemies to the French; therefore, they were blood brothers to the English. This was an alliance which would last until well after the Revolutionary War, and it would cause the lifting of hundreds of American scalps along the Mohawk Valley during our fight for independence.

In 1715 the Iroquois took in a branch of their southern cousins, the Tuscaroras; the Five Nations

became Six, and from time to time the thinking men in the Americas would pause to consider the forces at work within the federation. By 1744 the problem of colonial adjustment to the Indian problem was a pressing one, and in that year a council was held between the representatives of the Six Nations and the colonies of Pennsylvania and Connecticut. An Oneida sachem voiced the thought that had been running through the minds of some of the white representatives. He suggested that, since the league had worked so well for the Iroquois, an organization patterned along similar lines might be a possible solution to the many problems which beset the young and struggling colonies.

In 1754 the first formal proposal for a political union of the American colonies was made at the Albany Convention. Representatives from seven colonies attended, and although no agreement was reached, this convention laid the groundwork for the later Constitutional Convention which united the colonies. The leading figure at the Albany Convention was Benjamin Franklin; his remarks, in pleading the cause of union, held up the Iroquois as an example:

It would be a strange thing if Six Nations of ignorant savages should be capable of forming a scheme for such an union and be able to execute it in such a manner as that it has subsisted ages and appears indissoluble; and yet that a like union should be impractica-

ble for ten or a dozen English colonies, to whom it is more necessary and must be more advantageous, and who cannot be supposed to want an equal understanding of their interests.

Franklin's good advice came to nothing tangible at that particular time; apparently the "Six Nations of ignorant savages" were more capable of forming such a scheme and of executing it than were the colonists in 1754. The seeds of the idea, however, had been sown; and deliberate attention of the representatives of the various colonies had been called to the existence of the constitutional body of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee. The thought of political union became uppermost in many minds; it seems logical to assume that a long and searching look was given to the fabric of the Indian organization.

As we look back from the vantage-point of a twentieth-century view, it doesn't really matter whether the Ho-de-no-sau-nee was established in 1450 or 1570, nor does it matter whether the sacred white canoe of Hiawatha was guided on its Sky Journey much as the funeral barge of King Arthur found its way to the wondrous island of Avalon. The important thing is that the so-called "savages" of New York had developed a remarkably sophisticated type of social and political order, and that Hy-ent-wat-ha was the central figure in the establishment of that order.

Looking further beneath the surface workings of the political structure, we discover some remarkable things. It was a structure based upon a respect for the rights of the individual; it was truly representative in form; it functioned upon compromise in council, but a decision reached was final and binding on all parties; its total aim was one of peace among the nations of red America. Where the Ho-de-no-sau-nee would have led the Indians had it been given time to develop to its fullest can never be known, but certainly it was the most democratic form of government in the world at the time of its creation.

Perhaps it is more than coincidence that the free government of the United States was born and was nourished alongside the Federation of the Iroquois. Perhaps the voices of Hiawatha and of Deganoweda spoke down through the centuries to the listening ears of Franklin and Jefferson and Washington and Hamilton; and perhaps, in part, the architecture of man's greatest government rose upon the framework of that Ho-de-no-sau-nee fathered by Hy-ent-wat-ha, the Comber-Out of snakes.

2. THE BATTLE OF THE THOUSAND SLAIN

LITTLE TURTLE, THE MIAMI

(1752–1812)

THE DAY the golden-haired Custer fell at the Little Big Horn with about two hundred and twenty-five of the cream of the Seventh Cavalry around him has been dramatized as the biggest single victory the Indians ever scored against the army. But this is far from the truth: where Custer lost one man, St. Clair lost almost three, killed on the field of battle or missing and presumed dead, and no one will ever know how many of the seriously wounded died as a result of the battle.

It happened in 1791. An old Indian-fighter named George Washington was President of the United States, and a Miami war leader named Little Turtle (Michikiniqua) roamed the wood-

lands of the Ohio country. He was heir to an assembly of tribes led by Pontiac thirty years earlier—a confederation of Miamis, Delawares, Shawnees, Potawatomis, Ottawas, Chippewas, and Wyandots.

Little Turtle's warriors had heard their fathers speak of the great days of the uprising against the white men at mid-century—the days of the siege of the fort at Detroit—and of the fall of Presqu'isle and Le Boeuf and Venango. And they had heard a hundred times the story of Michillimackinac, and how the English had learned that day never to let down their guard in the fierce wilderness that was America.

It had happened this way: it was a hot summer's day in June of 1763, and it was King George III's birthday. The troopers were taking it easy. Besides, they had been invited to watch a game of Indian ball to be played in the open ground in front of the fort. All the warriors showed up unarmed, accompanied by a throng of blanket-draped squaws.

As the game got under way the excitement grew. The fort gates were opened and the soldiers gathered outside to watch. Suddenly from a knot of players the ball arched up and soared toward the open gates, with the players in loud pursuit. As they dashed past the group of women, each handed a gun or tomahawk from under her blanket to a

racing brave. The shouts of the players turned to the fiercer blood-cry of killers, and the Indians were in the fort before the soldiers could stand to their guns. In a few minutes the English were dead.

All Indian boys in the Northwest Territory knew this story of the game of Indian ball at Michillimackinac from their infancy. Their fathers had taken part in it, and they were resolved to be equally worthy of the name of warrior. The enemy was different this time—Americans instead of English—but by the time the Miamis and their friends were finished in the 1790's, Michillimackinac would look like a Sunday school picnic.

This time the Indians had a better leader than Pontiac—they had Little Turtle. He was smart, he was tough, he was tricky. St. Clair had already been warned by no less a personage than the President himself against the danger of a surprise attack, because a year earlier General Harmer had been chopped up by the same cast of characters. Before it was all finished, the wily Miami would cause the court-martial of one general and the resignation of a second, and he would also school a young Shawnee warrior from whom the whites would hear later—Tecumseh.

Born the son of a Miami chief and a Mohican mother, Little Turtle was about thirty-five years old when the Congressional Act of 1787 ceded

"forever" to the Indians the lands northwest of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi. By this time Little Turtle had shaken off the onus of a Mohican mother (genealogy of many of the Indians was traced through the matriarchal line; he was technically a Mohican and not eligible for leadership among the Miamis). He had a very wise head on his young shoulders, however, and the elders of the tribe realized that here was no ordinary young man. They ignored his blood and made him a war chief.

The virile young republic of the United States of America was already looking to the West; that was where the land and the opportunity lay. So the settlers came crowding into the Northwest Territory, crossing the Ohio and establishing settlements in the face of growing Indian opposition. And formidable opposition it was soon to become.

No one would say that the Indian, as a fighter, lacked personal courage in combat. He was fearless, he could endure, and he was fighting for his home. His weakness lay in the fact that he was not a tactician, nor did he often reach the point where he would submit to the discipline necessary to form a hard corps of "regular" warriors.

The war chiefs who were able to apply some kind of military tactics to their engagements were few, and prominent among them was Little Turtle. Where the Indians of both the woods and plains

relied chiefly on attacking in force, splitting the defenders into small groups, and rolling over the opposition in this way, Little Turtle was one of the rare leaders who could make his braves stand and fight against the white man in the white man's way.

As the hated invaders surged across the Ohio, building homes and settlements and cutting wagon roads through the hunting grounds, Little Turtle turned to his neighboring tribes and spoke to them in the same way as had Pontiac a generation before him. With the help of Blue Jacket of the Shawnees and Buckongahelos of the Delawares, the confederation was cemented and made its resolution to oppose the white man openly, to defend the ancestral hunting grounds, or to die in the attempt.

It was now out in the open; every Indian village pulsed with the preparations for war. Weapons were readied and at night the braves made their boasts and chanted their war songs. The quiet but deadly tomahawks were raised over the prone bodies of settlers and travelers throughout the length of the Ohio, and the scalp sticks grew full with trophies.

By 1790 there was no longer any pretense on the part of the whites, either. George Washington ordered an army into the field to subdue Little Turtle and to give protection to the border country.

Washington would have preferred peace, but not peace at any price.

Charged with the subduing of the Indians was General Josiah Harmer, who assembled an army of more than a thousand men and set out from Fort Washington, where the city of Cincinnati now stands. The army was in high spirits, looking upon the venture as a gay lark. The bulk was militiamen, recently in the service and inexperienced in border warfare. Seasoning the green troops were three hundred and sixty regulars, many of whom had stood through the Revolutionary War and knew tough going when they saw it.

By mid-September Harmer had made his way cross-country to the main Miami village, which he found deserted. Sure that the Indians had fled in panic before so formidable a force, the army destroyed the encampment and pushed on with even greater zest, anxious to overtake the fleeing Miamis.

So certain of his ground was Harmer that he detached one hundred and eighty men to press on ahead of the main force. Under the command of Captain Armstrong, a soldier with considerable Indian experience behind him, the detachment moved quickly out in pursuit of the elusive Indians.

This was what Little Turtle had been waiting for. As Armstrong's command rushed forward, the still

October air was broken by the sharp cry of a fox; at this given signal a ring of steel closed around Armstrong, and the Indians poured a deadly fire into the Americans.

"Take cover! Take cover!" bellowed Armstrong, but it was too late. There was no time to form any kind of a defense; raw panic seized the troopers, and those who were still alive turned to flee. But they were caught in a tight noose—it was every man for himself. Armstrong himself leaped into a swampy mire, headlong—and there he lay for hours with just enough of his face showing to allow him to breathe.

Meanwhile, back at the camp, the noise of the engagement reached Harmer. What went through the general's mind no one will ever know, but he ordered his men into defensive position and left Armstrong to shift for himself.

When Armstrong dragged himself out of the muck that night and found his way back to Harmer, he discovered that his whole command had been wiped out. After receiving Armstrong's report, Harmer ordered a retreat for his main force after detaching three hundred and sixty men under Colonel John Hardin to go back and "punish the Indians."

At this point Little Turtle proved himself a crafty tactician. Hardin expected an attack, of course. How was Little Turtle to throw him off

guard? When Hardin's force reached the scene of Armstrong's bloody debacle, the soldiers, bent on revenge, saw a small band of warriors on the field. The warriors made a tentative thrust at the whites, fought sharply for a few minutes, and then broke. Hardin's mounted command gave pursuit; his foot soldiers, sensing victory, moved forward on the double.

The story was repeated—the sharp cry of the fox, the blistering fire from the red ambushers, and Hardin's attack wilted. His men had enough presence of mind, however, to keep some semblance of order so that the force was able to break through the ring and retreat toward the main body of Harmer's troops.

When Hardin returned, minus about twenty-five per cent of his command, he found Harmer packed up and in full retreat. Harmer's belly was full of this kind of fighting, so back to Fort Washington he scurried posthaste, there to face a court-martial board for his miserable showing against Little Turtle.

What strings Harmer pulled to keep from being drummed out of the service we cannot determine, except that it is indeed difficult to hang a court-martial conviction on a general. During the trial Harmer revealed that he had not gone to Armstrong's aid because he didn't want to take a chance on having Little Turtle annihilate his whole

army. Even more astounding was his claim, repeated several times, that his whole campaign had been successful because the Indians had not pursued him after the attack on Colonel Hardin's troops!

Whatever the reasons may be, the court-martial board found him guiltless and he was absolved of all charges brought against him. Within a few months, however, Harmer resigned his commission and turned his back on the military, his whole career broken by a red "savage" who had outgeneraled, out-thought, and out-fought him.

The news of Harmer's stunning defeat shocked the government, which realized that as long as Little Turtle stood in the way, the Northwest Territory would remain closed. General Arthur St. Clair, who a scant four years before had been president of the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation and who was one of the most prominent men of his time, was chosen to lead the army that was to wipe out Little Turtle or press him beyond the Mississippi. He was currently serving as Governor of the Northwest Territory, and knew—or should have known—the country and the problem.

Summoned to the capital at Philadelphia by Washington, St. Clair discussed the seriousness of the situation with the President. The two old comrades-in-arms understood each other perfectly, and

when St. Clair prepared to leave, Washingon had short parting advice:

"Beware of a surprise! The Indians have a leader of great bravery in Little Turtle and have proved that they can fight with great strength. You know how the Indians fight us. I repeat it! *Beware of a surprise!*"

Remembering these words of caution, St. Clair set about the task of raising an army that would break the back of the Miami Confederacy and secure the rich and fertile lands for white settlement.

The raising of an army in those days was a rather elastic process. Around a hard corps of regulars was gathered the militia, and the unseasoned militia was often a strangely assorted group—youths who flocked to the colors for the adventure of fighting Indians; farm boys tired of following the plow; the floaters and the grifters on the dodge from the law; backwoodsmen, tough scrappers but men who wouldn't take discipline worth a damn—they all signed up for glory and for $2.10 a month.

By early summer of 1791 St. Clair had put together such an army, numbering about 2,000 men. Serving as St. Clair's leg man was General Richard Butler, young, able, and enthusiastic. The burden of years was upon St. Clair, his rheumatism bothered him, and he suffered from the gout. But he

planned well and thoroughly, and as summer waned the army moved out from the Ohio and pushed northward, probing for Little Turtle.

By the time St. Clair brought his army to the march, the usual rash of desertions had set in, and he finally hit the trail with approximately 1,500 effectives. In an effort to reduce the desertion rate the general very unwisely gave permission for some two hundred of the soldiers' wives to accompany the army. It is not difficult to imagine the hardships which this would work on a body of fighting men. Petty bickerings became the normal state of affairs when tackling the problem of accommodations. And some of the wives bestowed their favors somewhat freely upon others than their wedded husbands; when the wedded husbands heard of this, skulls cracked and the blood flowed freely.

Add to St. Clair's woes the fact that the regulars and the militia never got along well together. There was never any overt trouble between them and they would work side by side during the day, but each group set up its own camp at night. So the army that plunged deeper into the tangled Ohio woodlands was torn with factions as it moved closer and closer to its rendezvous with destruction.

Almost from the moment the army was out of sight of Fort Jefferson, the Indians hit in small

forces along its flanks. These light attacks were all part of Little Turtle's grand strategy of battle. They were designed to make St. Clair feel that the Miami Confederacy was a myth, and that the red men were up to their usual game of every group for itself. The handling of the marauders was entrusted to an ambitious young Shawnee warrior, Tecumseh, twenty-three years old and anxious to win his eagle feathers. So St. Clair was lulled into the same false sense of security that had been the undoing of Harmer. He saw only as many Indians as Little Turtle intended for him to see, and the rest of the fighting force stayed out of sight.

In the meantime Little Turtle perfected his plan for the massive attack. He carefully laid out his plan of battle and entrusted certain areas of the field to specific war chiefs, prominent among them Blue Jacket, Buckongahelos, and Tecumseh. Little Turtle told his warriors ahead of time that he did not intend to lead the attack; he was going to mastermind the battle from the rear as the white generals did. How strong a hold he had upon his men is evident from the fact that they accepted his word and did his bidding, although for centuries the Indian war chief had been traditionally foremost in the actual combat.

So the trap was baited and set. All that remained was for St. Clair to put his force in a position for the springing.

The date was November 3, 1791; the place was the army campground on a then-unnamed creek later called St. Mary's, a tributary of the Wabash River and twenty-nine miles north of Fort Jefferson. Following their usual custom, the regulars and the militia were split, camped across the creek from each other. There had been no nuisance attacks for a couple of days; all was quiet. The smoldering black eyes of the Indian scouts saw everything, and word was taken quickly to Little Turtle.

Little Turtle listened to the scouts, to the tale of the location of the enemy, to the story of the creek which flowed between the militia and the regulars. He listened carefully, and nodded. The time had come. Quickly he laid out his instructions.

"When the dawn lights the sky we strike. Go quickly and quietly; make no noise. Take the positions I have told you about. Surround the white men. When you can see down your rifles is the time to kill. Blue Jacket will give the cry of the fox. I have spoken."

During the night, fourteen hundred warriors took their places on the line. There was no disorder, no fumbling in the dark, no alarm. Silent as death they came, the waiting time almost over. Little Turtle had said this was the time and place, so time and place it must be.

A light snow began to fall; the Indians lay in the

snow with the patience born of centuries. Sentries on duty paced back and forth and swore at the weather and stopped to warm their hands at the campfires. The Indians waited.

Soldiers muttered in their sleep as the cold seeped in through the blankets. St. Clair's rheumatism was worse in cold weather; he mumbled at the fate that had sent him to lead a ragtag army into the wilderness to stamp out a will-o'-the-wisp Indian confederacy that had apparently dissolved. He turned over painfully and sought sleep again. The Indians waited.

The snow stopped. Sentries continued to pace, to cast quick glances into the dark surrounding forest and longing looks back at the campfires. The sky started to lighten in the east, imperceptibly. Dawn was slow in coming, but the light grew. The camp was ready to stir.

Blue Jacket, the wily old Shawnee, sighted down the rifle barrel and caught the dim figure of a sentry in his sights. It was time. Over the camp by the little creek rang the short sharp bark of a fox. The trap was sprung.

Flame spurted from the rifles; the staccato yelp of the Miamis, the eerie wail of the Shawnees, the deeper and more gutteral war cry of the Chippewas shocked the camp into a wild state of turmoil. The Indians appeared to rise up out of the ground. Soldiers were caught half-dressed and unarmed,

and Little Turtle's first rush at the militia overran them. In terror they turned to cross the creek and join forces with the regulars. In the poor light and in the hysteria of the moment, the regulars fired on anything they could see—scores of the militia were cut down in midstream by volleys from their own comrades.

After the first frightening shock was over, the regulars formed a makeshift defense line and stood to their guns. Generals St. Clair and Butler were everywhere among their men, rallying them to the task of fighting off the attack. But Little Turtle had chosen his ground well; the soldiers were caught in the open and the Indians had cover. The murderous fire of the attackers raked the camp time and again; St. Clair had three horses shot out from under him and took eight bullets through his clothing, although miraculously none touched him. Butler was less lucky; he receipted for a bullet through the abdomen and another in the arm, and lost his life to a scalping warrior.

By midmorning, it was plain to St. Clair that if he held his men where they were nothing could save the complete annihilation of his command. To break out of the trap would be murderous, but there was no alternative. So he gathered his force together and they struck fiercely out of the pocket where they had been pinned down. They broke

through the red ring on the first wild charge and were in the open.

Fort Jefferson and safety lay twenty-nine tortuous miles away. The troops had already been viciously handled by Little Turtle—they didn't want to fight any more. What set out to be a retreat became a rout—a mad rush on the part of the survivors to reach Fort Jefferson alive. The warriors came after them, and each of the twenty-nine miles was marked with the bodies of those who fell at the hands of the victory-drunk braves.

When the gates of Fort Jefferson closed behind the survivors, the losses were counted. The carnage had been staggering. Killed or missing and presumed dead were 38 officers and 593 men for an immediate total of 631; another 21 officers and 242 men were wounded, of whom a substantial percentage later died as a result of their wounds. This made the casualty list mount to an overwhelming 894 men killed, missing, or wounded. Add to this 56 wives who lost their lives in the attack, and the grand total is 950 whites who felt the might of Little Turtle and the Miami Confederacy that day of November 4, 1791.

In fact, the United States army was mauled worse in this battle than it had been throughout the whole Revolutionary War—none of the British generals was able to hang that kind of loss on the

federal troops in any of the pitched battles of the Revolution.

General Arthur St. Clair returned to Philadelphia, there to give a personal account of the battle to George Washington. At least St. Clair was saved the ignominy of a court-martial but the outcome was the same. He, too, resigned his commission in the army, humbled by the military genius of the Miami chief known to his own people as Michikiniqua.

For the Indians, the Ohio country was safe from the whites for the time being. The eventual outcome was in the cards, however, and combine as they would and fight as they would, the Indians could not stem the westward surge.

Washington was understandably loathe to send another army into the field in the face of what had already happened, at least not without first attempting a peaceful settlement. So the year of 1792 was one of negotiation.

The services of Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea), the influential Mohawk chieftain, were sought by Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox; it was hoped that he would lend his influence to the side of the government. Brant hedged, although the Seneca orator Red Jacket was strong in his support of a peaceful settlement.

In a belated effort to gain clear title to the lands in question, the government offered to pay the

Indians an immediate cash sum, plus regular annuity payments. The reply of the red men to this offer by the peace commission was interesting indeed. What they said, in effect, was this:

"We really don't need the money; all we want is our native land to live on. White men need the money more than we do. Why don't you divide this money among the settlers for abandoning their claims to our land? Then everyone will be happy and peace will be restored."

The Indians could not understand the white man's hunger for owning, individually and completely, a piece of land. The talks broke up and the chiefs went home, and George Washington was faced with the task of selecting a commander who could whip his men into fighting shape and break the power of the Miami Confederacy. This time he picked a winner.

"Mad Anthony" Wayne loved a rough-and-tumble fight and he loved rough-and-tumble men under his command. Further, he had that rare quality of making them take orders and like it.

Starting to assemble his army in mid-1793, he whipped his men into shape for a year. He drove them, swore at them, praised them, and made them into a first-class fighting outfit. He wintered eighty miles north of the Ohio, where he was kept under close scrutiny by the Indians. Because of his

constant watchfulness, he gained the name of The Chief Who Never Sleeps.

For one last time Little Turtle showed his superior sense of military strategy. He gathered reports from his scouts, learned all that he could of Wayne's numbers and his extensive preparations. Then he called his counselors together.

"Here," he said in effect, "is a different kind of a fighter. He has many, many good men. He watches constantly. We cannot surprise him. If we cannot surprise him, we cannot defeat him. Let us counsel with The Chief Who Never Sleeps. Now is the time to talk of peace."

At this suggestion, the heretofore loyal followers of Little Turtle turned against him. They accused him of growing faint-hearted; giddy with their earlier successes, they deposed their great leader and put Blue Jacket in command of the planning to meet and defeat Wayne.

"Mad Anthony" moved out in the summer of 1794, locating the place where St. Clair had met such a humiliating defeat. In Wayne's words, "Five hundred skull bones lay in the space of 350 yards. From thence, five miles on, the woods were strewn with skeletons, knapsacks, and other debris."

As the army drove deeper into hostile territory, the flanking attacks under Tecumseh were mounted once more. Here Tecumseh first crossed swords with a soldier who was to haunt him until the Shaw-

nee's death almost a score of years later—a young lieutenant, at this time, named William Henry Harrison. A personal contest would be waged between the two until the Battle of the Thames in 1813, when the Shawnee would choose to go into his last fight wearing the breechcloth of the Indian warrior in place of his uniform of a British general, and following the battle he would lie forever in an unmarked grave. From that victory Harrison would make political opportunity, and "Old Tippecanoe" would one day sit in the White House.

Blue Jacket was a fine fighter in the Indian tradition of guerrilla tactics, but he did not have anything of Little Turtle's grasp of bold strategy. With Little Turtle in the ranks as a common warrior, Blue Jacket, commanding fourteen hundred braves and outnumbered two-to-one, elected to hold a defensive position close to the Maumee Rapids, a few miles south of the present city of Toledo. The Indian was never at his best in a daylight encounter under these conditions; his forte was hit-and-run. Blue Jacket chose a defense line in an extensive tangle of downed trees left in the wake of a tornado, and here Wayne caught up with him.

The Chief Who Never Sleeps sized up the field with a fighting general's eye, and on August 29, 1794, he sent his men in. The issue was never in doubt. With the infantry digging hard into the

center of the line and with the cavalry folding back both flanks, the Indians were soon overrun; in three quarters of an hour Wayne had assured the complete collapse of the Miami Confederacy at the Battle of Fallen Timbers.

Once "Mad Anthony" had them on the run, he kept them there. He moved through the Ohio country burning the villages and the cornfields, driving the Indians to the very doors of the numerous English trading posts that were still dotted throughout the unsettled country. No doubt the English had encouraged the Miamis in their attacks on the Americans—this issue would remain a burning one for nearly a score of years until it would be settled by the War of 1812—but the traders dared not give any overt help to the fleeing Indians in the face of Wayne and his army of 3,000 men. So the doors of the trading posts were closed to the hostiles, and the winter of 1794-95 was a long, cold, bitter one for them.

The following summer—the summer of 1795—the leaders who had been responsible for the uprising were brought together for the signing of a peace treaty. The pattern was a familiar one: the member tribes of the Miami Confederacy were asked to cede away the land for which they had fought so valiantly. The discussions were long and involved, and through all of the conferences Little Turtle sat quietly and stolidly, saying only a few

words from time to time as to what should or should not be done. His people were broken, and he knew it.

Finally it was time for the signing, for the giving away of the rich Ohio country that had been a homeland of the red men for centuries. One by one the chiefs came forward and put their marks on the paper. Again Little Turtle stood by impassively, watching his comrades-in-arms agree to raise no more the war hatchet against the Americans. When all the others had come forward and signed, Little Turtle took up the pen and made his mark saying:

"I am the last to sign it, and I will be the last to break it."

He kept his word. When his young lieutenant Tecumseh started to rally the red men a decade later, Little Turtle took no part in the great crusade which reached, at one time, from Canada on the north to the Creek country in Georgia. Had the organizational powers of Tecumseh, then at the height of his strength, been joined with the tactical sense of Little Turtle, conceivably the whole movement might have taken on a different complexion.

The men against whom Little Turtle had fought knew the caliber of his military genius. When the great leader died at Fort Wayne in 1812, he was buried with the full military honors due an officer,

the recognition which fighting men pay to a valiant foe who has proved himself worthy of the highest respect.

Perhaps the greatest honor came from the man who would become President, William Henry Harrison. He had served as aide-de-camp to Wayne at Fallen Timbers; he would be a major-general when he would crush Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames in 1813. Harrison was a good military man, and in a letter to a personal friend came this tribute to Michikiniqua of the Miamis:

"'A safe leader is better than a bold one.' This maxim was a great favorite of Caesar Augustus . . . who . . . was, I believe, inferior as a warrior to Little Turtle. . . ."

3. THE MIRACLE OF THE TALKING LEAVES
SEQUOYAH, THE CHEROKEE
(1770?-1843)

IN AN obscure Georgia village called New Echota, a four-page newspaper, damp and smelling of printer's ink, made its first press run on February 21, 1828. There would seem to be nothing very startling in this simple fact, but there was—something very startling indeed. That newspaper was the *Cherokee Phoenix,* and its maiden run marked the publication of the first Indian paper in a native tongue to be printed anywhere; it marked a giant step forward in the progress of a very intelligent and a very alert people; and it marked an almost impossible personal triumph for an illiterate, uneducated Cherokee genius named Sequoyah. Not a fighter in the usual sense, he was the dogged foe of ignorance wher-

ever he encountered it, and his classic struggle against age-old tradition was contested not with weapons but in the minds of men. His is one of the most inspiring of all stories of man's slow and painful climb out of darkness toward light.

Both his ancestry and his early history are clouded; born somewhere between 1760 and 1775 in the Cherokee village of Taskigi, Tennessee, he was the half-breed son of a Cherokee girl and a white man. His father is usually identified as George Gist (sometimes Giss, Guest, Guess), a rather shadowy vagabond of a German trader among the Cherokees. A more logical paternal figure for Sequoyah, however, emerges in the person of Nathaniel Gist, long a hunter and explorer in the Cherokee country. That Nathaniel Gist was on the best of terms with the Indians is readily established—in fact, he got along with them so well that, when the Revolutionary War broke out and he applied for a commission in the newly formed army, it took an official inquiry by the general assembly of Virginia to clear him of charges that he had helped the Cherokees in their attacks upon the whites. He was cleared and was appointed a colonel in the Continental Army by its commander and his personal friend, George Washington.

Following Nathaniel Gist's marriage to Judith Cary Bell in 1783, he sired several daughters who

married well: Sarah became the wife of a United States Senator from Kentucky named Jesse Bledsoe; Anne married a doctor, Joseph Boswell; Maria was wed to a well-to-do Lexington businessman, Benjamin Gratz; and a fourth daughter, Eliza, married the prominent editor of the Washington *Globe,* Francis Preston Blair, later a high-ranking advisor in President Andrew Johnson's "Kitchen Cabinet." To this latter couple were born Francis Preston Blair, Jr., United States Senator from Missouri and a brigadier-general in the Civil War, and Montgomery Blair, postmaster-general in the cabinet of Abraham Lincoln.

The son of Montgomery Blair, Major Gist Blair, inherited the historic old Blair House on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., which came into prominence when President Harry Truman occupied it from 1948 to 1952 while the White House was being renovated. Major Gist Blair has gone on record with a statement that, when he was a youngster visiting some of his Gratz kin in Kentucky, he was there told that the Gratz line accepted Nathaniel Gist as the father of Sequoyah. And in view of the remarkable achievements of the half-breed Cherokee, it seems more reasonable to assume that he sprang from a family of such accomplishment. He would, then, have been the uncle of Brigadier-General Francis Preston Blair, Jr., and of Postmaster-General Montgomery Blair.

Regardless of his lineage, he was born into a Cherokee village and knew nothing but that way of life. His mother was Wut-teh of the Red Paint Clan, and from the Red Paint People came the conjurers and the casters of spells. Many of his tribesmen would come to believe that Sequoyah was a maker of bad medicine and the cause of much of his people's suffering before they would understand the greatness of the man and of his work.

As a youth the young Indian showed a marked ability to work with his hands; he was a gifted craftsman and silversmith, with the infinite patience and attention to detail which mark the Indian. His coin-silver bracelets and earrings, his silverware and buttons and buckles, were sought not only by the Cherokees but by the few white men who knew him as well, and every piece he made bore the unmistakable stamp of a superb artisan.

An injury to one of his legs while he was yet a boy made him a life-long cripple, and he was destined to walk with a slight limp; the name Sequoyah is sometimes translated as The Lame One. The exact nature of the injury is a mystery to us; some sources say that it came as the result of a hunting accident, others that it was due to a "white swelling sickness."

The handicap did not deter him from enlisting, along with his Cherokee friends, on the side of the United States in the War of 1812. If the truth were

known, the Cherokees chose to fight not because of any love for the United States but rather because their traditional enemies, the Creeks, had already allied themselves with the British. So off to war The Lame One went, enlisting under the name of George Guess. He fought at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend under Andrew Jackson, whom the Cherokees then knew as The Pointed Arrow. Much later, after Jackson became President and signed the papers for the Indian Removal, the Cherokees would call him, with hatred in their voices, The Chicken Snake.

Before he went off to war, Sequoyah had married and had become the father of a number of boys, probably four, and of a daughter, Ah-yoka. He had supported the family well—his house had been kept neat and orderly, his vegetable garden carefully tended and productive—but when he returned from fighting in Georgia, his habits and his whole way of life changed. He came home listening to the voices of the talking leaves.

When had the wonderful talking leaves first whispered to him? What was the spark that lighted in the mind of a lonesome, crippled, half-breed Cherokee boy? No one knows. Introspective and self-searching by nature he was set apart further from his own kind by both his mixed blood and his lameness, and from some source deep within him came an iron strength of purpose and a limitless devotion to a dream.

Perhaps he had first seen the white man talk

with paper as a child and had accepted it as more of the powerful medicine like the magic of guns. As he matured and learned to use and to understand the white man's tools, perhaps the nagging thought persisted at the back of his mind that there was another tool, more important than all the others—a tool by which men could talk across the miles, and by which the records of his people could be kept, and by which the old knowledge could be set down. What did the white man do when a problem arose about which he knew little? He went to the talking leaves that other men made, and there he found answers. What a glorious gift this would be for his Cherokees! What doors it would unlock for them!

Available evidence indicates that Sequoyah had a growing awareness of this for about three years prior to his going away to war. Thrown in service into closer contact with whites than he had been previously, he must have watched them closely. He must have seen the soldiers, huddled around the campfires at night, laboriously making the strange dark marks on that thin, unsubstantial stuff no thicker than a leaf, which would whirl away in the wind just as a leaf does, and which the white men called paper. But the white leaves went away and talked the men's minds—the minds of homesick husbands and fathers. Then other leaves came back, and Sequoyah watched the faces of the sol-

diers as they read the letters, with news of wives and children and home. For himself, there was no news—not one word in two long years, because none of the Cherokees knew the secret of the talking leaves.

So Sequoyah came to his great task. Of course the task was impossible—any linguist could have told him that. How many thousands of years did it take to produce and refine the alphabet with which this page is written? Intelligent and well-trained men had already attempted to set the Cherokee tongue into a pattern of letters, but with no success. It took Charles Hicks, a converted Cherokee, a matter of several months to transcribe the Lord's Prayer into Cherokee using the English alphabet, and even then it wasn't right. And the Moravian Missionary Board commissioned one of their members, Daniel S. Butrick, to learn the language; after several years of study, the Board reported that ". . . he found nine modes, fifteen tenses and three numbers, singular, dual, and plural. No prepositions or auxiliary verbs were employed, these adjuncts being in the verbs themselves. Pronouns were seldom used; instead, the nouns were repeated. With the study of years, Butrick was not able to express himself so as to be understood by the Cherokees."

In Sequoyah's ignorance lay his strength. He had no preconceived ideas to overcome, since these

were lines upon which no Indian had ever thought before. He could neither read, write, nor speak English—once, long ago as a half-caste boy derided by his playmates because of his white blood, he had sworn a private vow that he would be all Cherokee and that he would never learn the tongue of the father whom he probably never saw. And he knew that he must succeed. Factions were rising among his people; already the Creeks to the south were badly split, and more and more the Cherokees were being pushed hard by the white surge from the east. Indian families were breaking up, some of them starting to wander westward into Arkansas. Once an Indian left his family and was torn from the kinship system which meant so much to him, he became nothing. A way must be found to keep the Cherokees together. It must be done, or the Principal People, as they called themselves, would scatter and drift and die.

In the beginning, Sequoyah set about developing a form of picture writing. Where previously he had worked long hours in the garden and had kept his small house in good repair and had busied himself over his silversmith's tools, he now sat in the sunshine with charcoal and sycamore bark, making the intricate designs on the bark and stacking the pieces together and sorting and resorting them according to their forms and sounds.

When a friend would stop by to talk, Sequoyah

would listen avidly. And when a word would be used that Sequoyah could not immediately call to mind, he would interrupt the conversation, dive into the piles of bark, and search for the mark which stood for that word. If the search were successful he would return to hear more words; if a careful review of his words showed it not to be in his cache, Sequoyah would seize his charcoal and a bit of bark and lose himself in the contemplation of how best to represent the idea behind that particular word. Small wonder, then, that his old friends looked questioningly at him, and small wonder that the word started to be whispered that Sequoyah, whose mother had been of the Red Paint Clan, was making strong medicine and bad medicine.

As The Lame One became more and more obsessed with his work, the neat house of which he had once been so proud fell into disrepair, and the rows of corn and beans grew rank with weeds. His sons were getting older, but certainly they were not ready to take on the task of managing the home and the small plot of land. And one day while he was absent his wife, in high (and from her point of view, righteous) feminine rage, indignantly collected his hundreds of bits of carefully hoarded sycamore bark and pitched them into the great open fireplace.

When Sequoyah returned, he had no need to ask what had happened. His wife's face told him that.

Laughed at by his friends, scorned and humiliated by his wife, he called his young daughter Ah-yoka to him. Gathering her up in his arms, he turned to the path that led away into the woods and set out. He never came back.

Several miles away stood an old, tumble-down cabin that had been deserted for years. There Sequoyah and his daughter, now about six years old, established their rude home, and there Sequoyah started again on the long and tedious task of making the leaves talk in Cherokee.

Then a wonderful stroke of good fortune befell the outcast. As he and Ah-yoka were walking along the path one day, her quick eyes were the first to see it. There it lay, half-hidden in the grass—a strange, flat thing which the little girl did not recognize. She picked it up and brought it to her father questioningly. It was a book—it was the talking leaves of the white man.

Like a man in a dream, Sequoyah took it back to his cabin and placed it on the table. He examined it carefully—the strange black lines which marched so evenly across the paper, but which were broken up in ways he did not understand. He looked again at the countless letters, but of course he could not call them letters in his mind, since they were a new concept to him. But he saw that some of the marks were repeated. Ah, was that it? A sign for a sound?

He worked now with great care, identifying the marks, checking them, counting them. Yes, that was right. Twenty-six. The whole book made up of twenty-six signs, repeated over and over again. What did it mean? What could the leaves say to him, who was seeing them, closely for the first time?

They told him one vital thing—that all words were made up of a relatively few combinations of sounds. No need to work further on a system like that by which the Chinese are still handicapped today; no need to have a different picture for every word. Identify the sounds in Cherokee, make a symbol representing each sound, and the task would be done. The crippled half-breed, with Ahyoka sitting quietly by his side and wondering at this strange transport of her father's, must have sat in his cabin that afternoon and felt within himself that pure pleasure which great minds know when they chance upon an elemental and universal truth. Now he could do it, he knew—he saw the plan, the scheme, the pattern. Now he could capture the words of his people and set them down forever on that fragile stuff called paper!

The work started again from the beginning, but with a new direction. This time it was easier—much, much easier. His method again marked with meticulous care, Sequoyah identified two hundred sounds—syllables, really—in the Cherokee tongue.

Using the letters from the white man's book for some of his characters (there were nine variations on the letter *J* in his completed work) and making up others of his own, a Cherokee syllabary began to emerge. With it he could set down his thoughts, and Ah-yoka, quick of mind and eager to learn, could trace a childish finger over the characters and read back to her father what he had written. The system worked. He had succeeded.

Still the dark talk ran through his tribesmen that Sequoyah was in league with the spirits of evil. He was looked upon as a man possessed of the devil, and children avoided his cabin carefully lest they come upon the pathetic figure somewhere along the trail. Some sources say that his retreat was burned to the ground in an effort to stamp out the evil which hovered over the cabin and which had enveloped Sequoyah and his daughter.

The great and humble man, now probably in his mid-forties, reflected on all this and came to a grave decision. He needed time to think, to get away from this place where he was scorned and rejected. His wife, he understood, had married again, and now that his work was practically completed there was nothing to hold him any longer. Perhaps the Cherokees who had gone west would listen to him; perhaps Arkansas was the place to get his fresh start.

With his precious symbols drawn on a piece of

deerskin and with a few silversmith's tools to support the pair as they went, the two inseparable companions made their way slowly out of the Smokies toward the Mississippi. When they reached the mouth of the Arkansas River they fell in with other Cherokees moving westward, among whom was a widowed woman and her eight-year-old son. By the time the group reached Fort Smith, Arkansas, Sequoyah was again a husband, finding with his new wife Sally the companionship, the compassion, and the understanding of his work which he had never known with his first wife.

The next three years were spent in making a home for his new family in a new land and in refining his syllabary. Ah-yoka, who had grown up with her father's work, was almost as facile in its use as was its inventor. His new wife and his stepson also picked it up easily, and the family used to spend their evenings in testing it and working with it. Many of what Sequoyah had at first identified as separate syllables he now recognized as combinations of simpler syllable unions, so one at a time he weeded the combinations out. When he had cut the language down to its essentials, he emerged with a final syllabary of eighty-six characters.

With these finishing touches put on his talking leaves, Sequoyah knew that the time was ripe to present his work to the Principal People. Many of his friends in Arkansas had showed interest in this

new device, but the Cherokee Nation of the West, as it was called, still looked to the eastward and to the homeland for guidance. So Sequoyah knew that if his syllabary were to be accepted, it would have to be accepted by those who had laughed at him and scorned him and who had openly blamed his obsession for the dark days which had come to the Cherokees.

Leaving his wife and her son to care for their new holdings, The Lame One and his daughter retraced the long road that led to the east and to home. Here Sequoyah sought out his old friend and now one of the head men of the Cherokees and chairman of the tribal council, John Ross. Ross himself had an excellent education in the white man's schools, was reputed to be able to read and write in English, French, Spanish, Latin, and Greek—and, of course, could speak in Cherokee. He would know, reasoned Sequoyah, something about languages.

John Ross was anything but enthusiastic at first. He remembered the old talk about Sequoyah, and he knew that there were many who understood nothing of what he was trying to do. They would rather see a witch burn than see how the leaves could be made to talk. But Sequoyah was persuasive, and so Ross agreed that The Lame One might unveil his work at a meeting of the tribal council.

The day about which Sequoyah had long dreamed was finally at hand. Twelve years of his life had gone into this work, and now he faced his personal moment of truth. Soon he would know.

The tribal council gathered, solemn and impassive. He recognized in the group some old friends—and some old enemies. Ah-yoka, now about ten years old and almost as skillful as her father in the use of the syllabary, was to set down on paper the words which the council would dictate to her. Sequoyah would then read back from her transcription.

The slim little girl sat at a great table, the white paper and a slender pencil before her. Sequoyah looked at the bronzed faces with their intent eyes riveted on the girl, laid a gentle hand briefly on his daughter's shoulder, and left the room. The test had begun.

What went through the Cherokee's mind can only be conjecture, but now his whole life depended upon a sheet of paper, a sliver of lead, and the quick mind of a ten-year-old girl. Would she be able to set down the message of the council? Knowing how much it meant to him, would she panic? Would the strange setting and the strange faces and the thick tension in the room drive from her young head the memory of those characters they had worked on so long together? Ah, he would know soon—very, very soon.

The door opened, a hand beckoned, and Sequoyah re-entered the room. Ah-yoka sat with her eyes downcast, the pencil and paper in the same place on the table before her. Quiet hung heavy in the air. Sequoyah breathed a prayer to the gods of the Principal People and walked slowly to the table. His eyes were fixed first on his daughter's face, but she was Indian—he could read nothing there. Then he looked down at the paper—and what had before been a blank sheet was now filled with the curious markings that had been born in the mind of Sequoyah.

He picked it up, and saw the neat and precise hand of Ah-yoka. The characters perhaps swam for a moment before his eyes, and then he started to read. And he read it all. The words given to the girl by the council and set down on the talking leaves came back to them as if by magic. Cherokee words! The work was done and proved—the leaves could be made to speak in Cherokee!

The tribal council was stunned and silent. Those who realized what this could mean digested it slowly; those who had come to see a witch trapped were dumfounded. Then the silence broke, slowly at first, and the excitement grew until there was a babble of sound in the room. Reserved men became like children with new toys, crowding around Sequoyah and the girl and looking at the strange marks on the paper and demanding to know how

to set down marks that would say their names and the names of their families and loved ones.

The tide that started to swell in that gathering of the tribal council rose until it swept over the whole Cherokee Nation. The Principal People were electrified as the news spread; Sequoyah was importuned by the council to stay in the east so that he could teach those who wanted to learn. The young men came to The Lame One as students, and they went out to teach others. The marks of the syllabary appeared everywhere—written on paper, scratched on the sides of houses and on fences and on trees, drawn with eager fingers in the dust of the roadside.

And the Cherokees learned. They learned how to read and write and they became a literate people in a shorter span of time than any other race, any place in the world. Soon letters were shuttling back and forth between the Eastern Cherokees and those in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Within a year, observers said, these people had passed from a state of having no written language at all to a high degree of literacy.

In the long view of history, what had this crippled half-breed named Sequoyah accomplished? He had done something which no man before him had done and which no man following him has done—he is the only person in the entire history of the world to invent, completely by himself, a sim-

ple and practicable alphabet or syllabary. It was a beautifully uncomplicated tool, capable of expressing the complete language and thought of the Cherokees. It was unquestionably the work of pure genius.

And for its inventor, sudden fame. The Cherokee Nation awarded him an income of $500 a year, one of the few purely literary pensions ever granted within the boundaries of the United States; the council of 1824 awarded him a handsome medal, and in an accompanying letter stated "... the great good designed by the author of human existence in directing your genius in this happy discovery, cannot be fully estimated ... it is incalculable."

From his invention came the type, cast into his eighty-six characters, with which the *Cherokee Phoenix* was printed. Magazines, periodicals, and a system of schools using the new method followed shortly after the first appearance of the newspaper.

Returning to the Cherokee Nation of the West, which was by now centered in the Indian Territory later to become Oklahoma, Sequoyah discovered that he had left unknown and returned a hero. Looked up to and respected because of his great gift to the Principal People, a gift called by them "more valuable than a bag of gold in the pocket of every Cherokee," he became one of the head men of the Western Nation. All of his skill, patience, and prestige would soon be put to a critical test.

When gold was discovered in the early 1830's on the lands of the Eastern Cherokees, the white cry went up to move the Indians west of the Mississippi. The policy of force was carried out: history books give this period passing mention as the time of the Indian Removal, but to the Cherokees it was known then, and is still known today, as the Trail of Tears. Seventeen thousand members of the tribe started, often driven like animals along the way. One out of every four never lived to see their new homes in the west; they lay instead in unmarked graves along the Trail of Tears.

With John Ross of the "Newcomers" and Sequoyah of the "Old Settlers" acting as respective spokesmen for their groups, the involved business of establishing homes for the influx of immigrants was carried out. Tempers became short and old animosities flared, but the steadying influence of Sequoyah and his ubiquitous talking leaves was a major factor in the successful reuniting of the Cherokee Nation a thousand miles west of its original home.

With the Principal People once more together, Sequoyah was once more free to turn his attention to another thought which had long intrigued him; he was free to search for a common key which would link all Indian languages together. Following his success with the Cherokee syllabary, he had helped to develop a written language for the Choc-

taws. Perhaps there might be developed a system of writing which all Indians could use.

In this Sequoyah was to be disappointed, since the melange of tongues among the Indians comprises the most thoroughly confused linguistic mix-up to be found anywhere in the world. But the old stories had whispered of a faroff link between the Cherokees and the Indians of Mexico; here, he thought, he might stumble upon a mother tongue.

Driven by the puzzle of words as he had been all his life, The Lame One felt himself drawn by the stories he remembered out of his youth—stories of a time when the Principal People lived in a warmer land and knew other ways.

In 1842—he was now probably about seventy-two years old and at an age when he could be expected to look back rather than forward—Sequoyah set out with a small party to travel through the Southwest and press on into Mexico. He talked with other Indians whom they met, searching and listening for the words which might reveal the origin of his beloved Cherokees and which would point the way to an American Indian Sanskrit.

He didn't find it. He found something else instead—death. The precise details of his passing are uncertain. It is reasonably well established that he fell ill on the trip but refused to turn back, and the party successfully crossed the Rio Grande into

Mexico. In August of 1843 the other members of the expedition were trying to make contact with members of neighboring tribes and had left Sequoyah alone in a cave. When they returned, the Beloved Old Person of the Cherokees had joined his mother Wut-teh and her people of the Red Paint Clan in the Indian spirit world which lies somewhere to the west, beyond the setting sun.

Today no stone rises over the grave of The Lame One—he was given back to his Earth Mother somewhere near the little town of San Fernando, Mexico. Like Tecumseh who had gone before and like Crazy Horse who was to follow, no white man would ever know the secret of where he lay. He was Indian, he was a part of Nature, he had returned to Nature. It was as simple as that.

But the spirit and the work and the memory of the man live on. Today the old Cherokees still read with his syllabary—fewer and fewer of them now, but the system is still alive after a century and a half. And as long as the sun wheels across the sky and the grass grows green, his name will be remembered. There is a mountain on the North Carolina-Tennessee border named after him, and a statue in Georgia, and a marker which fixes the place where the print shop stood in New Echota on that day in 1828 when the *Cherokee Phoenix* was first printed. And there is a county which bears his name in Oklahoma, and the state itself was very nearly called Sequoyah. Following its

admission to the Union in 1907, the first statue which Oklahoma placed in Statuary Hall in the nation's Capitol at Washington was a likeness of the Cherokee. In the Congressional Library are representations of the faces of men who, throughout history, have done the most to perfect written language, and among them is Sequoyah.

But perhaps the most enduring of his honors is this: those inspiring trees of California, the Big Trees (Sequoiadendron giganteum) and the Redwoods (Sequoia sempervirens), which are among the most nearly immortal and which reach closest to heaven of all the living things on earth, bear his name. And it is fitting. His people were old when they were young. The Cherokees are sure today that the trees talk among themselves of the days of the Red Paint Clan and of the wise, gentle genius Sequoyah, greatest of the Principal People.

4. HUMAN SACRIFICE TO THE MORNING STAR
PETALASHARO, THE PAWNEE
(1797?-1832?)

ALONZO THOMPSON didn't know it at the time, but when he kicked that bit of blackened silver out of a Pawnee grave he dug up quite a piece of Indian history. It was 1883, and he was prowling through an Indian burial ground near the present-day Nebraska town of Fullerton, where Cedar Creek comes in from the northwest and joins the Loup River. He bent over and picked the object up, fingering it curiously. It was large and nearly circular, about three inches across at its widest point, and slightly flattened at the top and bottom. Rubbing the metal to clean it as best he could, he examined it more closely. It was apparently a medal, for there was a hole at the upper edge as if it had been strung. On one side he could

make out the figures of several people, and a tree, and what appeared to be a rack or scaffolding of some sort. On the other side were the figures of a man and a woman, evidently in flight. Above the heads of the pair he deciphered, after much patient cleaning, the legend *To the Bravest of the Brave.*

Alonzo Thompson didn't know then that the stained medal which he held in his hand had once been featured prominently in the newspapers of Washington, D.C. Nor did he know that it had been hung around the neck of a six-foot, superbly muscled young subchief of the Skidi Pawnees by a young lady speaking for the highly select enrollment of Miss White's Seminary for Girls in that city. Nor could he know that for a few months in the spring of 1822 every proper girl in the nation's capital secretly confided to her pillow at night a very improper yearning, which no doubt would have shocked the prim matrons of the nation's capital (unless they were quite honest and admitted to the same yearning themselves, or at least remembered when they had). The yearning was as old as woman and is simply told: to be snatched, from a sacrificial altar and from a savage throng screaming for ceremonial blood and to be borne off into a star-swept night and freedom by a rugged, handsome, taciturn hero. That was the act which caused the medal to be struck, and that was why it

was hung around the neck of the Pawnee known to his people as Man Chief (how the girls must have sighed at that!), but we are threescore and seven years ahead of our story. . . .

It was in the fall of 1816 that the raiders swept out of the dawn into the Comanche village. The young girl could see the mounted warriors bearing down upon her, and hear the screams of the frightened women and children as they scattered like the prairie chickens in that wild Nebraska country. She felt their hands, strong but surprisingly gentle, as they seized her and set her astride a horse. And as quickly as they had come they were gone again, up and over the gentle ridge, down into the swale she had known since childhood, and then off into the northeast, riding hard and riding quiet.

Of course sudden raids upon the villages were customary in her world, and women had always been one of the chief objects of those raids. She accepted the capture with the stoicism of her race—it was unfortunate, but it had happened. She could look forward to a life of a near-slave, and perhaps, later, some older man would single her out as a third or fourth wife, and she would be accepted into the tribe.

She wondered who her captors were. They spoke a language completely unintelligible to her. They were shorter and heavier than the Sioux, whom she knew, and they were heading in the

wrong direction to be Kiowas. Not Cheyenne—not Arapaho—perhaps Osage—she knew that the Osages lived in that general direction.

The wild ride lasted that day, most of the night, and all of the following day. At sunset of the second day the tired horsemen rode into the village that was their destination. The Comanche girl was totally unprepared for the reception, for apparently every Indian, young and old alike, had come out to greet the returning party. They were welcomed with ceremony, and she found herself the center of all eyes.

The village itself was quite unlike the ones she had known. Her own people, fierce and warlike and nomadic, had lived in the buffalo-skin tepees which could be disassembled and moved with a minimum of effort. But here the houses were permanent: wood frames plastered over with mud, and the river-bottom land green with corn and beans.

Her curiosity grew in the coming months, for she was not subjected to the humiliation which was usually visited upon captives of another tribe. Nor was she made to work, and this was completely unheard-of in her world. Every day she would see the women of the tribe going about their customary chores of cleaning and dressing the skins of animals which had been brought down with the spear or arrow, of preparing the game and the

stores of dried corn for food, of housekeeping in the pole-and-mud *akkaras* of the Pawnees, but for her—nothing! Instead there were the choicest bits of food, the almost fawning care, the constant treatment as an honored guest.

As the bitter winds of winter blew themselves out and she felt in the air the first faint trace of spring, the care with which she had been treated seemed to increase rather than diminish. Everywhere she went she was an object of great attention, but there was something veiled in the glances that she did not quite understand, and it troubled her.

One evening a group of female attendants came to her, bearing garments of the softest and whitest doeskin elaborately decorated with porcupine quillwork. (This quillwork decoration, incidentally, gave rise to the intricately executed beadwork of the Plains Indians when white traders arrived with a supply of the colorful "seed beads" and "pony beads." Originally, the designs were worked into clothing, medicine bags, tobacco pouches, parfleches, etc., with dyed and softened porcupine quills.) She felt a quick shiver of excitement and anticipation as they combed out her luxuriant black hair and dressed it with sweet-smelling oils. As they washed her bright young body and anointed her flesh with the same fragrant oil, her excitement grew. The heady scent was applied to the

backs of her straight and slender legs, to the skin where her arms bent at the elbow, to her breasts, and last of all to her belly and thighs.

What was at first a faint hope, almost too wild to be true, now became almost a certainty in her mind. Surely she had been chosen by one of the important men in the tribe! What a stroke of fortune that would be—from captive to a place of honor in a chief's lodge, all within a few short months. Then, with her ablutions completed, she was led out into the quiet evening air.

Her heart leaped with excitement; surely she was being taken to the *akkara* of her lover! She walked slowly behind the women who had bathed and dressed her, eyes downcast demurely and the color rising in her face. But there was no chief or war leader waiting for her; instead there were four ceremonial circles made through the village, each time the circle moving to the west in the direction of the setting sun, and then the grave and solemn return to her place of lodging. It was a puzzled and concerned young Comanche who came back to her pole-and-mud shelter that evening early in 1817. If she had known the truth, her concern would have turned to horror, because she had been captured by the Skidi Pawnees, the only tribe north of the Rio Grande who still held to the dark practice of human sacrifice.

The rituals of the Pawnees were the most complicated and the most involved of any of the plains

tribes. Poets, astronomers, and philosophers, they had evolved, because of the demands of their religion, a rich and mystical symbolism around every daily act. Their legends of creation were dignified and lofty, comparing favorably in many ways with those of the early Greeks. Through all of their thinking ran the concept of a Supreme Being, all-powerful but so remote from man that he could not be approached directly through prayer. This god had created the earth, but all life upon that earth—human, animal, vegetable—had come by the magic of the Corn Woman. She was usually referred to as Mother Corn, and the germination of a seed of corn was symbolic of all living things, since this was the tangible genesis of life.

Much of their prayer, then, was addressed to Mother Corn so that life as they understood it would continue to exist. But from time to time it became necessary to send the prayers of the Pawnees to the Remote One, the creator of the earth in whose bosom Mother Corn flourished. Since he could not be appealed to directly, prayers meant for the attention of the Remote One were addressed to the Morning Star, chief of the gods upon whom the Pawnees could call. But the Morning Star was a blood-drinker, and he listened only when the blood and flesh of an innocent youth, preferably a young virgin, were tendered him.

The ceremony of the taking of the life of the victim was a hideous one. Four days of celebration

and feasting, of music and dancing, would precede the sacrifice. The pageant of death moved with a stately deliberation, every act a part of the rigidly prescribed formula which must be carried out perfectly if the prayers were to be delivered to the Remote One.

On the first day the young Comanche, innocent and laughing, was disrobed by the priesthood and her body bathed in the fragrant smoke of burning sweet-grass. Then came the ceremonial painting of the body—red, for the Day Color—and the dressing in a long robe of black deerskin, for the Color of Night. The barbaric ritual music of gourd rattles and flutes and drums threaded through the elaborate and precise movements of the Pawnees and of their captive, the characters of the drama bound inflexibly by the orbit of the Morning Star.

Thus the celebration proceeded through the second and third days, and the afternoon of the fourth day arrived. Then the stage was set for the climax to take place on the following morning, when the Morning Star appeared in the dawn sky. Four men, purified and made sacred and led by the warrior who had first touched the maiden in the Comanche village, went out into the timber lying along the river. Starting at a point of departure from a specified hackberry tree they made their way in the four directions, seeking limbs from an elm, a box elder, a cottonwood, and a willow.

With these the scaffold was built: elm and cottonwood, one black and one red for Night and Day, forming the uprights; four crossbars starting from the bottom, the first black and then red, yellow, and white; and at the top a willow limb, painted blue and white for the color of the clouds and of the rain, to which the girl's wrists would be lashed. Next a pit was dug under the scaffold, and the pit filled with wood begged by the captive from house to house.

When night fell, the songs picked up a wild and frenzied note. The sacred counting sticks were laid out, and after each song was finished one of the sticks was removed. All night the songs swelled, and when the last chant died away and the last stick was gathered up, the girl was no longer a captive of the Pawnees: she belonged to the Morning Star.

The songs were finished and the celebrants went each to his own *akkara*, the warriors there to prepare their bows and reed arrows and the women to procure lances and sticks. Again the girl was disrobed and washed, her body freshly painted, and she was again clad in black. Then a superb feather headdress was put on her brow and she was richly decorated with earrings, beads, and bracelets, and when she was fully prepared she was asked to lead the way to the scaffold.

Somewhere on that short walk the truth must

have burst upon her, and when her trembling legs took her to the appointed place, she was seized by rude hands, which had so long been gentle, and bound, wrists and ankles, to the rack. Then the villagers came, faces contorted in their frenzy, and grasped at the girl's clothes. The robe was ripped away, the headdress trampled into the dirt, the earrings and necklaces and bracelets seized roughly, and she was left hanging naked in the harsh pre-dawn of that April morning.

Next came the two messengers from the Morning Star, wearing the owlskins as their badge of office, and bearing the flaming torches. These they thrust into the hair of the captive's underarms and of her groin, purifying the flesh and ridding it of all earthly evil before it could become a fit offering. As the girl's cries of pain and terror welled, the young Petalasharo, son to old Knife Chief (Lachelesharo), made his move.

He knew the ritual—he knew it well. When the Morning Star tipped over the horizon and glittered coldly in the morning air, then would come the *coup de grace:* the bearer of the bow and the holy iron-tipped arrow would send the shaft winging through the girl's side and coursing upward into her heart. Then the sacrificial knife and the cutting out of her heart, later burned to purify the agricultural tools which ate at the breast of Mother Corn. And the flight into the flesh of a burning reed

arrow from the bow of every man in the village, and the prodding and hacking at the body by the women, and the ceremonial cremation, and finally the laying out of the remains on the prairie, and the slow restoration of the girl's body to Mother Corn from whence she had sprung.

As the Morning Star broke over the rim of the world and as the iron-tipped arrow was lifted to the bow and drawn, Petalasharo shot with the speed of thought into the circle of superstition-crazed fanatics. The strident clamor which had been rising in pitch and volume died suddenly in the throats of the mob. They stood frozen at the sight of the highly respected son of the chief who thus flaunted the eternal wrath of the Morning Star. As he faced them, Petalasharo raised one hand solemnly and spoke.

"Take my life if you will, but the corn grows green from the sun and the rain and the earth—not because of the owlskin and the iron arrow and the human blood. Take my life if you will, but spare this girl who has long been a guest among us."

Turning quickly with his knife in hand, he cut the thongs which bound her to the place of death. Carrying the near-senseless victim in his arms, he set her upon a horse which he had provided ahead of time, leaped upon his own mount, and the two went at a run out of the Skidi encampment.

No hand was raised to prevent their going. The

Pawnees were transfixed, expecting that at any moment the heavens themselves would open and rain fire and vengeance upon Petalasharo. But nothing happened. The two figures grew dim in the early morning light and disappeared, and the sun rose as it always had and the birds twittered as on any other April morning. The Pawnees looked at each other, unbelieving.

For Petalasharo, rocketing over the prairie at sun-up, the course was set. He took the girl back toward her own Comanche camp, drawing as near to it as he dared. Then he pointed out her way to home and safety, bade her good luck and godspeed, and turned his horse back. He had no idea how his own people would receive him—perhaps he, himself, would be painted and tied to the scaffold and torn asunder. After all, he had taken a prisoner already consecrated to the Morning Star.

But the return to the village was uneventful. Lachelesharo, who had long talked against the inhumanity of the ritual, greeted his son more proudly than if he had returned from a war party with his scalp stick hung with trophies. The people, still stunned from what they had seen, knew at last that the power of the Morning Star was indeed a myth, and that indeed the corn grew green because of the sun and the rain and the earth, and not because of the prayers transmitted to the Remote One through the intercession of a star.

Thus Man Chief saved the life of a Comanche enemy, and thus the great blow was struck, in the popular mind of the Skidis, against the efficacy of the human blood rite. Not that the practice ended then and there: there are always those who advocate a return to "the good old days." Reports filtered in occasionally until well into the 1860's that the ritual had been carried out again in secret, and that the Morning Star had again drunk blood. But Petalasharo gained stature in his tribe and a piece of immortality as well, and his Pawnees took a great step upward.

Of course old Knife Chief's son didn't become a hero until he went to Washington to see the Great White Father. In the winter of 1821 sixteen delegates from among the Pawnees, Missouris, Otoes, Kansas, and Omahas made the journey to visit President James Madison; when he arrived, the subchief Petalasharo was practically unknown except to his own people. The delegates made an impressive showing in Washington and then were given a three-week tour of the East Coast. Returning to the capital in late December, they conferred throughout January on the problems of Indian lands and Indian-white relations.

An enterprising newspaper reporter, ferreting out material for a bit of color on the visitors, happened onto the *Report to the Secretary of War on Indian Affairs* by Jedidiah Morse, in which Morse related the account of Petalasharo's bravery. When

a brief story was run on the incident in the *National Intelligencer*, Washington went genteelly berserk. Certainly the story lost nothing in the telling, and the girls of Miss White's Seminary shivered in happy vicarious horror as they talked among themselves.

When the Indians staged a war dance on the White House lawn, all the nation's business came to a screeching halt. The two houses of Congress adjourned, shops and business establishments closed, and thousands of spectators crowded onto the lawn to see the show. Those rooms of the White House itself with windows looking out upon the dancers were packed with females whose social rank rated a gallery box. The throng was so dense around the dance ring that the President himself had to help break a path through the crowd so that the Indians could enter the circle to perform. The dance was a smashing success, and the even tenor of Washington was so disrupted that, in the words of a reporter for the Georgetown *Metropolitan*, ". . . the lover forgot to call on his mistress . . . the constables did not hunt in droves . . . neither did the magistrates make out a single *mittimus*."

Enter Mary Rapine, a member of Miss White's elite school and the daughter of a prominent Washingtonian. When the girls returned to classes following the dance, the handsome Petalasharo was the center of conversation and the dream of every

heart. As they chattered among themselves, the girls felt an urge to "do something nice" for the Pawnee, and Mary Rapine's suggestion was an obvious and logical one.

"He ought to have a medal," she declared.

The giving of medals to prominent red men was a custom of long usage—the Spanish, the French, the English, and the Dutch had done it in the colonies long before there was a United States. And the Indians who were so honored set remarkable store by them, no question about it. The medals became an important part of a leader's ceremonial dress; to the owner it was a powerful medicine amulet from the white men who realized what a great person the Indian was.

Mary Rapine's suggestion met with an immediate chorus of "Oh, let's!" and "We must! We must!" So the girls spent long hours in planning what they thought was a suitable design and in making up a fitting legend; when their work was completed, they pooled their pin money and had the medal struck in silver.

That is why, two weeks later—on Saturday, February 23, 1822—Petalasharo presented himself at the home of Mary Rapine's father, there to be given his award. Clad in his barbaric buffalo robe, worn hair-side in, he must have made a startling contrast to the fluttering girls, each garbed in her smartest array.

Susan Smith

Mary Rapine took up the medal by its broad ribbon, caught her breath at the thought of standing so close to her hero, and spoke. Her presentation took the better part of several minutes; excerpts from what she said that day follow:

Brother, I have been requested by my school mates, the young ladies you see around me, belonging to the seminary of Miss White, to present you this silver medal as a testimony of our esteem and admiration for the courage and humanity you have manifested toward our sex. . . . Brother, we have heard of your humanity and courage in rescuing a young squaw of the Paduca nation (Paduca was then a common term used to designate the Comanches) from a cruel death and still more cruel torture, and leading her back to her home and tribe. . . . Your white brethren admire and honor such virtue, and will always esteem their red brethren in proportion as they display this generosity and heroism. You see we are all young, but we love and admire benevolence and courage, whatever be the color of the skin that covers them. . . . The Great Spirit will bless you for it; because he always blesses those who perform good deeds. Wherever you go, the white man and white woman will be your friends; because you have been a friend to one in distress and danger; and because they love and respect those who do good to each other. . . . Brother, accept this token of our esteem—always wear it for our sakes, and when again you have the power to save a poor woman from death and torture—think of us, and fly to her relief and rescue.

Mary Rapine draped the ribbon over his bowed head; the bright silver gleamed on his chest. Petalasharo took the medal in his hand and smiled; his words of thanks were simple.

This brings rest to my heart. I feel like a leaf after a storm, and when the wind is still. I listen to you. I am glad. I love the pale faces more than I ever did, and I will open my ears wider when they speak. I am glad you heard of what I did. I did not know the act was so good. It came from my heart. I was ignorant of its value. I know now how good it was. You make me know—by giving me this medal.

And so it was that Petalasharo returned to his Skidi Pawnees in the Loup Fork country of Nebraska in the spring of 1822, and around his neck hung always the silver medal bestowed upon him by the fluttering young ladies of Miss White's Seminary. It was a different world from Washington, this wide and brutal world of the Pawnees.

Because of his brief day in the sun, the name of Petalasharo became widely known, and as a result the Pawnee is given credit for a number of accomplishments in which he had no hand. Some authorities say that he rose to the chieftainship of the Grand Pawnees, or Chauis; but this is ridiculous, since he was a Skidi and had very little truck with the Chauis. The name Petalasharo was applied to at least four of the Pawnee chiefs, and it is difficult

—if not impossible—to keep them all sorted out in proper order.

Some devoted scholars have Man Chief dying in 1852, others argue vehemently that he lived until 1874. But the few known facts and an educated guess point in another direction altogether: the last real proof of the continued existence of Petalasharo of the Skidis is his signing of a treaty, together with his father, in 1825. That treaty, executed at Fort Atkinson near where Omaha now stands, specified that the Pawnees would not harass Americans traveling to and from Santa Fé, and that in turn the American government would provide "from time to time such benefits and acts of kindness as may be convenient or seem just and proper to the President." These words were mouth-filling and impressive, but the Americans would not be seriously troubled by the Pawnees for very much longer anyway. When another treaty was signed in 1833, neither the father Lachelesharo nor the son Petalasharo signed for the Skidis. What had happened in the meantime?

It had been a tragic few years for the Pawnees. In 1830 they were hit hard by the Osages, but they recouped some lost prestige in a fracas with the Cheyennes. In the Pawnee-Cheyenne go-around, the Cheyennes lost their sacred medicine arrows—big tribal medicine—to the Pawnees, and the Cheyennes date much of their rapidly accumulating misfortune from that encounter. In that year of

1830 the Pawnees held their own against their hereditary enemies: they won one and they lost one. But the big one they were to lose to the whites two years later, and it really wasn't a fair fight.

In 1832 the Pawnees came upon a wagon train on the Santa Fé trail, and the Indians were allowed to visit in the camp and to trade with the Americans. Among the articles turned over to the Indians were a number of blankets. Somewhere in the meeting the Skidis contracted smallpox, and brought it back to their village. Reports from Indian agents say that nearly every Pawnee over the age of thirty was killed by the disease, and that approximately 3,000 people—half of the Pawnee population of four villages—died as a result of the epidemic. It is someplace within this brief span of time following 1825 that both Petalasharo and his father were lost from the eye of history; it seems reasonable to believe that the white man's curse which decimated the Pawnees killed not only half of them but took the two chief leaders of the Skidis as well.

We can cluck sympathetically and say, "Isn't it a pity that a common disease which anyone might get could kill so many people?" There is a faint and persistent whisper which implies that there is more to the story. The whisper, often passed in low voices and with meaningful looks, says that smallpox was planted deliberately among the Pawnees—

that the blankets passed in trade from that Santa Fé wagon train in the spring of 1832 were known to be infected; that they had, in fact, been liberally sprinkled with smallpox virus for the express purpose of introducing a plague among the Pawnees. If this be true—and the story has hung on with remarkable persistence and is most certainly not discounted by careful scholarship—we have another unforgivable example of white man's inhumanity to red man. We may talk of the cruelties and atrocities of the Indians, but no red people ever practiced that kind of atrocity upon the whites.

It is a bitter indictment of the white race that Petalasharo, toasted by those belles of Washington society for a chivalry not often met with among the Indians, should toss and tumble, muttering and incoherent, in a fever-ridden *akkara* until he was mercifully called home to his prairie gods.

Did his mind turn back in those hours to his days in Washington and the girls in their fashionable frocks, and did he remember the words of Mary Rapine when she called him "brother" and hung the medal around his neck, saying, "Wherever you go, the white man and woman will be your friends; because you have been a friend to one in distress and danger; and because they love and respect those who do good to each other. . . ."? And did he remember his reply, "It came from my heart"?

I would think not. I would think that instead he

saw again the traders along the Santa Fé trail, and the blankets, and his people dead and dying—and that his last thoughts may well have been "Let me get at them. Let me get at them with a gun or with an arrow or with a knife or with my bare hands, but let me show them how the son of a chief of the Skidi Pawnees should die."

All that, of course, is only conjecture. Regardless of how he died, or where, or when, this much is fact. Heroes are born into every people and in every time. No race has a corner on personal courage, and no act was more heroic than was that of this pagan Indian. He turned against his own people and against his own religion to save a girl whose tribe was his ancient enemy, and he dared the wrath of his greatest god so that one human being might be allowed to enjoy longer the precious gift of life.

And that's the story Alonzo Thompson didn't know—the story he held in his hand on a day in 1883 when he found that bit of blackened silver, turning it up to the outer air for the first time in fifty years. He must have wondered, as he deciphered the words, where it had come from and what it had meant. It meant that the girls of Miss White's Seminary chose the legend on their medal well for Petalasharo the Pawnee—*To the Bravest of the Brave.*

5. THE RED FOX OF THE EVERGLADES
OSCEOLA, THE SEMINOLE
(1803?-1838)

THE SEA APPROACH to Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, was in theory guarded by Fort Moultrie, a series of low buildings huddled at the water's edge where Sullivan's Island looked south across the harbor mouth. It was not much of a military establishment in 1838, nor was it much in 1860 when Major Robert Anderson, headquartered at Fort Moultrie, judged it a position impossible to defend and so moved his command to Fort Sumter, a few miles to the southeast. Fort Sumter was, under the circumstances which arose in April of 1861, equally impossible to defend, but it won a name in the history books and became a national monument as the opening battle

of the Civil War, while Fort Moultrie faded and was forgotten.

The post surgeon at Fort Moultrie in January of 1838 was a man named Dr. George Weedon, and under his care were two hundred and three prisoners of the Second Seminole War then being fought in Florida. Two hundred and two of them—men, women, and children—gave Dr. Weedon very little cause for concern, but the two hundred and third was a slightly built, light-skinned war leader, about thirty-five years old—Osceola, the Black Drink Singer.

Osceola had won the headlines and the notoriety (or fame, depending upon which side of the issue you took), and Osceola was dying of malaria. As the month of January wore on it became evident that the days of the war chief were running out. The weakened chief steadfastly refused the ministrations of the white doctor, and instead was attended by a fellow-tribesman and fellow-captive who was a medicine man.

George Catlin, anxious to meet Osceola and to paint him, rushed to Fort Moultrie and there completed his classic portrait. On the night of January 27 the Indian was so ill that Catlin and a few others sat up with him all night. He took a turn for the better, had a couple of good days, but on January 30, 1838, he died.

Dr. Weedon wrote feelingly and in some detail of the last hours of Osceola, telling how the Semi-

nole indicated that he wished to see the chiefs and officers of the post and his family for a last time. When the group was assembled Osceola sent his two wives for his war costume and put it on. Weedon continued:

He then called for his red paint, and his looking glass, which was held before him, when he deliberately painted one half of his face, his neck and throat—his wrists—the backs of his hands, and the handle of his knife, red with vermillion; a custom practiced when the irrevocable oath of war and destruction is taken. His knife he then placed in its sheath, under his belt and he carefully arranged his turban on his head and his three ostrich plumes that he was accustomed to wearing in it. Being thus prepared in full dress, he laid down a few minutes to recover strength sufficient, when he rose up as before, and with most benignant and pleasing smiles, extended his hand to me and to all the officers and chiefs that were around him; and shook hands with us all in dead silence; and also with his wives and little children; he made a signal for them to lower him down upon his bed, which was done, and he then slowly drew from his war belt his scalping knife, which he firmly grasped in his right hand laying it across the other on his breast, and a moment later smiled away his last breath, without a struggle or a groan.

So died the last and one of the most noted of the Eastern war chiefs. The tide was running westward, and there was no longer a place for Indians

east of the Mississippi. Osceola's story would be a source of pride to Indians everywhere, especially to his own Seminoles.

The Seminoles were latecomers as a tribe, actually a joining of "splinter groups" who started breaking from the Lower Creeks around the middle of the eighteenth century. As the whites crowded in upon the Indians of the southern portions of Alabama and Georgia, some of the natives drifted farther southward into Florida. There they mixed with the smaller tribal groups of Florida, and were joined as well by increasing numbers of runaway slaves who fled from the slave-holding sections of the South.

In this little-known land called Florida, still under the dominion of Spain, the dwellers took on something of a lose tribal identity. Their language remained closely related to Lower Creek, and their way of life was an adaptation of their former ways to the changed geography of their new homes. They remained agriculturists, but now the agriculture must be practiced on the mounds of earth, or hammocks, which rose out of the swampy areas of central Florida. The derivation of their tribal name indicates its origin—*isti sim-a-no-le*—meaning, in Creek, "runaway" or "wild man."

As there were no ancient and honorable tribal strains among the Seminoles, it is to be expected that their greatest war chief, Osceola, should show a mixture of bloods. His mother was a Lower Creek

named Polly Copinger, and the name Copinger certainly poses the distinct possibility that there was white blood in her veins. It is reasonably well-established that Osceola's father was a half-breed Scottish-Creek trader named William Powell; as a young man, Osceola often went by the name of Powell. Certainly his light skin would indicate the presence of white blood, but how much is impossible to determine. Osceola himself always claimed full blood and the painter George Catlin refers to him as full, but researchers in later years have marshaled some evidence to indicate that he was actually less than half.

He was apparently born in Georgia and spent his early years there, but a marked unrest surged through the Indians of the Southeast during the years before and after the War of 1812. Like many other dissident Indians, refugee Negroes, and renegade whites, the small band of Lower Creeks to which Osceola and his mother belonged pushed farther and farther south toward the sanctuary of the unknown Florida interior.

In this way Osceola came to the land where he was to become a figure which would arouse nation-wide controversy. He would be called both hero and traitor, both patriot and serpent; and the means of his capture would rouse bitter public opinion against an officer of the United States army who would seize a foe under the white flag of truce.

The name Osceola is an English derivative of *Asi-yahola—asi,* the "black drink" which played so great a part in the ceremonies of the Southeastern Indians—and *yahola,* the cry of the participants in the taking of the black drink. This beverage, made from a species of holly called youpon (*Ilex vomitoria*), was an emetic which was used as a purgative for ceremonial cleansing of body and spirit.

The years of Osceola's early youth passed—the years of the First Seminole War in 1817, when the army marched into Florida and looked upon both the Seminoles and the Spanish as fair game, despite the fact that the army was on Spanish soil; the years of the Spanish cession of Florida to the United States in 1819, following Andrew Jackson's nine-month campaign through the Sunshine State; and the period of the 1820's when the whole white South cried out for the removal of the Indians to some portion of the Louisiana Purchase lands.

The other southern Indian tribes, who had taken up many of the white man's ways, were more readily convinced not of the right of the matter but of the might of the United States. The Choctaws and the Chickasaws, the Cherokees and the Creeks were moved westward accordingly, across the Mississippi to the Indian Territory which, in the 1830's, was thought to be the outer edge of nowhere; everyone assumed the Indians would be able to live there as huntsmen almost forever. When Thomas Jefferson purchased the vast French

holdings that made up mid-America, he was confident that a thousand years would pass before the new land would be settled.

To the *isti sim-a-no-le*, the wild men, things looked a bit different. They were separatists by blood already, and they had come into being as a people because they didn't like to be pushed around. For decades their lands had been a haven for escaping slaves, who were often eager to trade a hard white master for an easy Indian one. Many of the Seminoles were slaveholders, in the sense that the Negroes "belonged" to them, doing the agricultural work and paying a portion of their crops to the Indians. This system freed the Indians for hunting and fishing, which they enjoyed far more than growing corn, beans, and squash. The Seminoles had long played the game of "fool the white men who come after runaway slaves," and they had watched Jackson slog up and down over Florida campaigning against the Spanish. They felt that Indian Territory might be all right for the Creeks but Florida was best for the Seminoles.

The decision had not been made overnight, nor was it unanimous. When the Indian Removal Bill was signed by Jackson in 1830, the Seminoles entered into negotiations with the government along with the other tribes. However, finding themselves restricted to lands almost worthless for both hunting and agriculture and being victimized by the

signing of the Treaties of Payne's Landing (1832) and Fort Gibson (1833) under highly suspicious circumstances, they became increasingly edgy in their relations with the government.

The small band in which Osceola was gaining prominence as a hunter and war leader was scheduled to leave for the West in 1833, but arrangements were not completed then nor in the following year. In the fall of 1834 Indian Agent Wiley Thompson, a major-general in the militia in the War of 1812, called for a conference with the Seminoles. Thompson, who had served for years in the House of Representatives from Georgia and whose voice had been one of the loudest in the cry for removal of the Indians, was first made aware here of the increasing prestige of Osceola, and the Seminole was mentioned in his report to Washington as being "a bold and dashing young chief ... vehemently opposed to removal."

At a second meeting held at Fort King in April of 1835, Osceola made it clear that he was steadily gaining followers for his policy of nonremoval. A long-popular story tells of how, when Osceola was called to put his mark on an agreement, he drew his knife instead and plunged it through Thompson's paper, saying "This is the only treaty I will sign." (Or you may prefer the smoother remark put in his mouth by a better script writer: "That's my knife and your heart.") There is no real substantia-

tion of the incident, but its telling serves to illustrate the fact that this meeting was, in effect, Osceola's declaration of war.

Government plans ground on massively for the eventual removal of the Seminoles. By late summer of 1835 (the government's delay had already violated the terms of the agreement at Fort Gibson in 1833, all of which was conveniently ignored) Wiley Thompson was ready to effect the removal, estimating that it might take as much as twelve days "to collect the disaffected and stragling (sic) Indians." But nothing much happened. The Indian strength built up, and the government made no move. A few whites, Indians, and Negroes were roughed up in light clashes, but no great show of force was exerted by either side until the year was running out.

On December 28, 1835, the Seminoles made two fierce jabs at the authority exercised by the government. Major Francis L. Dade, making his way northward from Fort Brooke to Fort King with two companies of men and a six-pounder, ran into a hornet's nest. To Major Dade there was nothing to mark that particular stretch of roadway as being different—it was narrow and bordered by palmettos, but that could be said about the whole route. We can never know what the major thought, because when the palmettos started to spit fire Dade was one of the first to fall with a bullet through his

heart. Captain U. S. Frazer went down in the same volley, and when Lieutenant W. E. Basinger tried to mount a gun crew for the six-pounder his men were methodically shot down from a range of about thirty or forty yards. The fight didn't last long—it couldn't. When the last sharp rifle blast died away, ninety-nine of the one hundred and two men in Dade's company were dead on the spot. Two more died a short time later at Fort Brooke, and the lone survivor held onto life for another five years before he too died of the wounds he took that morning along the palmetto-lined road.

The "Dade Massacre" had not been Osceola's affair; the attack on Dade had been led by Micanopy, the head chief of the Seminoles. Osceola was busy with an affair of personal honor, and that same afternoon he arranged a little surprise party for Wiley Thompson. Thompson had once imprisoned Osceola briefly, and the Seminole had not forgotten it. Lying in wait within the shadow of Fort King for Thompson and his companion, Lieutenant Constantine Smyth, Osceola and his warriors struck with the same fierce surprise that had leveled Dade and his men. Smyth fell with two bullets through his body, Thompson with fourteen.

The post sutler and his two clerks were also disposed of, and after the warriors had scalped the victims they faded back into the wilderness.

Friendly Indians at Fort King had identified the shrill and distinctive war cry as being that of the Black Drink Singer. The combat had now been joined in earnest, and the army was faced with the housekeeping chore of rounding up the Seminoles and shipping them off to the West.

The task of bringing the Florida Indians to heel was given to General Duncan Clinch, aided by the Florida Volunteers under General Robert Keith Call. Within a few days the commands of Clinch and Call had joined to make up a force of about five hundred men. On the last day of the year of 1835, the combined forces were rapped sharply by Osceola as they tried to cross the Withlacoochie River. Clinch had already crossed the stream when he was hit by the Seminoles, who were under scrub cover along the bank. The soldiers rallied for a bayonet charge, which had little effect other than to drive the Indians deeper into the woods. The Seminoles finally melted into the swampland, and here General Clinch left them, hurrying to recross the river before dark. This crossing was uncontested, but Osceola had thrown back a force of soldiers with about twice the strength of his own band, and he had maneuvered them into what was actually a retreat by the army.

Previous to that last blood-filled week of December, military opinion had been in accord with Thompson's earlier estimate that only a few days

would be required to round up the "wild men." But when the news of Dade's massacre, of Thompson's murder, and of Clinch's setback was revealed, a new hard look was directed at the problem. Lieutenant George A. McCall, who had been at Clinch's battle, wrote to his father that the whole affair had been brought on by "huge blundering, or by unfair dealings on the part of the government agents," and that it would take a matter of years to subdue the Seminoles.

Early in 1836 (January 21) General Winfield Scott took command of the troops in the field. When General Gaines advanced against the enemy without authorization and asked for food and supplies from Scott and Clinch, Scott refused the request and ordered Clinch to do the same. Gaines' men were contained by Osceola at Camp Izard, and before Gaines was relieved his troops had eaten all of their horses to stave off starvation.

Captain Ethan Allen Hitchcock, serving under Gaines, had arranged a parley with the Indians, telling them that General Scott, who had authority to reach some kind of terms with them, would soon be on their heels. "Five thousand men are coming—you must yield or all be killed," Hitchcock was reported to have said. In answer Jumper, one of the war chiefs with Osceola, replied, "Enough men have been killed," and Osceola, bitterest of them all, observed, "I am satisfied."

This parley could perhaps have ended with some kind of honorable settlement except for a most unfortunate incident of poor timing. General Clinch's relief party, hurrying up to aid Gaines, opened fire on the Indians when they saw them in the area near the parley grounds. At the first sound of gunfire the Seminoles disappeared, doubtless believing that they had been attacked with Hitchcock's knowledge, and an excellent opportunity to reach a settlement was gone.

Although much of the maneuvering in the Second Seminole War was conducted across fairly firm footing, the Indians loved to catch the troops somewhere close to a swamp. The white man has never been an accomplished jungle fighter, and some of this was jungle fighting of the most vicious kind. The treacherous waters of the swamps were known only to the Seminoles, and the white soldier who would fight gallantly with solid ground under his feet became more than a little nervous in this strange tropical world of poisonous snakes, alligators, Spanish moss, malaria, and quicksand.

General Scott, on the scene with the largest military force yet assembled in Florida, had no more success in bringing matters to a head. His efforts to corner the "wild men" and force a decisive engagement were fruitless; the Seminoles avoided all contact in strength. About all Scott could be sure of was that there were invariably more Indians be-

hind him than there were in front of him, since Osceola's warriors adopted the policy of "Hit where the army has been, not where it's going to be." The situation became critical, in part because of the large Negro population in Florida which felt a keen sympathy toward the Seminoles. There had been considerable mixture between the races, and many Negroes had friends or relatives among the red men. Fears were expressed in various circles of a Negro uprising, and two companies of militia were called in from South Carolina to prevent just such an occurrence at St. Augustine.

With the tropical summer coming on and with nothing concrete to show for his four months of work against the elusive enemy, Scott doubtless welcomed the new orders which called for him to assume command of the Creek campaign in Alabama. The temporary commander now was the leader of the Florida Volunteers and governor of the state, Robert K. Call. He had long sought the chance to lead an army against the Indians; since he was governor he had a more personal interest in an immediate resolution of the conflict. He pushed the campaign with considerable energy through the hot summer months, but with about the same results as the others had shown. When he could engage the Seminoles he could overpower them, but Call's hounds could never bring the red fox Osceola to bay.

As it grew to be midfall General Call grew bolder. His forces had been beefed up by the addition of a contingent of Creeks who had agreed to fight the Seminoles. At the head of a thousand troops Call plunged into Great Wahoo Swamp, hot on the trail. By the time he had fought his way back out again his enthusiasm had diminished considerably, as had his army. His force suffered a jolting defeat. Call had had his chance at Osceola, and the wily warrior was still running free.

It was now the turn of General Thomas Sydney Jesup to have a go at the Seminoles, who had repeatedly embarrassed the army. Commanding a force of eight thousand men and with his record as a hard fighter already made, Jesup took charge in December of 1836 and launched an all-out offensive. From captives taken early in 1837 Jesup learned that Osceola was ill, probably suffering from malaria. Sensing that others of the chiefs might be more amenable without the leadership of Osceola, he asked for a parley with Micanopy, Alligator, and Jumper. At the end of a series of councils which drew out through two months, the three leaders agreed to cease fighting, bring in their warriors and women, and submit to emigration.

The submission of Micanopy, head chief of the Seminoles, was especially heartening to Jesup. Groups of Indians started to drift in to the assembly point at Tampa Bay, and the general felt that

he had the problem well in hand. On May 3 the Black Drink Singer appeared at Fort Melton, surrendering to Colonel William S. Harney and expressing his willingness to lay down his arms and call everything square; Jesup's victory was almost complete. But disquieting reports filtered in to the Seminole war chiefs; slavers from the southern states had appeared, and the word was passed that not only were they claiming many Negroes as runaway slaves, but that any "dark Seminole" was subject to being picked up as well.

This question of relations between Seminole and Negro had been a sensitive one from the beginning, and slave catchers had already hampered the army considerably in their campaign. Now, as the Seminoles congregated at Tampa Bay preparing for removal to Indian Territory, army officials were put under mounting pressure from southern political leaders and plantation owners. Bands of renegade riffraff—the mixed bloods and cast-offs of a dozen blood lines—hung like jackals around Tampa Bay, eager to seize Negroes and/or Indians for the open slave market.

The Creek scouts who had been used against the "wild men" had been promised the property of all Seminoles whom they captured, including the Negro slaves held by the Seminoles; further, Jesup had offered to the Creeks a reward of twenty dollars for each captured Negro who was a runaway from a white master. This offer, look at it as

you might, put the United States government in the fugitive-slave business.

Rumors also ran through the Indian camps that the government was planning to execute those who had been war leaders in the conflict. The head chief Micanopy, trying to shepherd his people at Tampa Bay, was aware of the growing unrest and knew that rising numbers of both Seminoles and Negroes were slipping back into the swamps.

On May 9 Osceola and some of his lieutenants received permission to return to their villages and to report back to Fort Melton within a few days. The few days passed, and no Seminoles returned. When Osceola next appeared it was not at Fort Melton but rather at Tampa Bay, three quarters of the way across the state. He appeared on the night of June 2 at the head of two hundred warriors, giving orders that no white men be killed but that all the Seminoles who had appeared for emigration should go back into the swamps and continue the fight. Although Jesup had been warned by the Creeks that the swamp grapevine reported Osceola on the way, and although he had taken precautions against it, the coup was carried off smoothly and quietly. A hundred and twenty Creek warriors had Micanopy's camp under observation, and the mounted patrols of the army were ready to move out on a moment's notice. Despite these precautions Osceola and his band came into Micanopy's camp, labeled him a turncoat and took him off at

gun-point, and the whole encampment melted back again into the lush green wilderness. On the morning of June 3 Jesup awoke to the realization that he was holding an empty bag—that the army had lost all its captives and all the ground it had won over the last several months.

General Jesup, who possessed great personal bravery as well as the courage of his convictions, had several points to make in the few days which followed this turn of events. He felt that the war must now continue, and that it would be impossible to remove all the Seminoles from Florida. Furthermore, plans should be made immediately to press the attack with even greater vigor in the fall. "The troops and all officers below the rank of Major General, should receive double pay while serving in Florida. . . . If the war be carried on, it must necessarily be one of extermination. We have, at no former period in our history, had to contend with so formidable an enemy. No Seminole proves false to his country, nor has a single instance ever occurred of a first-rate warrior having surrendered."

After waiting out the hot summer months, during which time the white soldiers would have been completely ineffective slogging through the Florida morass, Jesup re-formed his command and made ready to push a second campaign. His unhappy experiences with the Creeks had led him to ask for, and to receive, a contingent of northern Indians as a scouting force—Shawnees, Sac and Fox,

Kickapoos, and Delawares. Jesup apparently expected no pitched battle—indeed, there was hardly a decisive action fought during the entire period of the Second Seminole War. In September General Joseph M. Hernandez, over on the east coast near St. Augustine, netted a pair of influential chiefs, King Philip and Uchee Billy. Coacoochee (Wildcat), son of King Philip, soon came in to Hernandez with his band; and on October 18 Coacoochee gave to Hernandez the long-hoped-for word that Osceola was near St. Augustine and ready to talk again.

By this time Jesup himself was on the scene, and made preparations to move cautiously in the matter. Two days later another message came to Hernandez from Osceola, urging a meeting near Osceola's camp. Jesup agreed that the conference should be held, giving Hernandez a set of questions to direct at Osceola and insisting that Hernandez be backed up by a strong force. Hernandez' orders were to take Osceola by force if his answers to the prescribed questions were not satisfactory.

On October 21 Hernandez, heading a force of two hundred troops mounted and armed to the teeth, kept his appointment with the Seminole. With the troops laying back from the parley grounds, Hernandez and his staff greeted Osceola. The Black Drink Singer was obviously a sick man, thin and drawn, as he stood under the white flag planted in the center of the conference area. There were other Indian leaders present in the group of

almost a hundred who waited for Hernandez to open the discussion.

As talk progressed, Co-e-hadjo took up the burden as spokesman; the proud Osceola was apparently too ill to lead for his people. Co-e-hadjo was direct in some of his answers, evasive in others. This was a conference, he pointed out, not a surrender; the Seminoles were willing to discuss terms upon which the fighting would cease but they did not intend to be removed from Florida.

While the conference went on the soldiers quietly edged around and encircled the council, still talking earnestly under the white flag which hung from its make-shift staff. Micanopy and Jumper, said Co-e-hadjo, were sick with the measles but they were willing to talk and would come in when they recovered. General Hernandez (a Florida plantation owner in civilian life) judged these answers to be "unsatisfactory" and, acting upon the orders of Jesup, raised his hand to signal to the troops.

The startled Seminoles looked up into the rifle barrels, and although there were forty-seven loaded guns in the possession of the Indians at the conference, none made a hostile move. In the words of one observer, Osceola's manner was "quiet and calm, and not the slightest symptom of emotion could be seen in his countenance, or indeed in that of any of his warriors." The Indians were disarmed without a murmur; they filed out

on the march to St. Augustine except for Osceola, who was obviously unfit to walk and so was given a mount. This was the way the Red Fox was taken, and the white flag drooped listlessly on its staff over the now-empty clearing.

When the newspapers learned of the means of Osceola's capture, denunciation of Jesup and of the army ran strong. Public opinion was inflamed. The *Charleston Courier* took its stand with the statement that "Treacherous he may have been, but we cannot forget that he was provoked by treachery, and captured by treachery." John Ross of the Cherokees protested to the Secretary of War the imprisonment of the Seminoles under a flag of truce, and the United States Senate conducted an official investigation. Jesup was cleared of the charges, and perhaps has been too severely villified by history because of his actions. He had made powerful political enemies because of his stand that the army was not in Florida to capture runaway slaves but rather to remove the Seminoles by force if force were the only way in which they could be removed.

For the dramatic central figure in the Second Seminole War, however, the end had all but come. Imprisoned with the other Indians at Fort Marion, near St. Augustine, Osceola could no longer take much of an interest in the world around him. When Coacoochee led a successful escape out of the prison at Fort Marion which freed a total of

two war chiefs, sixteen warriors, and two women, Osceola was not with him. He who would have been the one to plan and the one to lead a few months earlier could now but suffer the recurring fevers of malaria and, shut up like an eagle in a cage, grieve for his beloved swamps.

Because of the successful bolt by the escaped prisoners and in a belated gesture of humanity to move those suffering with lowland fevers to a more northerly climate, the prisoners were sent up to Fort Moultrie and arrived on the first day of the new year of 1837. There Osceola continued to sink until his death at the end of the month.

Meanwhile the war went on without him, and eventually ground to a very inconclusive end. Many Seminoles were removed to the Indian Territory and many of them remained deep in the vastnesses of the Everglades, and no real decisions came out of it. It was sufficiently decisive for the two thousand officers and men who lost their lives in it, and it was decisive for the Indians who trekked westward. The cost of the war, with some estimates running as high as sixty million dollars, would have provided a wholly satisfactory reservation for the Seminoles in Florida.

In the last few days of Osceola's life newspapers carried bulletins on the weakening condition of the still-young war chief. Citizens shook their heads sadly at the news that Osceola was so bitter toward the white men that he refused the help of the good

Dr. Weedon, who, the nation felt, might have been able to save him. What a shame that this valiant warrior should depend in the last extremity upon an Indian medicine man and commend his soul not to God but to *Fi-shak-ki*, the Breathmaker. Indeed, the sympathetic Dr. Weedon who wrote of how Osceola, in his last moments "... with most benignant and pleasing smiles, extended his hand to me ... and shook hands ... in dead silence" has been cast in a minor role. But perhaps Osceola had sufficient reason not to trust Dr. Weedon, and perhaps a later act of this army doctor was the most vicious and inhuman of all.

Post Surgeon George Weedon was the brother-in-law of Wiley Thompson, who had first inflamed the hatred of Osceola at Fort King and whose body had been punctured with fourteen bullet wounds following the Black Drink Singer's affair of honor on December 28, 1835. Thompson's scalp had hung at Osceola's belt. Following Osceola's death, Post Surgeon George Weedon cut off the Seminole's head and kept it in his home as a grim memento of his experience with the Indian. When his young sons behaved badly, Dr. Weedon would hang the grisly trophy on their bedsteads at night, as a reminder to mend their ways on the morrow. A gentle, compassionate, and forgiving man, Dr. Weedon—surely Osceola could have trusted him.

6. THE DAY THEY HANGED THE SIOUX

LITTLE CROW, THE SIOUX

(1803?-1863)

IT WAS A COLD, blustery winter morning on December 26, 1862, and tension ran high in the stockade at Camp Lincoln, Minnesota. Hundreds of spectators watched from roofs of nearby buildings and from the opposite bank of the Minnesota River. Fifteen hundred soldiers were ranked around the great wooden scaffold.

A few minutes after nine o'clock, the doors of the stone building serving temporary duty as jail were thrown open and the prisoners, hooded with white muslin caps and their hands bound together in front of them, were led out. They came quietly and stolidly, a guard at the side of each prisoner. Up the steps they went, where the ropes hung still against the cold winter sky. The Indians were

guided to the platform, and the nooses adjusted over their heads, and still no sound. All was ready.

Then, as the guards left the scaffold, the chilling and dissonant Sioux death wail started up. It was a rhythmic and eerie chant, and as the prisoners swayed and stamped the scaffold shook under the feet of the near-dead. The drummer sounded three slow rolls, and William J. Duley, Indian fighter and father of two massacre victims, stepped forward, knife in hand. He took one deep breath and slashed at the taut rope. The traps fell and the prisoners stood on nothing. There was a sharp indrawn gasp from soldiers and spectators, there was the flailing of arms and legs that lessened and lessened, there was the last spasmodic jerking, and then they hung quietly in rows. All dead. Thirty-eight of them.

What did it mean? It meant that the first chapter of the great Sioux uprising was finished; it meant that thirty-eight Sioux were hanged because nearly two thousand whites, citizens and soldiers, had been killed in one flaming month of warfare; and it meant that trouble with the Sioux would last until the Battle of Wounded Knee in 1890. The names of the Sioux war leaders who would rise in the next three decades would be many. Every schoolboy has heard the name of Sitting Bull, and to most people Crazy Horse is familiar. Fewer

would recognize Red Cloud, probably the greatest of the Sioux chieftains. And almost lost to history is the name of Little Crow (Taoya-Teduta) who started it all, who gave the signal for the greatest surprise attack and perpetrated the bloodiest massacre in the history of the long and bloody contest between red man and white.

The Santee-Dakota Sioux were reservation Indians. The Mendota Treaty of 1851 granted them land extending ten miles on the south side of the Minnesota River, starting from a point approximately ten miles upriver from New Ulm and running some one hundred and fifty miles in a northwesterly direction to the headwaters of the river. The chiefs of the various bands were to be granted $475,000 in cash to defray the cost of moving. Of the $475,000, more than two thirds went to traders, fur companies, and self-styled "Indian agents" who presented claims to the government. Many of the Indians received nothing.

What money was distributed went first to those who declared their intention of becoming farmers. For hundreds of years the Sioux had been roving hunters; now they were asked to settle on eighty acres of land and work the soil for a living. The Indians who adopted white man's dress, cut their hair, and settled in one place were derided by their fellow tribesmen; they were called "Cut-Hairs" and "Dutchmen," as differentiated from the

"blanket" Indians who still roamed the reservation fishing and hunting.

By the summer of 1862 the blanket Indians could look back upon a decade of constant irritation with the ways of the white man. Some of the wrongs were no doubt fancied; many of them were only too real. Constant defrauding of the Indians by unscrupulous traders and conspiracies between traders and Indian agents were the rule rather than the exception. So when the annuity payments and provisions were late that summer, talk grew bolder around the campfires.

There was the suspicion that the federal government, deep in the Civil War, did not have the money to meet its obligations to the Indians. There was the statement by Andrew Myrick, an agency trader, who refused to extend credit to the Indians.

"So far as I am concerned," he said, "if they are hungry let them eat grass."

Myrick would live to regret that statement. He wouldn't live long, true, but "Let them eat grass" became the war cry that was to rally the Dakotas in their swift and deadly sweep against the whites.

But the immediate reason for the conflagration at that time and in that place was far more simple: Red Middle Voice called Little Crow a coward.

Little Crow, head chief of the Santees, could

look back upon a checkered career. Born about 1803 to the chief of the Medewakontons (or Santees) near the present site of St. Paul, his youthful habits gave little promise that he would live to attain any maturity of years. His weakness for fire water and shapely feminine ankles bade no good for his reputation, and he was forced to leave his father's village because of the threats of irate husbands whose wives found the scalawag's charms irresistible.

As he roamed through the Minnesota country, he acquired and discarded two wives. Finally settling down for a time with the Wahpetons, he married four sisters, whom he kept more or less permanently; at his death he could be reasonably sure that his line would not die out immediately, since he had fathered twenty-two children.

Upon the death of his father, Little Crow laid claim to the office of chieftain, a claim which was disputed by two half-brothers. As the altercation became more fierce, and fanned as it was by several generous drafts of rotgut whiskey, it degenerated into a shooting fray; from this encounter Little Crow brought away one crippled arm, two shattered wrists, and the office of the chief of the Santees.

When Little Crow rose to the rank of chief, he put his past behind him as best he could and set about stamping out liquor and immorality among

his people. He journeyed to Fort Snelling to request that a missionary be sent to the tribe, and a Reverend Thomas S. Williamson established a mission among the Santees.

Thus Little Crow's star rose. A bold and persuasive orator, he had helped to sell the Mendota Treaty of 1851 to his people, and in 1858 he traveled to Washington, D.C., on tribal business. He went so far as to cut his own hair shoulder-length and to assume, outwardly at any rate, the role of a farmer. He was looked upon by the whites as the ideal toward which all Indians should strive.

But among many of the "blanket" Indians, there was a different opinion. Little Crow was accused of selling out to the whites; his position as the most influential chief of the Santees was secure, but that position was beginning to shake just a little. And there matters stood when, on Sunday, August 17, 1862, four young braves from the band of Red Middle Voice attacked and killed five white settlers near Acton, thirty miles to the north of Little Crow's headquarters near the Lower Agency.

That same Sunday morning Little Crow had attended church services at the Lower Agency chapel, and had sat through the Reverend Mr. Hinman's sermon with his usual solemnity. At the conclusion of the service he gravely shook hands with the minister and with several of his white friends in the congregation, and then departed. No one knew

it at the time—not even Little Crow—but in that moment he turned away from the world of "Cut-Hairs" and "Dutchmen" and went back to the "blanket." When the whites saw him again, it would be in an entirely different role.

The murder of the white settlers demanded, of course, a high council, and early in the morning of August 19 that council met in the frame house of Little Crow. The Sioux were never known for pulling punches in their council meetings, and each chief, together with his head soldiers, spoke his mind—Red Middle Voice, Shakopee, Little Priest, Wabasha, Wacouta, Mankato, Big Eagle. Taunts and jibes flew back and forth between the opposing factions, those who supported an immediate strike at the whites and those who stood for peace. Words of bravery were spoken, and deeds of bravery were recounted, and finally Red Middle Voice uttered the words which no Indian warrior could accept.

"Little Crow is afraid of the white man. Little Crow is a coward."

That, of course, did it. The chief launched into an impassioned defense of his own personal bravery, and also reminded the war-hungry young men of the road ahead of them.

"... The white men are like locusts when they fly so thick the whole sky is a snowstorm. Kill one, kill two, kill ten, and ten times ten will come to kill

you. Fools! You will die like rabbits when the hungry wolves hunt them. Little Crow is no coward. He will die with you!"

Thus Little Crow let slip the dogs of war, and "Havoc" was indeed the cry. The braves, hungry for food, hungry for blood, and painted for battle, crept quietly into the Lower Agency, surrounded the buildings, and began butchering the traders.

Myrick, who had suggested that the Indians eat grass, was among the first to fall, shot as he attempted to flee his house. When his body was found two weeks later, it was punctured with bullet holes and arrows. To set off a grisly jest, a hay scythe was thrust into his abdomen and his mouth was filled with a large, bloodmatted tuft of grass.

The whites at the agency who decamped at the first sound of gunfire escaped; others, who waited to see what was happening or who attempted to stand off the invaders, were killed. The ferry across the Minnesota River was crowded with those seeking safety on the north side where they could flee the thirteen miles to Fort Ridgley.

Once the first taste for blood was satisfied, Little Crow's starving men fell upon the stores of food at the agency and devoured their fill. Then the looting and the burning began, while the refugees streamed toward Fort Ridgley with their story.

On that same morning, under the direction of other chiefs looking to Little Crow for leadership,

the Sioux guns and tomahawks were unleashed upon numerous isolated cabins and homesteads. Bands of roving braves crossed the river to the north and wrought death and destruction upon the unsuspecting settlers. News of the uprising traveled fast, but was discounted by many who heard it. Little Crow on the warpath? Fantastic! But before the day was ended hundreds of settlers, including women and children, were killed in cold blood. Scores of women captives were taken, to be given to the warriors that night in the empty tepees on the south banks of the Minnesota. And there is no record of a single Indian killed or seriously wounded in the first day's fighting. Surprise was rewarded well that day.

As the refugees flocked into Fort Ridgley with tales of horror and atrocity, Captain Marsh, who was in command, took action. Mustering forty-six soldiers and an interpreter, Peter Quinn, he drove the detachment with all possible speed toward the agency. It had been a wet winter; the Minnesota was running high and only the Indians knew the safe fords. Marsh was forced, then, to proceed on the north side of the river to Redwood Ferry, where he hoped to effect a crossing.

Marsh was a bull for courage but he was not a seasoned Indian fighter. He felt sure that the trouble had been instigated by a band of renegade

Indians; he apparently had no conception of a mass uprising.

He arrived at the north approach to the ferry about 1:30 in the afternoon. Although his force had seen the bodies of several Indian victims along the way, and although smoke from burning buildings arose not only at the agency but from homesteads throughout the surrounding countryside, the ferry itself seemed to be quiet.

As Marsh and his men came down to the river, the south bank appeared to sprout Indians who loosed a volley of rifle fire at the soldiers. At the same instant some hundred warriors who were hidden in the grass on the north side rose to join the encounter. The battle was short-lived; Marsh was driven into the river and drowned; Peter Quinn, the interpreter, was killed instantly, and the detachment was treated harshly. Twenty-three of them, some badly wounded, were able to slip along under the overhanging river bank and make it back safely to the fort; twenty-five were killed.

Little Crow knew that Fort Ridgley was a ripe plum waiting to be plucked; after all, the post could mount only twenty-two soldiers plus the remnants of Marsh's detachment, and by Tuesday noon some two hundred refugees had flocked into the fort, further hampering the defense efforts. There were arms and ammunition to be won, scalps to be taken, paleface squaws to be captured.

But Little Crow's men had met with sweeping success on Monday; it was now time to feast, drink, dance, and rest. He tried to urge them to attack; it was useless. By Tuesday evening three reinforcement units reached the fort; there were now one hundred and eighty men under arms and three hundred refugees swelling the fort. Ridgley did little to dignify the name "fort": it was actually an unbarricaded outpost.

By Wednesday Little Crow was able to mount a halfhearted attack upon the fort. Finding it well-defended, he withdrew, sent out messengers to other chiefs among the Sioux asking for their help, and prepared for a massive attack on Friday. In addition to the personal leadership of Little Crow, both Mankato and Big Eagle, prominent chieftains, prepared for battle. Warriors from the bands of Shakopee, Red Middle Voice, Traveling Hail, and others joined the attackers, so that Little Crow commanded a force of eight hundred men on that Friday afternoon.

When the attack came, it was a bristling one. Little Crow directed the charge from a ravine on the southwest side of the fort, Big Eagle was on the south and east, and Mankato would lead a massive assault at the southwest corner if the others were held off.

The battle began on a ferocious note and maintained that pitch for almost six hours. Gun-

smoke, acrid and bitter, drifted over attacker and defender alike and fire arrows arched like comets onto the roofs of the buildings, but a rain the day before had dampened the rough shingles so that no fires broke out to distract the beleagured whites.

The opposition from the fort was so stiff that Mankato's forces were ordered into the battle. And how they came! They fired the hayricks and woodpiles as they fought their way up from the southwest; the stables and sutler's quarters were taken in the first charge. Howitzer fire from the fort slowed them, but the Dakotas were driving. The thin line of defenders reeled back; the refugees who had already experienced some of the brutalities resolved that they would never be taken alive. Only a miracle could save Fort Ridgley now. And then the miracle happened.

As Big Eagle's warriors circled the fort to join Mankato in his final push, Sergeant John Jones and a crew of gunners manned the 24-pounder on the parade ground. Just as the two forces were about to unite, the howitzer spoke and Jones touched off the big gun. He dropped a double-loaded charge of cannister squarely between the groups of warriors. Probably it was not the effect of the charge so much as it was the noise of the giant gun. The dark roar sounded up the valley and the Indians, a few moments before at the point of victory, broke and fled in complete panic.

While the warriors under Little Crow concentrated on the fort, others ranged over the western half of Minnesota, the eastern fringes of the Dakota Territory, and southward into Iowa, killing and striking terror as they went. Panic-stricken settlers fled eastward to safety; within ten days more than a score of frontier counties were almost depopulated, and an estimated thirty thousand settlers had abandoned homes, treasured possessions, and livestock and were moving back to civilization.

As the word flashed eastward along the Minnesota River, companies of citizen volunteers sprang to arms in each of the communities. Militia units were hastily formed, and units of the regular army recruits training for Civil War duty were diverted to meet the emergency.

Closest to the outbreak was the village of New Ulm; here Judge Charles E. Flandrau was put in charge. A weak thrust at New Ulm on the next day following the agency attack was repulsed by the defenders. The rest of the week was spent in frantic preparation to ward off the major blow which everyone felt was coming.

When Fort Ridgley was not taken as Little Crow had expected, he turned eastward toward New Ulm and on the following day came down like the wind upon the frontier town. The two days of feasting and dancing had cost the Indians dearly;

by now New Ulm was well-manned and the assault was expected.

Savage fighting raged back and forth through the town for much of the day. The braves put a third of the settlement to the torch, and often the lines of the citizen soldiers wavered. But Little Crow could never muster the big push when it was needed; and when nightfall came New Ulm was still safe.

In the meantime an organized offensive thrust to drive the invaders out of the fertile valley and make "good Indians" of them was proceeding with something less than all haste. As soon as word reached Fort Ridgley on that first Monday afternoon that Marsh had been ambushed at Redwood Ferry, Private William Sturgis was dispatched to Fort Snelling, one hundred and sixty-five miles away by frontier road and trail where the Minnesota feeds into the Mississippi River.

Sturgis rode as if all the fiends of hell were on his heels and reached Snelling in a state of near-collapse on Tuesday afternoon. Governor Alexander Ramsey was notified and his action was immediate. He ordered four companies of Fort Snelling troops "to move to the scene with the utmost promptitude," and he appointed ex-Governor Henry Hastings Sibley a militia colonel and put him in charge of the troops.

Sibley had dealt with Indians before, but never

in this role. He had been an official in the American Fur Company, earlier described by General Zachary Taylor as "the greatest set of scoundrels the world ever knew." If Sibley were going to fight Indians he would have to have two primary requisites: mobility and speed.

But Sibley temporized; he needed more men, he needed better arms, he needed more equipment. He got six more companies of infantry, a command of mounted troops, and additional supplies and equipment. As a result of the inexplicable delay, eight days came and went before Sibley, moving ponderously over the roads with troops and volunteers now swelling his total force to fifteen hundred, arrived at Fort Ridgley. By that time, of course, Ridgley had stood off a major attack, New Ulm had blunted the Sioux thrust downriver, and the Sioux were having a real holiday with the fear-crazed settlers racing eastward toward safety.

Once on the scene, Sibley continued to follow the pattern already established. It took him three days to order a force the thirteen miles upriver to the Lower Agency to bury the dead who had fallen there and at Redwood Ferry. The command of one hundred and fifty troops was led by Captain Hiram P. Grant, who was further instructed to keep a sharp eye out to see if he could determine where the Indians who had deserted the Lower Agency might be.

Arriving at the ferry, Grant split his forces and sent a detachment across the river to the agency while he kept to the north side and moved upstream, burying the bodies of settlers as he went.

On his return trip the next day, Grant pushed hard for the fort but evening caught him on Birch Coulee, some three hours from Fort Ridgley. He was joined there by the burial detail that had split off to work the south side of the river. No one had seen any Indians. It was thought that they had fled westward to the Dakota Territory when they learned the size of the force Sibley mustered.

But if Grant couldn't find the Indians, the Indians could find him. Little Crow was now well to the north, but Gray Bird, Mankato, and Big Eagle were still south of the Minnesota. Their scouts reported the near-evacuation of New Ulm, and as the main force moved up to investigate, outriders came upon the encampment at Birch Coulee.

That Grant would choose a campsite in a natural depression, within rifle range of timber and tall grass on two sides, seems inconceivable. But he did. So an hour before sunrise the next morning, the camp awakened to the shrill war cries of the Dakotas. Grant's men were completely surprised, and in the first few minutes of the encounter perhaps a third of the effective fighting force was killed or seriously wounded. By daybreak the soldiers had managed to throw up barricades, dig

shallow breastworks, and prepare to fight a defensive action.

Noise of the battle was heard at Fort Ridgley; the sound of gunfire was faint and fitful, but unmistakable. Listeners could not determine at first which direction the sound came from. Shortly before noon (the battle had now been joined for seven hours!), two hundred men were ordered to the rescue under Colonel McPhail.

Within three miles of Birch Coulee, McPhail's force sighted Indians. McPhail was a very keen student of Sibley's tactics; he retired to a hilltop position and sent back to the fort for reinforcements.

This time a thousand men moved massively out to rescue McPhail, who was in no danger, and Grant, who should have been rescued much earlier. The ponderous army found McPhail about midnight, and the next morning as the Sioux scouts reported "three miles of troops" bearing down upon them, they melted into the prairie and disappeared.

When Grant's detachment was reached at 11:00 the next morning, they had been under attack for thirty hours. Twenty-four men were killed, some sixty seriously wounded, and most of the remaining soldiers were nicked or creased by enemy fire. They had been without food or water the entire time. And all within earshot of fifteen hundred troops at Fort Ridgley. Small wonder there was

grumbling throughout Minnesota about the tactics of Sibley, the Indian fighter.

But in a bizarre way Sibley would yet redeem himself and defeat the Indians and win a measure of fame. Here is how it happened.

By September 18 he was ready to go looking for hostiles. Out of the bivouac at Fort Ridgley he came, now sixteen hundred strong, headed upriver to see what the tribes at the Upper Agency were about. These had remained reasonably peaceful throughout the fracas; perhaps Sibley wanted to start out fighting peaceful Indians.

But with sixteen hundred men under his command and with the memory of the debacle at Birch Coulee still fresh in his mind, Sibley still didn't have a scouting force out ahead of his army. He didn't know that the Lower Agency tribes were camped near Wood Lake, some forty miles from the fort.

On the night of September 22, the army bedded down at Wood Lake. Dozens of pairs of glistening dark eyes watched them. Careful plans were laid for a surprise attack as the cumbersome army broke camp in the morning and started to string out along the road northward.

It was a lovely place for an ambush—a ravine on one side and a hill on the other to conceal the waiting Dakotas—and once the battle was joined,

Indian horsemen would sweep in over the rolling prairie, scatter the army, and chop it up.

It was a daring plan and it deserved to work better than it did. But Sibley's raw frontier troops were not under the sternest kind of discipline, so when a few of his men took a wagon and started out to see if they could find some homesteader's abandoned garden and forage fresh vegetables and melons, nothing was said. Coincidence took them down the road the army was to follow, and from there they cut across the prairie toward the river.

Already the Indians were in position; they lay still as death in the deep grass, but the wagon bore down upon them. There was nothing to do but move. A few shots were fired, the army was still massed and was not on the road when it was alerted, and the main body of Indians was too far away to launch a surprise attack.

As a result, fewer than half of Little Crow's eight hundred warriors saw any action and less than a third of Sibley's troops fired a single shot. The artillery was wheeled out and unleashed. Without the benefit of ambush the Indians knew it was no use; again they faded back into the prairie. That was the battle of Wood Lake, where Sibley gained a hero's mantle and became a brigadier general, and the power of Little Crow and the Santee-Dakotas was broken. It was the end of the uprising.

Moving slowly upriver, Sibley set up Camp Release, where prisoners freed by the Indians were assembled. Here he set about the task of convincing the Indians that it would be wiser to surrender to the troops and be fed and clothed than it would be to face the threat of a Minnesota winter on their own. Many came in voluntarily and surrendered; others, knowing that the white man would demand satisfaction for the blood which had been spilled, followed Little Crow's advice to "scatter over the plains like wolves."

As a result, most of those who had led the attack or who had committed the most heinous atrocities were never caught. Little Crow made good his escape, and many of those most guilty and therefore most fearful of the white man's justice were never seen again.

The white man's honor still called for revenge. A military court was set up to try those prisoners on hand. Charges of murder, rape, and outrage were made against the nearly four hundred prisoners; in the latter part of the trial, admission by an Indian that he had been in one or more of the battles was enough to find him guilty. By early November the trials were over and the score announced—three hundred and ninety-two prisoners tried, three hundred and six to be hanged!

Sibley could count on the backing of General Pope, head of the newly created Military Depart-

ment of the North West; Pope had said earlier, "It is my purpose to exterminate the Sioux."

Pope sent off the names of the condemned to Abraham Lincoln, asking for authority to hold the mass execution. Certainly Lincoln had other problems on his mind that fall of 1862, but rank injustice to the Indians called for the same kind of action as did rank injustice to the Negroes. Pope was soon in receipt of the following letter from Lincoln:

> Your dispatch giving the names of Indians condemned to death is received. Please forward as soon as possible the full and complete record of the convictions; if the record does not fully indicate the more guilty and influential of the culprits, please have a careful statement made on these points and forward to me.

Pope complied grudgingly. When Lincoln received the record, it was immediately apparent that a gross miscarriage of justice was being attempted. Consequently he appointed Francis Ruggles and George Whiteman as his special representatives to sift the evidence and to determine those who had perpetrated crimes which called for the death penalty as differentiated from those who had merely participated in action against the soldiers.

Of the three hundred and six condemned, the sentences of all but thirty-eight were commuted;

those thirty-eight were the ones who walked briefly on air a month later.

The leaders most responsible for the outbreaks never stood trial. Little Crow himself was surprised in July of 1863 while picking berries with his son Wowinopa and was shot by a settler named Lamson. No one knew who the Indian was; it was a month later that Wowinopa was picked up, half-starving, and revealed the identity of the dead chief.

Of those who were hanged, the most deserving was doubtless a bestial and degraded warrior named Cut Nose. He admitted to twenty-seven killings, to the ravaging of settlers' wives and daughters, and to the brutal murder of children. He expected to die for his crimes, and he did.

Add one more footnote to the story of the Sioux uprising. When the thirty-eight victims were cut down and pronounced dead, they were buried in a shallow common grave. That night a group of doctors from the frontier communities, anxious for the opportunity to get cadavers, played the part of resurrection men and dug up some of the bodies.

The doctor from the small town of Le Seuer drew the body of Cut Nose. He took it to his office, cleaned the flesh from the bones, wired the skeleton together, and had himself a first-class display which he could study and with which he might also adorn his office. In the natural course of

events, the two young sons of the Le Seuer physician displayed first a boyish curiosity concerning the skeleton; later the curiosity turned to interest, the interest to obsession, and the world would rejoice that Cut Nose had been buried in a shallow grave. Those two boys who learned their first lessons in osteology from the Sioux skeleton in their father's office would grow to manhood in Minnesota and would develop a fine medical facility. The name of that obscure Le Seuer doctor was William W. Mayo. His sons, William, Jr., and Charles, built Rochester's famed Mayo Clinic.

7. THE RED MOSES
CHIEF JOSEPH, THE NEZ PERCE
(1840-1904)

FOR ALMOST four hundred years the white man in the Americas was at war with the Indian. Out of this long period of bitterness and battle came fighting Indians whose names are household words around the world—King Philip, Pontiac, Tecumseh, Osceola, Crazy Horse, Geronimo. Throughout these dramatic centuries the warrior chieftain made a name for himself as a brave and wily foe, often treacherous and cruel, who was able to stand against the white man only because he knew the terrain so well and because he could throw hundreds and sometimes thousands of yelling braves against a fort or a wagon train or an outpost.

But of all the Indians who fought, courageously

and desperately and in a losing cause, most experts agree that the best military mind among the Indians belonged to a man who was born a Christian, brought up in the ways of peace and who, caught up in a fight for his life and the lives of the people he led, fought with the very highest sense of personal honor, dignity, and fair play. He was honest; he was direct. He moved across the theatre of war with a classic dignity worthy of the highest hero of Greek tragedy. While doing this he outfought and outmaneuvered some of the greatest Indian fighters the West ever knew, and he allowed himself to be captured a few miles from freedom because he would not suffer his women and his wounded to fall into the hands of the "Christian" soldiers!

His name was Hin-mut-too-yat-lat-kekht (Thunder Rolling Over the Mountains), but to his peaceful and law-abiding tribe and to the few whites who knew of this singular person, he was plain Chief Joseph, hereditary leader of the Lower Nez Perce.

When Lewis and Clark crossed the Nez Perce country—the Oregon-Washington-Idaho triangle—in 1805 they found the Nez Perces (Pierced Noses) friendly and open. As trappers, traders, and immigrants flocked to Oregon in the 30's and 40's they could count on one sure thing—the continuing friendship of the Nez Perces.

Horse Indians of the very highest order, the "Pierced Noses" alone among all of the various tribes practiced selective breeding of their stock, and out of this selective breeding came the strong and handsome spotted Appaloosa, held at a premium by the Nez Perces and later by the whites. Today among stockmen and owners of fine saddle stock, no horse owner is more proud than he who rides a fine animal showing the instantly recognizable and dramatic markings of the Nez Perce Appaloosa. These people soon set up a profitable business as horsetraders, restocking emigrant trains as the pioneers prepared for one last haul before they dropped down into the lush and verdant valleys of the Oregon Territory.

So the Nez Perces progressed and prospered. They were intelligent, hospitable, curious. They embraced the white man's religion; they were never disposed to warfare against the whites; they were a model tribe. Some competent historians go so far as to assert that between 1805, when the Nez Perces made their initial contact with Lewis and Clark, and 1870, when serious misunderstanding arose, there was a grand total of one white man killed by a Nez Perce Indian!

The story of the disaffection of the Nez Perces toward the whites is an old, old one, told over and over again by almost every American Indian tribe. It is the story, basically, of the refusal of the white

man to live up to his treaty obligations and to respect the rights of the nomadic red men. When the Nez Perces finally sounded the war cry in 1877, they could look back upon more than twenty years of broken pledges and double dealings by both the government and the individual settlers.

In 1855 Old Joseph (Tu-eka-kas), father of Thunder Rolling Over the Mountains, signed a treaty with the federal government setting up a reservation which included, generally speaking, the land now contained in Lewis, Nez Perce, and the western portion of Idaho County in Idaho; Asotin County in Washington; and Wallowa County in Oregon. The government further pledged such other grants and services as "schools, teachers, agents, sawmills and gristmills, shops and mechanics." In addition to this, the lands of the Nez Perces were exempt from settlement by whites, and grazing, fishing, and hunting rights were guaranteed.

The "schools, teachers, agents, sawmills and gristmills, shops and mechanics" were not provided; the grazing, hunting, and fishing rights of the Indians were not protected. In fact, Assistant Adjutant General to the Commander of the Department of the Pacific, Henry Clay Wood, handed down the opinion that the government itself had abrogated the contract and that the Nez Perces were no longer bound by it.

So a second treaty in 1863 was proposed, calling

for the abandonment of the original reservation lands and the giving up of the Oregon holdings in the Wallowa Valley; the Lower Nez Perces were asked to move about sixty miles north and east to a reservation to be established at Lapwai, in Idaho. This treaty was agreed to by the Upper Nez Perces but was never signed by Joseph, the six-foot two-inch, two hundred-pound son of old Tu-eka-kas, now tribal chief. When the government insisted that the treaty was legally executed and that the Lower Nez Perces must abide by it, Chief Joseph's logic was simple but irrefutable:

If we ever owned the land we own it still, for we never sold it. In the treaty councils the commissioners have claimed that our country had been sold to the government. Suppose a white man should come to me and say, "Joseph, I like your horses, and I want to buy them." I say to him, "No, my horses suit me, I will not sell them." Then he goes to my neighbor, and says to him: "Joseph has some good horses. I want to buy them, but he refuses to sell." My neighbor answers, "Pay me the money and I will sell you Joseph's horses." The white man returns to me, and says, "Joseph, I have bought your horses and you must let me have them." If we sold our lands to the government, this is the way they were bought.

But the government insisted that it was right. Joseph demurred. Miners, ranchers, and farmers encroached upon the Nez Perces. Tempers grew

brittle; but for years Joseph patiently spoke with the government representatives, kept a strong restraining hand upon his young men, and advocated a peaceful settlement. At last the government laid down its ultimatum: move from the tribal home in the Wallowa Valley or face removal by force.

Chief Joseph had once said to his dying father, "What kind of an animal would sell the lands where lie the bones of his father?" He was faced with the decision of fighting for his home and seeing his people destroyed, or submitting to demands which he knew to be wrong.

Even in the face of this he counseled peace. His decision was to move from the beloved Wallowa to the reservation at Lapwai. Hurried by General O. O. Howard's order of May 15, 1877, which gave him thirty days to pack, round up livestock, and leave the valley, and harried by acts of vandalism and theft committed by white squatters on the Indian lands, Joseph started to move his people.

It was not to be. On June 13, while his band was preparing to break camp, three hot-headed young Nez Perces, made brave by rotgut whiskey and unable to endure longer the taunts and jibes of the whites, set out for revenge. Before the firewater had worn off, five whites who had been on unfriendly terms with the red men lay dead. The Nez Perce War of 1877 was joined. Joseph's way was clear. There was no other course open.

Years later, looking back upon that day, Joseph said:

I was deeply grieved. . . . I knew that their acts would involve all my people. I saw that the war could not then be prevented. The time had passed. I counseled peace from the beginning. I knew that we were too weak to fight the United States. We had many grievances, but I knew that war would bring more. . . . I would have given my life if I could have undone the killing of white men by my people.

I know that my young men did a great wrong, but I ask "Who was the first to blame?" They had been insulted a thousand times; their fathers and brothers had been killed; their mothers and wives had been disgraced; they had been driven to madness by the whiskey sold to them by white men; they had been told by General Howard that all their horses and cattle which they had been unable to drive out of Wallowa were to fall into the hands of the white men; and, added to all this, they were homeless and desperate.

I blame my young men and I blame the white men. I blame General Howard for not giving my people time to get their stock from Wallowa. I do not acknowledge that he had the right to order me to leave Wallowa at any time. I deny that either my father or myself ever sold that land. . . . It may never again be our home, but my father sleeps there, and I love it as I love my mother. I left there, hoping to avoid bloodshed.

Bloodshed was something which Joseph could not now avoid. Units of the First Cavalry went out

under Captains Perry and Trimble and found the nontreaty Nez Perces in White Bird Canyon. This marked the first time that Joseph and most of his men had ever fired a gun in anger. Apparently they did it well; ninety-four troopers went out and sixty came back, leaving thirty-four dead. The Indians, with probably no more than fifty armed warriors, had two injured and none killed.

General O. O. Howard, Commanding Officer of the Department of the Columbia, was stunned; this was the year following the Little Big Horn shocker, and the army was pretty touchy about its reputation as Indian fighters. Chief Joseph would stun Howard repeatedly in the four months to come.

In an effort to keep the trouble limited to Joseph's small band of Lower Nez Perces, Howard moved against Joseph and detached two troops to prevent Looking Glass, another of the Nez Perce chiefs, from joining the hostiles. This was an exercise in pure frustration for both Howard and for the detached troops under Captain Whipple. Whipple got nervous and hit Looking Glass, thereby making it certain that this previously uncommitted band would throw in with Joseph. Howard himself moved across the Salmon River and plunged deep into the wilderness after Joseph. The next thing he knew, Joseph had recrossed the Salmon, had cut him off from Whipple, and was sitting squarely astride Howard's supply lines.

Floundering back out of the wilds to find that only Joseph's policy of nonaggression toward peaceful settlers had prevented widespread killing while the army was decoyed, Howard beefed up his troops to about five hundred and set out in pursuit of the elusive enemy.

He caught up with them on July 11 at the Clearwater River, and attacked with cavalry, a howitzer, and two Gatling guns. Outnumbered and fighting on the defensive, the warriors came back strong. They held their position for a day and a half, contained the troops while the camp was struck, the women and children moved to safety, and the herds of livestock started on their way. Then they gave up the campsite, leaving Howard with nothing to show for his dead and wounded. Lieutenant William R. Parnell described the encounter in these words: "At the Clearwater the opposing forces were about equal. If anything the troops had the advantage in numbers as well as position. And yet, strictly speaking, the Indians were not defeated. Their loss must have been insignificant and their retreat to Kamai was masterly, deliberate, and unmolested, leaving us with victory barren of results."

Following the engagement at the Clearwater, the Nez Perces held a high council to determine the course of their action. North of them roved their old friends the Crows, and farther north yet

was Sitting Bull and his renegade warriors who had fled into Canada. Perhaps, they reasoned, the Crows would help them—or the Sioux, anxious for another chance at the army, might help—and failing this, the Canadian border offered refuge. Sitting Bull had retreated there and the United States troops had not followed him. So the Nez Perces, burdened by children-in-arms and by the old and helpless and slowed by the two thousand head of horses which would provide them with mounts and remounts, plunged into the Bitterroot Mountains with Howard hard behind them.

Up and over the treacherous Lolo Trail they went, inching their slow and painful way out of Idaho and dropping down into Montana. The troops, hampered by their bulky camp equipment and the paraphernalia of war, found the going even slower and more painful.

An attempt was made to hold the Indians at the point where the Lolo drops down out of the high country into the Bitterroot Valley. A telegraph message to Captain Rawn at Missoula had brought him and a handful of men to the end of the Lolo Trail, where they had hastily thrown up a fort so that they could bar the Nez Perces until Howard could overhaul them.

Joseph, making a demonstration in front of the fort to draw Rawn's attention, sent his people quietly off the trail and around the fort, through moun-

tainous country thought to be impassable. With "Fort Fizzle" behind them as they moved on into the well-populated Bitterroot Valley, Joseph again demonstrated the control under which he held his band. They passed quietly through the settled areas in perfect order, committing no acts of violence and bargaining for supplies for which they paid in cash. Cutting south up the Bitterroot River and knowing that Howard was still hung up somewhere back on the Lolo Trail, the Nez Perces crossed east to the Big Hole River and stopped for a well-earned rest.

The army had one vital advantage, an advantage which would eventually lead to the last stand of the Nez Perces. That advantage was quick communication by telegraph, so that the many military units throughout the West could keep tabs on the movements of the Indians. This time it was Colonel John Gibbon with a force of two hundred who had come on a hard march south and west from Fort Shaw to tackle Joseph's party.

Early on the morning of August 9, Gibbon dropped down out of a wooded height, crossed the river, and fell upon the sleeping village. According to all the rules of Indian warfare, the Nez Perce campaign should have ended right there. The camp awoke to the sound of the soldiers' rifles and to the sight of the bluecoats squarely in the center of the pitched tepees, firing indiscriminately at the

men, the women, and the children. It had long been said that no man who fought at all fought so poorly when he was surprised as did the American Indian. But the Nez Perces proved themselves of a different stamp that day at the Big Hole River.

Rallying behind leaders like Joseph, old White Bird, Toohulhulsote, Looking Glass, and Joseph's younger brother Alocut, the warriors regrouped at the outer line of tepees and started to sting back at the soldiers. Gibbon ordered his men to put the torch to the tepees, but, dampened by a heavy dew, the tepees refused to burn. As the Indians rallied, Gibbon's position became untenable; he himself wounded in the leg, Gibbon withdrew across the river to the high woods from which he had first attacked.

The Nez Perces were thoroughly aroused and felt like settling with Gibbon for keeps; they followed the retreating soldiers and pinned the force down securely to the hillside. As soon as the troopers withdrew from the camp, the women returned and quickly cared for the wounded, broke camp, rounded up the ponies, and the noncombatants were again in flight.

Gibbon no doubt wished that he too could flee, but he couldn't; he was caught and held tight. As the long day of fighting wore on, the soldiers found themselves in a critical position. They were cut off from water on a hot August afternoon and were

forced to take refuge behind any log or rock which offered protection; the moans of the wounded and the dying hung heavy on the hillside.

The desperate Gibbon tried to bring up ammunition, but several thousand rounds were seized by the Indians. In an effort to turn the battle, the howitzer was ordered into action; the Nez Perces captured it and rolled it unceremoniously off the cliff.

No question about it—here was another Little Big Horn in the making; a third of the troops were dead or wounded, and fourteen of the seventeen officers were casualties. But that night word came to the Indians that Howard was finally in their rear and coming up fast. The warriors quietly quit the battle and set out on the trail of their people who were now safely out of reach and making good time away from the enemy.

What did the military men who knew most about this battle think of Joseph's strategy? Brigadier General O. O. Howard, the one-armed hero of Antietam and Gettysburg who had saved Gibbon with his timely appearance, said this: "After Gibbon's battle, Joseph showed his influence over the Indians by rallying them on a height, just beyond the reach of the long-range rifles. He gathered the warriors, recovered lost ground, and recaptured his numerous herds of ponies, which had already been cut off by Gibbon's men, buried

the most of his dead, and made good his retreat before the force with me was near enough to harm him. Few military commanders, with good troops, could better have recovered after so fearful a surprise."

However, Chief Joseph's people were mauled badly there, and his sick and wounded were forced to travel as quickly as human endurance would permit. With Howard again pressing hard, the desperate Nez Perces dropped southward toward Targhee Pass, hoping to make it over the Continental Divide before they were caught from behind. As Howard gained on the fleeing band, a force of warriors dropped back and, on a dark night, stampeded the army's pack mules and left Howard once more hamstrung.

Up and over Targhee Pass they went, crossing through Yellowstone Park and capturing some tourists along the way. The fear-stricken captives were not mistreated and were allowed to escape within a few days. When the hurrying Nez Perces broke out of Yellowstone they turned northward, only to bump into a new antagonist, Colonel Samuel Sturgis with six companies of "Custer's Avengers," the Seventh Cavalry.

Sturgis was now across Joseph's front and Howard in his rear, but at Clark's Fork Canyon the great chief again led his exhausted tribesmen through a tortuous dry river bed and succeeded in

flanking Sturgis neatly. Sturgis later admitted that he had been completely outwitted by Joseph.

But Sturgis was fresh and still unengaged and the Crows, upon whose help Joseph had depended, had long worked with the army as scouts and turned against the ever-weakening band of Nez Perces. The retreat became a snail's-pace groping northward toward Canada and freedom. The suffering increased; it was now nearing mid-September in high country, and turning cold. The valiant little group could no longer care adequately for their wounded and their infirm, and these pitiful victims of war were abandoned along the trail.

Even then Sturgis had to go with everything he had to catch up, and at Canyon Creek he overhauled them on September 13. Again, however, it was the same story—the Nez Perces turned into a high, rocky canyon and the warriors dropped back to defend the rear. A brisk running engagement was cut off when Sturgis' men ran out of rations and ammunition and the Indians fled on, by now fighting blindly for sheer survival.

Further held back above Canyon Creek by mounting pressure from the Crows who succeeded in running off about half of the already brutally overworked band of ponies, the Nez Perce flight became a desperate, groping stagger through the high, rolling northern Montana wilderness. Sturgis had fired and fallen back, unable to cross the Mus-

selshell River and continue the pursuit. Howard, with fresh pack animals, was on the march again, puffing up in a futile effort to close with Joseph one more time before he reached his Canadian sanctuary.

Helping themselves to military stores from a depot at Cow Island on the Missouri River, the Nez Perces continued to brush off the Crows and to stumble on. With the Missouri safely behind them, they paused to draw a deep breath; for the first time since the long trek began, they began to hope. Freedom was close—oh, so close.

But the time of their last disillusionment drew near. Every minor skirmish had reduced their fighting power; every wounded warrior had added to their burden; every sick child had slowed them down that much more. Joseph had never commanded more than three hundred and fifty warriors at any time, and in his dash he had fought pitched battles with or brushed against three thousand troops. Howard alone traveled 1,350 miles in a straight line of pursuit; Joseph probably made good at least 1,800 in his swinging efforts to shake loose from the army.

With Howard now at least two days behind him, Joseph stopped at Snake Creek in the Bear Paw Mountains; he was thirty miles from Canada and freedom. Howard had been faked out of his field boots, no question about that, and Sturgis was now

removed from the picture. As far as the Indians knew, they had shaken off or were well ahead of all pursuit. Safety lay just over the border—they had won. But the white man's "singing wire" had spoken far across the mountains to Colonel Nelson A. Miles, and Miles had hurried from Fort Keough to intercept.

It was by the sheerest kind of luck that Miles knew where to look for the Nez Perces; when he arrived at the Missouri he confidently expected them to be three or four days to the south with the crossing still ahead of them. But two white men coming down the river gave Miles the startling information that the Indians had hit Cow Island two days earlier and were already across and heading north. Miles was caught on the wrong side; he had to get over, fast. The steamer *Benton* had just left for downriver; Miles ordered the artillery fired in hopes that the steamer was still within earshot and would return. A half-hour after the firing, the *Benton* chugged back upriver to Miles, where she was pressed into service as a ferry, transporting men and equipment across the Missouri.

Starting on September 26, units of the Seventh and the Second Cavalry headed out under Miles, traveling light and traveling fast. On the morning of September 30 their Crow and Cheyenne scouts found the Nez Perces and Miles, probably the best of the Indian fighters, called for a cavalry attack supported by dismounted units.

With 375 men and cannon and with the element of surprise he caught the "Pierced Noses," but Joseph's braves were not the panicky kind. They were real professionals by now; they waited until the cavalry was almost upon them before they opened fire. Troopers' saddles were emptied, and the Indians fought back with a ferocity and skill that amazed Miles. Soon breastworks were thrown up by the Nez Perces, squaws dug trenches with frying pans, and the two forces were locked in a rough, tight, slug-it-out-toe-to-toe kind of trench warfare. Miles tried again to overrun the position, but was thrown back with severe losses, so he settled down to play a waiting game.

October was ushered in the next day with a six-inch snowfall, and the weather turned raw and biting, with continued flurries. But still the Nez Perces, suffering intensely from the cold, manned their barricades and held off the army. There is no question but that the braves could have gone out during the night and won their way through the lines and dashed for the border, but they refused to desert their women and children. And then on October 4 Howard arrived on the scene with an advance guard, and Joseph and his subchiefs knew that the long game was finished. Canada and safety lay a few hours and thirty miles to the north, but that last thirty miles the Nez Perces would never travel. The 1,800-mile retreat had come to an end.

Assured by Miles that his people would be returned to the reservation at Lapwai and with General Howard standing by, Thunder Rolling Over the Mountains handed his rifle to Miles. With that calm dignity which marks the Indian, he spoke. It was the noble utterance of a noble man:

... I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Toohulhulsote is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led on the young men is dead. (Joseph's brother, Alocut) It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food; no one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.

The long, grueling, uneven campaign was over—a campaign which, incidentally, has been examined by the professional militarists of every western nation, and a study of which was once included in the curriculum at West Point. It remains today one of the classic examples of how to stage a strategic retreat through distance.

So Chief Joseph and his Nez Perces came to the end of the same trail that marked the path of

every tribe in the United States, the trail marked "Defeat" and "Capitulation." It is most interesting that the United States government is known all over the world for being a "soft touch." Uncle Sam is more than generous to his enemies; he gives them money and food and equipment to rebuild and treats them like honored allies. But to whom does he owe a greater debt of honor than to the American Indian? And whom has he treated more shabbily?

The experience of Chief Joseph from the time of his surrender is testimony. Here was a great man, a leader of a fine people, whose honesty and integrity were beyond question. Remember that Assistant Adjutant General Wood had already ruled that the United States didn't have a leg to stand on in the first treaty squabble, and that the Nez Perces were completely in the right. As for the second treaty argument, the one which led to the flight of the Indians, we must admit the force of Joseph's logic: the government acted honorably only if we recognize the right of one man to sell his neighbor's horses.

When Joseph surrendered, he surrendered with the solemn assurance of Miles that he and his pitiful handful of survivors would be taken back to Lapwai in Idaho, the point for which they were headed when Joseph's young men who "had been insulted a thousand times" precipitated the war.

The facts of the case are different: the Nez Perces were put on flatboats and taken down the Missouri to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas and later to the Indian Territory where they were given a handful of seed and some wornout equipment and told to scratch for themselves. Superb horsemen who had been prosperous and happy in the hills and valleys of the Wallowa were turned into bitter, broken remnants of men in that foreign, and to them, harsh country later to become Oklahoma. They had been mountain people, vigorous, healthy, strong. Here, in the miasma of the lowlands, they contracted malaria; scores of them died, although it is difficult to say whether they died of malaria, or of starvation, or both.

Let it be to the eternal credit of Miles that he decried, to all who would listen, the treatment of Joseph and his people. "The Nez Perce," he said, "are the boldest men and the best marksmen of any Indian I have ever encountered, and Chief Joseph is a man of more sagacity and intelligence than any Indian I ever met; he counseled against war, and against the usual cruelties practiced by Indians, and is far more humane than such Indians as Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull." This from the man who was four times wounded in the Civil War, had commanded the victorious Union forces at Fredericksburg, and had been awarded the Medal of Honor for his action at Chancel-

lorsville; who had campaigned in the West from 1869 to 1891 against the Kiowas, the Comanches, the Cheyennes, the Sioux, and the Apaches; who ran Geronimo to earth; and who would be the commanding general of the army during the Spanish-American War.

The treatment of the Nez Perces he branded a violation of surrender terms (which it was), and stormed that the government had broken its solemn word with an honorable foe (which it had). But it all came to little—the Nez Perces and their chief stayed in the Indian Territory.

Finally, in 1885, came the decision that the homeless wanderers might return to their beloved Northwest. As a result, some of them were sent to the reservation at Lapwai, Idaho. But not Joseph. He was a troublemaker, said the federal officials—he should not be allowed that close to his people and to his land. So he was sent instead to the Colville reservation in northern Washington, to surroundings little like those of his beloved Wallowa Valley.

In the ensuing nineteen years, Joseph petitioned many times to be allowed to go back to that portion of the earth which would always be closest to him. Each time the petition was denied, and the footsteps of no Nez Perce fell in the valley of the Wallowa to quiet the spirits of the Old Ones, who lay there sleeping.

With his death in 1904, Thunder Rolling Over the Mountains was returned to the earth, his mother. But the impressive shaft raised over his grave at Nespelem did nothing to atone for the treatment he had received from his white "Christian" brothers, nor did it answer the plaintive question he had addressed to Old Joseph when his dying father had cautioned him against agreeing to any treaty giving up the Wallowa:

"What kind of an animal would sell the land where lie the bones of his fathers?"

8. THE MAN WHO TALKED WITH GOD
WOVOKA, THE PAIUTE

(1856?-1932)

Big Foot and the few forlorn remnants of the once-mighty Sioux Nation came to the end of a long and bloody trail that day in late December of 1890. The end was anticlimactic as far as a battle was concerned—it wasn't a battle, it was butchery. It was an opportunity for the proud Seventh Cavalry to wipe out the memory of the day of Custer's dishonor at the Little Big Horn fourteen years earlier, and the Seventh seized that opportunity eagerly. From a strictly disinterested point of view, perhaps the dishonor was compounded rather than expunged. There would seem to be small glory in the massacre of nearly two hundred men, women, and children, slight honor indeed in ringing the hills with Hotchkiss guns and

firing point-blank into the huddled masses of confused Sioux, and something less than high humanity in leaving the wounded to die unattended there in that snow-blanketed and frozen South Dakota swale.

But the Sioux were broken, and the spirits of Waneta and of Sitting Bull and of Crazy Horse stirred restlessly in their graves. And Red Cloud, mightiest of them all and now old and going blind, must have thought back to the days when his hell-for-leather braves covered the hills like a red cloud, so that he would be called by that name among the hated *wasichus* (white men). His mind must have run like an antelope down the memory road to that day in 1868 when he told the army they'd better shut down the Bozeman Trail and quit bothering his country trying to build Fort Phil Kearney, and the army listened and said, "Yes, Red Cloud, whatever you say." So the Bozeman Trail was pinched off and the soldiers marched out of Fort Kearney. They had no sooner got to the top of the first ridge than the Sioux made a real bonfire out of what was intended to be the last word in frontier protection.

Those were the days when the Sioux were the scourge of the western plains. Big Foot's source of strength, however, had been found in another direction; it had developed upon something older and deeper and more primitive in the Indian cul-

ture. Red Cloud's great faith had rested in the tightly drawn bowstring and the superb mounted fighter; Big Foot's hope lay in the few square feet of white muslin which each of his believers wore in the form of a loose-fitting shirt. On each shirt were the magic symbols of the cult, and the markings were to make the wearers invulnerable to the bullets of the white man's guns. Big Foot's people were the Ghost Dancers, and they came to their deaths in the massacre at Wounded Knee because of a naive and twisted belief in a man who was widely heralded west of the Mississippi as the Indian Messiah, or the Man Who Talked with God.

The Ghost Dance was born a thousand miles to the west of that Wounded Knee stage where its most dramatic act was played. It was born in the mind of a Paiute visionary and prophet named Wovoka, known to the whites of Walker Lake, Nevada, as Jack Wilson. Son of Tavibo, the old prophet of Mason Valley, Wovoka knew from his earliest childhood the rich, colorful, complex spirit-world of the Indians—a world in which the animals, the birds, all growing things, the sky, and the earth itself had voices through which they could talk with man. All life was a struggle between the Powers of Light and the Powers of Darkness, and man must attune his ear to Nature, the only source from which he might hear the truth.

The Paiutes were "Digger" Indians, a term used contemptuously to denote any western group whose subsistence standard was low or any group marked by lack of initiative and ambition. The term, strictly used, means a tribal organization which lived to a considerable degree upon roots and edible tubers dug from the ground.

These desert dwellers were a desperately poor people when compared with many of the other Indians of the United States. Living in the desolate Nevada wastelands, they maintained life by eating whatever could be found—scanty supplies of wild onions, camas roots, chokecherries in season; seeds from wild sunflowers, clover, pigweed; piñon nuts; and a special delicacy, crickets. The meat supply was made up for the most part of the small rodents of the desert—rabbits, ground squirrels, desert rats—and lizards, snakes, or what birds fell to the snare or arrow of the hunter. An occasional deer was reason enough for general thanksgiving and a feast.

It is easy to see why the Paiutes were never a threat to the white settlers. Their first concern was with keeping alive, and that concern occupied every moment of their time. War has always been a luxury of the leisure class—no people can go dashing over the country fighting when they are existing a half-step above starvation.

These were Wovoka's people. They had looked

for years to his father Tavibo to interpret the world of the spirits to them. The son had the gift of the Dreamer, and he had been instructed in the old, old rites by his father. He was a natural heir to the role of medicine man, dreamer, visionary, and teller of prophecy. His greatest prophecy would be twisted beyond all recognition by the other and fiercer tribes of the plains, to a point where it is doubtful that Wovoka could identify the germ of the movement as his own. But his it was, and none other.

Wovoka was a man of peace. He lived with a white family, the David Wilsons, for a number of years, picking up a slight command of English, and the habit of wearing white man's clothes, and a white name—Jack Wilson (more often called "that Paiute Jack who works for the Wilsons").

Born about 1856, Wovoka absorbed his father's teachings until his midteens, when old Tavibo died. The Wilsons took him in, and he was to make his home with or near them for another fifteen years. Married at twenty, he brought his wife to the Wilson ranch and there he lived—a somewhat rotund young man, grave-eyed and serious, working at the chores and odd-jobs that his benefactors had to offer. This was white man's work, which he did with fair grace; his reason for being, however, was expressed in his Indian work, that of talking with Nature for his people and interpreting for

them their places in the universe of which they were a part.

Thus the years came and went, the years of the Sioux-Cheyenne stand against the army and their eventual settling on the reservations, and the years of Chief Joseph's Nez Perces and of Geronimo's Apaches and the slow grinding down of Indian resistance. Then the period of disaffection in the 1880's, and the wiping out of the buffalo herds, and a mass unrest seemed to run through the plains tribes. Reservation life was dull and boring—no more of the great buffalo hunts and the times of danger and excitement, no more of the juicy ribs roasting over the open fires and the chattering wives and the fat, laughing children and the social get-togethers for dancing and singing and Indian dice and hand games. In place of that good life were the hours of standing in line for government rations of rancid bacon and weevily flour, and overalls instead of buckskin, and plows instead of a hunter's weapons.

In late December of 1888, Wovoka became seriously ill, with an attendant high fever. The fever was still upon him on January 1, 1889—a day which would shake the West. On that day, a total eclipse of the sun occurred in the western United States, and the day became night in Mason Valley. To the Paiutes, their god of light was being attacked by some evil monster who threatened to

devour the sun and plunge the world into total darkness. In the weird gloom of the eclipse, great wailings ascended to the skies from the frantic Indians; they shouted together and made as much noise as they could in order to frighten away the evil spirit which had attacked the sun. When the moon's disc slipped past the sun, their joy was immediate and unbounded; the Powers of Light had conquered the Powers of Darkness.

This unnatural event presaged, of course, some great change in the lives of the Paiutes, and when Wovoka told them of the vision he had seen in his illness (and perhaps delirium), they accepted it with the blind and trusting faith of children. After all, was it not known to everyone that Wovoka talked with the spirits regularly? Was it not obvious that the eclipse was caused by God for some special reason? They were ready to listen and to believe.

Wovoka's words were very simple and very direct, and the message he gave to the Paiutes was this: "When the Sun died (the day of the eclipse), I went up to Heaven and saw God and all the people who had died a long time ago. God told me to come back and tell my people they must be good and love one another, and not fight, or steal, or lie. He gave me this dance to give to my people."

And in these few words the Indians found new

hope. The dance of Wovoka came to the Paiutes—a slow, measured, monotonous circle dance to the left, with each dancer holding the hand of the person next to him as in the child's game of "Ring Around the Rosy," and the hypnotic rhythm of the drums, and the dissonant chants to the Spirit of the Universe. Some of those who danced fell into trances, and when they awoke they too had been to the place where they could "talk with the people who had died a long time ago." Messages were received from the Old Ones by those who believed, and the Ghost Dance, as it later became called, gave a unified direction to the always elaborate and complex spirit world of the Indian. Here was the means to talk with the loved ones who had died; here was the method by which an individual could bridge that very narrow gap between this world and the next.

Was the Paiute visionary a master of hypnotism who induced his own beliefs into the minds of others? Were his tribesmen, and later thousands of other Indians, caught up in an autosuggestive mass hypnosis? No one can say. The so-called "primitive" mind is crossed with deep currents of which we, in a more sophisticated time, are scarcely aware. It was a form of religious ecstasy brought out of the abasement and suffering of a racial minority, but probably the deepest and truest meaning of the Ghost Dance must always remain a mystery to us.

Its outward manifestations were very, very clear. The words of Wovoka blew through the Indians of the west like a wind, and toward the desolate Mason Valley sageland the religious leaders of dozens of tribes journeyed as if toward Mecca. They listened to the teachings of the Paiute, and were given the sacred dance and were initiated into the mysteries. Always Wovoka taught the same precepts—do not fight, do no harm to anyone, do that which is right, and the day of deliverance is soon at hand.

Just as the words of eternal life from a man named Christ led to the establishment of scores of divergent beliefs, so the words of eternal life from a man named Wovoka were subject to many interpretations. As the pilgrims carried the words back to their own people, each tribe saw the movement in a different light and worked the teachings of their Messiah into their own lore. The facets into which the basic belief broke up were multitudinous, but most of them revolved around one central thought—the time was coming when the whole Indian race, living and dead, would be brought together upon an earth which had grown new again. There would be no disease, no want, and no death, and the regenerated earth would provide, out of her great bounty, for the needs of the Indians.

By the latter quarter of the nineteenth century all of the tribes had undergone some exposure to

the Christian religion, and many of them related Wovoka to the Christ of whom they had heard. The white man had not, in their eyes, followed the teachings of the Bible; this time Christ had returned as an Indian to His chosen children. So Wovoka became to scores of thousands the true Son of God, despite the fact that he, himself, stated many times that he was merely a prophet of divine revelation who had talked with God and who had returned with a message of peace and promise.

The term Ghost Dance, by which the movement was known to the whites, was the name given by the Sioux. The Paiutes themselves called it *Nanigukwa* (Dance in a Circle), the Shoshones termed it *Tana rayun* (Everybody Dragging), to the Comanches it was *A paneka ra* (The Father's Dance), and to the Kiowas it was *Manposo ti guan* (Dance with Clasped Hands). Because it was concerned with the return of the spirits from the world of the dead, the Sioux called it *Wana ghi wa chipi* (Spirit Dance or Ghost Dance), and since the dramatic and powerful Sioux was the prototype of the Western Indian in the popular mind (and still is), this was the name by which it seized the public fancy.

In this way the religious fervor spread from tribe to tribe, until it encompassed most of the Indians from the Navajo country north to the Canadian

border and from California eastward to the Missouri River. At its height, thirty-five tribes comprising a total population of about 60,000 were involved, to a greater or lesser degree, in the movement; this figure represented almost half the total Indian populace living west of the Mississippi River at that time.

As the quickening belief ran through the red nations, there was a sizeable number of whites who believed the Mason Valley prophet to be Christ at His second coming. The Cheyenne leader Porcupine, one of the first to sit at the feet of the Nevada prophet, made his pilgrimage to Wovoka in the fall of 1889. His Northern Cheyennes would become the most fanatic of all the Ghost Dancers. In a statement given to Major Carroll at the Tongue River Agency in Montana on June 15, 1890, and transmitted to the Indian Office through the War Department, Porcupine says in part, "All the Indians from the Bannock Agency down to where I finally stopped, danced this dance, the whites often dancing it themselves." And again—

In the dance we had there (in Nevada) the whites and Indians danced together. I met there a great many kinds of people, but they all seemed to know all about this religion. The people there seemed all to be good. I never saw any drinking or fighting or bad conduct among them. They treated me well on the cars without pay. They gave me food without charge, and I found that this was a habit among them, toward their neigh-

bors. I thought it strange that the people there should be so good, and so different from those here. What I am going to say is the truth. The two men sitting near me were with me and will bear witness that I speak the truth. I and my people have been living in ignorance until I went and found out the truth. All the whites and Indians are brothers, I was told there. I never knew this before.

One of the reasons for this great solicitation on the part of the whites whom Porcupine met on his pilgrimage bears upon a story which is, in its own way, as fascinating as the one of Wovoka. During all of the Cheyenne's journey, he was traveling through Mormon country. There is not time to go into the often complicated relationships between the Mormons and the Indians, nor is it necessary other than to say that to the Mormons, the American Indians were the true Lamanites, a branch of the children of Israel who had wandered into the Americas in the pre-Christian era.

To the immediate point is this very concrete fact. The founder of the Mormon religion, Joseph Smith, Jr., on April 2, 1843, had made an astounding prophecy. This prophecy had stated that the Messiah would reveal himself to man in mortality in 1890. Joseph Smith's *Doctrine and Covenants* (130:15-17) reads: "I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice speak the following:

'Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou are eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man.'"

That some of the Mormons believed Wovoka to be this promised Son of Man is evidenced by the fact that in 1892 an anonymous pamphlet was published in Salt Lake City and was distributed widely there. Bannered across the top of the pamphlet were these words: "The Mormons have stepped down and out of Celestial Government—the American Indians have stepped up and into Celestial Government." And another quote from this pamphlet: "... March, 1890, the people of God, who were notified by the three Nephites, met at Walkers Lake, Esmeralda County, Nevada, where a dispensation of the Celestial kingdom of God—the gospel in the covenant of consecration, a perfect oneness in all things, temporal and spiritual—was given unto them. Twelve disciples were ordained, not by angels or men, but by the Messiah, in the presence of hundreds, representing scores of tribes or nations, who saw his face, heard and understood his voice as on the day of pentecost."

But Porcupine's plaintive statement that "all the whites and Indians are brothers. . . . I never knew this before," would be refuted at Wounded Knee. The Sioux were then the most numerous of the Indian tribes, an honor which has since passed to the Navajo. They had a warrior's heritage to live

up to, and they were hungry. Out of their version of the Ghost Dance, the *Wana ghi wa chipi,* was born another symbol of the movement—the Ghost Shirt. It was through the Ghost Shirt that the United States army became involved in the affair that started in Nevada with that eclipse on New Year's Day of 1889 and ended in South Dakota on December 29, 1890, three days less than two years later.

Seven Sioux delegates journeyed westward to the Messiah and returned in the spring of 1890. They bore marvelous tales of the power of the Paiute, and related how they had seen and talked with Chasing Hawk, a Sioux whom they knew to have died shortly before, and his wife, who had been killed in war several years earlier. Good Thunder, one of the delegates, also saw and talked with his dead son in Nevada. These men also reported that Wovoka bore on his body the marks of crucifixion, that he was the Son of God who had been killed by the white men, and that he had come now to punish the whites for their sins against the Indians. With the coming of the spring of 1891, the whites would be made to disappear from the earth and the land would be renewed, in far more beauty than it had been originally. All the Indians would live in peace and happiness forever, being reunited with loved ones who were now dead.

In the summer of 1890 the Ghost Shirt was

added to the other sacred paraphernalia of the dance. Black Elk, a young medicine man who was rising in influence because he had dreamed a great medicine dream of the "sacred hoop" of the Sioux Nation when he was eight years old, claimed that the magic symbols of the Ghost Shirt were given to him in a vision. Properly made, and decorated, the Ghost Shirt had the wonderful property, in the minds of the Sioux, of making the wearer invulnerable to bullets or weapons of any kind in the hands of the whites.

This hope for immunity from harm was the basis of the complete gamut of Indian "medicine," but usually medicine was an individual thing; each warrior had his personal talisman or his medicine bag which would work only for him. There were previous instances where a medicine man had convinced his followers that they could not be harmed—the crusades of both Pontiac and Tecumseh contained something of this element. But the Ghost Shirt was a new idea in that it represented "mass medicine." There was one other new feature to it as well. Plains warriors habitually went into battle wearing a breechclout and moccasins, and that was about all. Many of the Messianic aspects of the Ghost Dance doctrine can be traced directly to the Christian religion; perhaps the idea of the Ghost Shirt came from the same source. The white endowment robe of the Mormons, set with sacred symbols, worn by initiates into the religion, and

believed by at least some of those initiates to render the wearer invulnerable, was in all likelihood the genesis of the Ghost Shirt.

Wovoka's prophecy of peace was changed, then, when it came among the Sioux. Hemmed in by the whites, forced to try to wring a living from the South Dakota alkali lands that the settlers didn't want, beset by crop failures in 1889 and 1890 and faced with the prospect of a further reduction of government rations, the monarchs of the western plains were driven to action by starvation and disease. As one of the warriors put it after the Wounded Knee debacle: "Our children were all dying from the face of the earth and they might as well be killed at once."

At the Standing Rock Agency where Sitting Bull held forth and at Pine Ridge where the venerable old Red Cloud was in the sunset of his life, the tempo of the Ghost Dance was accelerated. At the end of October of 1890 Short Bull, the high priest of the Sioux movement, prophesied that the day of deliverance had been advanced and that perhaps another month would see the end of the white man's tyranny over the Indians. By mid-November, President Harrison ordered the War Department into action and soon thereafter there were 3,000 troops in the field to prevent a mass uprising on the part of the Sioux.

With the appearance of the troops in the Dakotas, many of the Indians were seized with raw

panic and a band of "hostiles," about 3,000 strong and containing six or seven hundred warriors, fled into the Badlands. There matters stood when, on December 12, orders were transmitted through military channels to arrest Sitting Bull.

Three days later the attempt was made by the Indian Police to place the acknowledged head of the Sioux Nation under military arrest. The Metal Breasts, as the Indian Police were called, entered the cabin of the old chief and medicine man at daybreak, arrested him, and urged him to submit peacefully. Sitting Bull dressed quietly and left the cabin with the Metal Breasts, but an excited throng of his followers had gathered outside to protest. Before the affair was over, gunplay had broken out; eight of the police were killed immediately or mortally wounded, and six of the hostiles, including Sitting Bull and his seventeen-year-old son, Crow Foot, lay dead.

With the death of Sitting Bull and the capitulation of Hump, another of the dissident leaders, the hostiles started to drift back in toward the agencies and the trouble was thought to be over. Big Foot, leader of a band of about 350 with a force of 100 warriors, was met by the troops and ordered in to the agency. Contact was made on December 28, and the 470 soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry under Colonel Forsyth bivouacked that night an arrow's flight away from the Indian camp.

On the following morning, preparations were

made to disarm the warriors before they were taken into custody. The Indians were completely surrounded, the Hotchkiss guns posted on a slight rise and trained upon the village, and the work of the day was begun. Troops were ordered up to within ten yards of the assembled Indians, and soldiers began going through the tepees in a search for weapons. Most of the warriors and no small number of the women and children as well were wearing their Ghost Shirts.

Yellow Bird, a medicine man, walked back and forth among his people as the soldiers prowled through the tepees, urging them in Sioux to rely upon the strong medicine of the magic shirts. Suddenly old Yellow Bird stooped and picked up a handful of dirt, which he threw into the air. Apparently this was a signal, and one of the young braves drew a gun from beneath his blanket and fired into the ranks of soldiers.

The next few minutes were indescribable. The soldiers replied with a volley at point-blank range, and the surviving warriors rushed to the attack with a few pistols, knives, and war clubs. The Hotchkiss guns poured in two-pound explosive shells at the rate of fifty per minute, and within the length of time that it takes to read this page 200 Indians and 30 soldiers were dead or dying and the survivors, mostly women and children, were fleeing blindly to the west, seeking the shelter of a

dry ravine there. Soldiers of the Seventh, maddened and out of control, pursued the helpless noncombatants and, in their cold rage, shot down mothers with children in their arms long after the last able-bodied warrior was out of the combat. The official report of Commissioner Morgan of the Bureau of Indian Affairs states it very bluntly: "Most of the men, including Big Foot, were killed around his tent, where he lay sick. The bodies of the women and children were scattered along a distance of two miles from the scene of the encounter."

Three days after the battle (January 1, 1891, and two years to the day after Wovoka's vision), troops were sent a distance of sixteen miles from the Pine Ridge Agency to the field of battle, there to bury the Indian dead and to care for the Indian wounded. A blizzard had followed the encounter, and numbers of women and children, wounded or near death from freezing or both, were found and brought in to the agency. Four live infants were found, carefully wrapped in shawls and lying beside the dead bodies of their mothers, who had nestled them close to conserve the last remnants of body heat against the bitter South Dakota storm. While we are dealing with white man's inhumanity to red let us go one step further and quote the statement of James Mooney in his report to the Bureau of American Ethnology: "It is a commen-

tary on our boasted Christian civilization that although there were two or three salaried missionaries at the agency not one went out to say a prayer over the poor mangled bodies of these victims of war."

Thus the might of the Sioux Nation died, and with it perished the bright hope of the Indians who looked westward to Wovoka as their prophet and their Messiah. True, the dancing still went on and in many quarters the Sioux were shunned because they had tried to turn a crusade of peace into a crusade of war. The fine edge of the movement had been taken off by the debacle at Wounded Knee, when the Ghost Shirts had not availed against the thunder sticks.

The feelings of doubt grew, and the spring of 1891 came and went and there was no day of judgment and no day of the ascendancy of the Indian race. The movement tapered off and finally quieted—except that today the Ghost Dance is still danced, and today many Indians believe that some time, in some way, the white man will be removed from this part of the earth and the Indian will control it again as he once did.

What of Wovoka, the man to whom more Indians looked for leadership than to Pontiac, or Tecumseh, or Sitting Bull? He had enjoyed being the religious leader of the Indians of the west, no question about that. It had been good when his

friends had come from many places and from many tribes and had counciled with him. But the days wore on, and the visitors became fewer and fewer, until he was left again with his own people.

Well, he had misread the signs or he had misinterpreted the vision, that's all there was to it. Like all of his race, he was incredibly patient. The time would come again. So back he went into obscurity, living in his sagebrush empire and communing with the spirits as he had done in the days before the sun died and he went up to heaven. There he lived until well into the present century, forgotten and alone. At his death in 1932, there were none but his Paiutes to mourn for the Man Who Talked with God.

9. STONE AGE MAN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ISHI, THE YANA

(1862?-1916)

TALES of the red Indian's skill as a fighter have crept into the language and literature of the whole world. His flair for the dramatic, his magnificent horsemanship, his patience, and his endurance have become legendary. The roll call of red heroes who won their names in battle is a long one, and great names they are. But one of the longest, most patiently enduring, and most pathetic struggles was carried on by a small, copper-skinned man hidden away in the rough canyon country of California's Sierra Nevada slope. No other contest in the history of the world has been more one-sided, because it was staged by one Indian against the press of white civilization. There were no guns and no arrows in this battle; it was

the meeting of one way of life against another. Of course the Indian lost, and it was only by the sheerest chance that the white world discovered that he existed at all.

His name was Ishi. The last Stone Age man on the American continent stumbled into the white man's world, starving and searching for the death that would end his misery, on August 29, 1911. He was found on the outskirts of the small Northern California foothill town of Oroville, already well-known for its heyday of bearded miners and wide-open gambling and Chinese prostitutes. Drawn like a beast by the rank smell of blood and animal waste, Ishi was found one morning by a pack of dogs as he crouched in the corral of an Oroville slaughterhouse. When the owner of the slaughter-house came out to investigate the ruckus, he found Ishi—dumb, trembling, helpless—ringed in by the dogs and unable, or unwilling, to raise a hand in his own defense. He had come to die; very well, then, let it be here in the blood and the dirt and the manure.

Calling off the dogs, the owner spoke to the Indian. There was no answer—it was obvious that English was a strange tongue to the crouching figure. The white man helped the Indian to his feet and led him, stumbling, into the house. The owner contacted the county sheriff who came at once and took Ishi under his protection. For lack of

a better place he was put into the county jail until his story could be told. The sheriff little dreamed that the uncovering of that story would call for the most careful scholarship and that when it was fully told it would reveal a series of the most dramatic and most touching incidents.

The major tribal groups around Oroville were the Wintun and the Maidu; the sheriff's first move was to call in interpreters from them. The solitary, small brown figure listened politely to what the interpreters said, but there was no reaction to their words. Interpreters from the smaller tribes were brought in, all with the same results. Here was an Indian with whom no one could talk, and the mystery of the "Wild Man of Oroville" spread.

There was one man, however, who had an idea. He was T. T. Waterman, a young anthropologist from the University of California. He knew that the Yana tribe had once ranged northward from Oroville through the rough, arid, broken, brush-covered foothill region that starts the lift from the level floor of the Sacramento Valley up to the breathtakingly beautiful high country of the Sierra Nevadas. The Yanas had been hill men, claiming this ragged span of hills as far north as Mt. Lassen, their sacred *Waganupa.* The gentler Maidus and Wintuns of the valley had feared their more warlike neighbors, and were quick to point out to the whites of the gold rush period and following that the Yanas

were "bad Indians." The Yanas were a fast-disappearing tribe in 1911; in fact, the southernmost branch of this group, the Yahi, were described in the learned books by two words, "Now extinct."

Waterman knew something of the tragedy of the Yanas. They had lived in that foothill and low mountain country for thousands of years. Primitive, yes, but game was plentiful, water was abundant, and the weather was mild. When the white man came, much of that was changed. Cattle ranged over the rolling grasslands, leaving less forage for the deer. The thunder sticks of the whites made the smaller animals more wary, and the simple weapons and snares of the Yanas were no longer effective. Far more deadly, however, were the white man's diseases, smallpox and tuberculosis; these grim killers stalked the hills and destroyed not only lives but also the spirits of those who survived.

But the Yanas fought back. The earliest white comers to California thought that they knew Indians and Indian fighting. After all, they had won their way across the plains, many of them surviving Indian attacks en route. The Yanas, however, put up a different kind of a fight. They had no guns and they had no horses, but they would drop down out of their hills of home and hit at the livestock and sometimes at the homes of the cattlemen and

sheepmen, and then they would withdraw as quietly as spirits and disappear into the sheer rocky canyons of Mill Creek and Deer Creek. They were perhaps the best of the red guerrilla fighters—tough, tricky, and silent.

How good were they? In September of 1862 (the probable year of Ishi's birth) the United States cavalry, under pressure from the settlers to stop the Yana raids, made a show of force by combing thoroughly the Deer Creek–Mill Creek–Battle Creek country, working their way up the rocky canyons and forcing a passage through the all but impenetrable chapparal that seemed to grow everywhere. Signs of Indians were abundant. There must have been, at that time, well over two thousand Yanas in an area of about forty miles square. But the cavalry searched and sweated and swore, and after a complete probe came back down into the valley reluctantly admitting that *not one soldier had seen one Indian!*

But what the cavalry couldn't do, the settlers did. The period of 1864-65 was the time of the infamous Yana Destruction. Organized parties of Indian hunters went into the Yana heartland and cold-bloodedly attacked, burned, killed. No one was spared—and of the more than two thousand Yanas alive at the beginning of 1864, perhaps as few as fifty saw the close of 1865.

This much Waterman knew. Arming himself

with a list of Yana words culled from what printed material was available on them, he hurried northward from Berkeley to Oroville and there sought, and was granted, permission to try to solve the mystery of the "Wild Man."

Alone with Ishi, he started to put his theory to work. Slowly he went over the Yana words in his vocabulary, working his way down the list. Ishi listened politely and patiently, his dark eyes on the face of the young professor. But there was no response other than politeness and patience—the words he did not understand.

Waterman began to grow unsure; he was distressingly near the end of his list, but he kept on doggedly. And then lightning struck. He came to the word *siwini*, meaning yellow pine.

"Siwini," said Waterman with little spirit, seeing his theory growing more and more uncertain with each word. But certainly he had not imagined that slight start, that straightening of the body and the quick intake of breath on the part of the "Wild Man"?

"Siwini." He said it again slowly, carefully.

This time there could be no mistake. Ishi's eyes lighted up, his face brightened, and back the word came. "Siwini! Siwini!"

That was the beginning. It would take months of careful work before Ishi's story would be pieced together; it would require painstaking patience be-

fore a workable vocabulary could be made up and Ishi would reveal that he was not only a Yana but of the branch of the Yahi—the only living member of a tribe thought to be extinct, and the last true Stone Age man on the American scene.

Waterman, eager to work at first hand with the anachronous Ishi, sought and received permission to take him under the aegis of the Department of Anthropology of the University of California. So back to San Francisco the two went, Ishi pathetically anxious to please the white man from whose lips he had heard the Yana words, and Waterman fully aware of the happy accident which had brought about an apparent rebirth of a language and culture previously thought dead.

For Ishi this was the beginning of a new way of life, a life so different as to have completely confused a lesser person than Ishi proved to be. His earliest memories must have revolved around the central theme that the white man was the mortal enemy, to be avoided at all costs. But when starvation and loneliness drove him stumbling out of his retreat, he emerged into a world filled with people—whites, his ancient foes.

That Ishi was able to overcome his fifty years of training, to find a place in his new surroundings, and to form deep and sincere friendships with those who knew him well, speaks for the understanding man in him which was able to transcend

old enmities and to accept the actualities of the here and now.

A place was made for him at the museum, and there he was to live for almost five years. The press, of course, played Ishi to the hilt, and swarms of visitors from all over the world came to see the "Wild Man." The gentle, soft-spoken Yahi must have been a keen disappointment to many of the curious spectators. T. T. Waterman; Dr. A. L. Kroeber, head of the Department of Anthropology; and Dr. Saxon Pope, a medical doctor at the University hospital with a great interest in archery, came, in time, to be the special confidants of Ishi.

As these friendships ripened and a mutual respect grew among the four, the story of Ishi came out, a piece at a time. Not that it was ever fully told—some of it was hidden by communication barriers, some of it was too full of hurt, some of it was taboo. But for the most part the Yahi was eager to share his experiences with these new and kind people whom he came to love.

To begin with, his name was not Ishi. Ishi is simply the Yahi appellation for *man*. He never gave any indication of what his personal name might have been, and any attempt on the part of his friends to probe here would have been the most serious breach of Indian protocol. A name was an essential part of a person, to be used only by those of the immediate family. To say to an Indian

"What is your name?" was, in essence, to say "I am a soul-trapper—give your soul, that essence of yourself, to me."

Born in or near 1862, Ishi's every remembered thought was bound up with the first law of survival, and survival to his people meant three things: (1) avoid the white man who would shoot an Indian quicker than he would shoot a wolf; (2) fade back into the roughest and most inaccessible retreats in an already rough and inaccessible country; and (3) there maintain life with the silent weapons—the cunning snare, the quiet fish spear, and the quick, bright arrow.

By the time Ishi was six years old, he had lived through the decimation of about ninety-eight out of every hundred of the Yanas. In 1868 he was made to understand that for him and his people there could never be a place of safety. In that year four cowpunchers came across the tracks of a wounded steer, and suspecting it to be the work of Indians, put dogs on the trail. The next day the four found the Yahis in a large cave on Mill Creek, and methodically proceeded to annihilate them to the last infant. When the carnage was completed there were thirty-three dead Indians, and it was thought that this marked the end of the Yahis. Yet when the cave was revisited by whites shortly after the massacre, all of the bodies had disappeared!

Two years later, in 1870, the few remaining

Yahis made their only effort at conciliation; five men and four women appeared one night at the cabin of W. S. Segraves, a rancher who was running cattle on the Butte Creek brakes. Apparently they had come to parley; five bows were presented ceremoniously to Segraves, but no one could speak the Yahi tongue and so the Indians melted back into the darkness and disappeared. The time of their long and final concealment was at hand.

From that night in 1870 until the August morning of 1911, the Yahi concealment constituted what A. L. Kroeber often called "the smallest free nation in the world." Perhaps there were as many as sixteen of them at the outset of the last withdrawal—these were the sum total of the human beings in the world of the eight-year-old Ishi. For the next four decades he would watch them die, one by one, until finally he, alone of all the Yahis, would be left.

What was life like in the concealment? On these grounds we can be safe, because Ishi told at length of the everyday routine of his people, and took his friends back to his homeland in the summer of 1914, there to show them the places he had known and to demonstrate how the Yahis had hunted, fished, and lived.

Upper Mill Creek was their habitat for better than twenty years; they were as wholly a part of the rocks and the streams around them as was the

wild life with whom they shared that lonely land. Salmon harpoons were used to spear the salmon on their annual runs, ropes and nets made from animal sinew and milkweed fibers were fashioned into traps and snares for the smaller creatures. Deer were stalked quietly with bow and arrow, and the fish and game were dried on small racks camouflaged to resemble the ever-present chapparal. Acorn harvest came in the fall, and a large supply of this edible fruit of the oak tree was gathered and stored to see the Yahis through the winter. Acorns were the staple food of most California Indians, and were prepared in many of the ways that the southwestern and eastern tribes used corn. Ground into meal, the acorn flour could be made into a soup, eaten as mush, or cooked together with meat and roots, wild fruits, or berries to make a rich and nutritious stew.

The boulder-strewn course of Mill Creek was one of their roadways; another was the bare face of the sheer rock walls. Neither left a sign that an Indian had passed, and movement without mark was the only way the Yahis could survive. Sometimes the hunters would travel for miles by stepping from rock to rock in the creek-bed; when they went from the creek up onto the brush-covered tops of the table-land they would use their long milkweed-fiber ropes to scale the rock face of the canyon. Once in the chapparal, they made their

way on hands and knees, always traveling through the densest thickets where no human eyes could see them.

In this way they lived, clinging tenaciously not only to life itself but to the traditions and rituals of their people. Each year during the hottest part of the summer, when the foothills were a great brown oven, the Yahis would make their annual pilgrimage to Mt. Lassen, their great *Waganupa.* They would live at the higher elevation until the weather turned cooler, and back down the precipitous canyons they would come, always walking softly—oh, so softly.

After their return they would set about the life-and-death business of preparing for the winter—spearing the salmon during their fall run and drying them on racks, and harvesting the acorns and storing them away in the beautiful Yahi baskets. Basketry was a special craft of the Northern California Indians: the Pomos, just across the Sacramento Valley in the Coast Ranges, made baskets the equal of, if not superior to, baskets made by any of the world's great basketmakers.

The acorns would be ground into meal with stone mortar and pestle—the mortar sometimes a detached and hollowed stone but often, at permanent campsites, a number of mortar holes would be worked into a single large boulder. (The author has seen, in the Maidu country just to the south of

where the Yahis made their last stand, an outcropping of rocks bearing an estimated two hundred mortar holes within a circle a hundred feet in diameter.)

With dried meat and acorns to subsist upon, the Yahis were ready to face the rainy season. The winters were raw with cold but not bitter; sometimes light snow would fall, but it usually fell in depth only at the higher elevations. The game would lie close, and the salmon were gone, and it was always a question whether spring would come before the store of dry staples was exhausted.

For the fourteen years following their initial disappearance in 1870, the few Yahis succeeded completely in their disappearance act. None were ever seen melting into the brush, no footprint was left uncovered, no bit of broken arrow found to tell the ranchers that the Yahis still lived. To the few whites who were interested, the perplexing problem still remained—what had happened to the bodies of the thirty-three massacre victims in Kingsley Cave?

Then in 1884 the Yahi world of silence started to crack just a little. No doubt death had laid its heavy hand on several of the small band, most certainly some of the hunters among them. Driven then by starvation, the Yahis were forced once more to take food from the herds and the cabins of the ranchers. Indian sign was found—here a calf

had been butchered, there a line cabin had been entered and food taken, and an occasional sighting of a Yahi was reported.

For another ten years this was the course of their existence. No hostilities ever broke out between the two peoples; perhaps a small, nagging thing called conscience was beginning to gnaw at the ranchers who, a score of years earlier, had gone on the Indian-hunting expeditions.

A pathetic story of the Yahis during this period was later recalled by a Mr. Norval, who lived in his cabin on Dry Creek. It was about 1885, as he remembered, that he returned home after an absence to find four Indians in the act of climbing out the window of his cabin. They had gained entrance the same way and had taken a few pitiful pieces of cast-off clothing. The four were a woman, an old man, and two younger men, one of whom was Ishi. Unexpectedly confronted by Norval, they lined up quietly against the cabin wall, making no move to escape. Norval looked at their meager possessions and waved them away, indicating that they could keep what they had taken. Several months later he came back to his cabin to find that the Yahis had visited him again. This time nothing had been touched; instead, on the rude table of his one-room cabin he found two beautiful Yahi baskets, left by the grateful Yahis in payment for the only act of kindness they could remember from the

hands of a people they called *saltu* (this term does not mean *white*, but something akin to *different being, nonhuman*).

In 1894 the small pilferings stopped as quickly as they had begun a decade earlier. The Yahis had left the upper Mill Creek country, crowded more and more by the increasing pressure from the settlers. Now probably only five strong, they crossed southward over the high, broken ridges and came down into Deer Creek. They had moved as far as they could go—this would be their last retreat. They chose with great care their main camp, *Wowunupo mu tetna* (Grizzly Bear's Hiding Place), and remained masters of about two square miles of their former empire.

The years came and went and one of the band died, leaving, toward the end, only an old man and an old woman (Ishi's mother), a younger woman (Ishi's sister or cousin), and Ishi. Upon him fell the task of the hunter and the provider, of extracting from the small domain sufficient food to sustain life in the bodies of four Stone Age human beings. The patience, the cunning, the skill that this task called for can only be imagined.

It was not until 1906, twelve years after the exodus from Mill Creek, that there was the least indication to those settlers, miners, and stockmen living along Deer Creek that they had near neighbors. A cabin on the upper reaches of the stream

was entered, and from time to time during the next two years a report would filter out of the brush that there was "something" on Deer Creek.

In early November of 1908 the mystery was solved. The Oro Light and Power Company was laying plans to build a dam on Deer Creek, and their engineers were running a survey for a flume line up the canyon. On the tenth day of that month, the survey party stumbled directly onto the Yahi camp. Ishi and the younger woman fled, leading the old man with them. Ishi's mother, ill and unable to help herself, had been hidden under a pile of skins, where the party found her. They saw an old, wrinkled, white-haired woman, her legs swollen painfully, apparently the victim of partial paralysis. Prowling through the camp further, the engineers and guides poked into the scant supplies of food, weapons, and tools. Then, with no more feeling than that of a ten-year-old boy robbing eggs from a bird's nest, the *saltus*, the nonhumans, picked up everything that was movable—the total worldly possessions of the Yahis—and took them back to their own camp, callously leaving the old woman behind.

On the following morning Merle Apperson, the one member of the party who had wanted to take Ishi's mother into their own camp and care for her, returned to Grizzly Bear's Hiding Place. He was with the party as a guide, not as a surveyor, and

knew Deer Creek and its history; his conscience told him that a great wrong had been committed the previous day. When he came to the Yahi camp he discovered that the old woman had disappeared. He searched the area carefully, but there was no footprint, no trace, no clue that could tell him what had become of her.

From Ishi himself came the rest of the story. He never saw the old man or the younger woman after the breakup. He believed that, in their panic at being flushed out of camp, they might have slipped on the treacherous rocks in the stream and drowned, or that they fell victims to the bears or mountain lions, those savage predators of Deer Creek Canyon. Ishi returned, after the *saltus* left, and carried his mother to another retreat. There he cared for her as tenderly as he could until she died. He burned the body according to Yahi tradition, and burned his hair short as a sign of deep mourning. From that time on he was alone.

For three more long years Ishi continued to hang on grimly. He never made his home again at Grizzly Bear's Hiding Place, nor did he say much about this last lonesome chapter in his life. That way of life, always precarious at best, must have become the slenderest kind of existence. There was no person to talk with, no hand to give help, nothing except to endure.

So it was in the summer of 1911 that he set his

face southward and went out into the world of the *saltus*. Most revealing of the iron strength of will within this little man was the way in which he prepared himself for his appearance in the white world. Thin to the degree of emaciation and feeling sure that he was approaching his own death, Ishi had ceremoniously burned his hair close, as he had following the death of his mother. There would be none left to mourn for him—then he would mourn for Ishi the Man, and in mourning for himself he would cry out for the death of a people. And that was the story behind the "Wild Man of Oroville" who was found in the slaughterhouse corral on the morning of August 29, 1911.

What kind of life did Ishi find in his new world? Probably quite a different one from what he expected. He found immediate interest in himself as a person, he found a few very close friends, and he found a few precious years of security of a kind he had never imagined. He was an alert, curious, gentle person, willing to share his knowledge of a way of life now gone with those who wanted sincerely to know about it. He put on many exhibitions of his Stone Age skills—he was adept at making fire with a bow drill, could shape a piece of obsidian into a superbly crafted arrowhead in thirty minutes, and held his hunter's bow in esteem bordering on veneration.

He was put on the payroll of the University of

California as a janitorial assistant, helping in and about the Museum of Anthropology, at that time located in San Francisco. He soon learned to handle his own money, to prepare his own meals white man's style, and to shop for his own groceries. Streetcars fascinated him and he loved to ride them; often he would cross the bay on the ferry and find his way to the University of California campus in Berkeley, there to work with professors on some problem of the Yahi tongue which needed clarification.

In the summer of 1914 Dr. Kroeber, T. T. Waterman, Dr. Saxon Pope and his eleven-year-old son, and Ishi went back to the land of the Yahis. They camped while Ishi gave them a never-to-be-forgotten lesson in how the first Americans lived. He demonstrated how to use the fish harpoon, how to purify oneself before luring a deer close enough to be killed with an arrow, how to scale the abrupt rock walls with the milkweed-fiber ropes of the Yahis, and the survival techniques without number by which his people had lived.

Ishi was a living encyclopedia that summer of the history of the mass death of his tribe within his own lifetime. All the knowledge he possessed he poured out to his friends—places of important events, caves where the Old Ones had lived but which had never been occupied to his knowledge, stories and rituals and beliefs, as much of his total

knowledge as he could communicate and demonstrate he gave to the once-hated *saltus* who had now become his brothers on the trail.

That going back was, for Ishi, his farewell to the country over which his forebears had roamed since the days of the greatness of Egypt. Late in 1914 he came down with a cough, and he was immediately hospitalized. As that year turned into the next and the Yahi did not respond to treatment, the nature of his illness became apparent—tuberculosis, the white man's killer. It followed the Caucasian around the world and laid its cold hands upon every other people whom the white man contacted. The outcome for the Yahi was, of course, inevitable.

For over a year Ishi lingered, with the customary ups and downs of a seriously ill patient. The gentleness of his nature, the unflagging good cheer, the sincere appreciation of his friends never left him. On March 25, 1916, he died; Dr. Pope, with whom he had stalked deer in the Lassen foothills, was with him.

Certainly no dying culture could be more impressively represented in a last survivor than were the Yahis in Ishi. He drew his white friends much more closely to him than a mere scientific interest in a little-known subtribe would warrant. Take the comments which those closest to him made about this man:

Dr. A. L. Kroeber, a formidable scientist in his own right, was in New York when Ishi died; knowing death to be imminent and fearful that a cry would be raised to preserve the skeleton of the last of the Yahis, he wrote to his assistant in California: "As to the disposal of the body, I must ask you as my personal representative to yield nothing at all under any circumstances. If there is any talk about the interests of science, say for me that science can go to hell. We propose to stand by our friends."

Dr. Saxon Pope, the hunting partner who had marveled at Ishi's skill with the bow and who had been, in a sense, closer to Ishi in personal terms than any of the others, wrote to Kroeber: "He was the best friend I had in the world."

T. T. Waterman, who had started it all in the Oroville jail with the word *siwini*, in writing to a colleague who had known Ishi and who had worked in the Yahi country, said it most simply: "He was my best friend."

The funeral was as ritualistic as circumstances permitted. The body of Ishi was placed in a coffin together with a bow and five arrows, acorn meal, some shell money, tobacco, and a few other personal items. The body was cremated, the ashes placed in a Hopi jar, and the jar set in its niche at Mt. Olivet Cemetery. And with Ishi's passing, there passed from the American scene the last of

the first Americans; his spirit started its journey westward, toward the place where the sun dies, and where exists that elusive hereafter of the American Indian.

Something glorious in America died with Ishi—something primitive and natural and true. He had lived a son of the earth, faithful to a strict code which he knew to be right and honorable. As the last prototype of a very old and a very proud race, he found strength in values upon which dwellers in the Space Age might do well to meditate. Perhaps it is fitting that we never knew his name, really, and that we would watch the Stone Age die in a person whom we could know only as Ishi—*Man.*

EPILOGUE

THE QUIET ONES MOVE ON

So the American Indian flourished for thousands of years, and so he was brought to bay by a dominant and aggressive occidental civilization, and so he was overrun. To say that he disappeared is not true, and to say that he is vanishing is not true; at the rate at which he is increasing, there will soon be as many Indians in the United States as there were at the time of Columbus. His acculturation has been steady, and he has absorbed many of the valuable attributes of the so-called "dominant" culture, along with some of those attributes of our present-day mode of life which are not so worthwhile.

In the taking on of the new, he has at the same time clung tenaciously to much of the old. Com-

pletely surrounded by whites, and broken up and set off in little pockets isolated from other tribal groups, the Indian has still not permitted his lore and legend to be devoured by the press of the twentieth century. His culture pattern is yet one of strength and he is not about to let it die.

There is an appeal to these people which reaches far beyond the limits of our own country. Visitors from other lands have a boundless curiosity with respect to our first inhabitants. They are without exception disappointed to discover that the Indians are not red (the Indians themselves dislike being called "redskins" and argue that the Anglo-Saxons, the Teutonic peoples, and the Nordic races have a ruddy complexion and hence are "redder" then they). Foreign visitors (and sometimes tourists from east of the Mississippi as well, sad to relate) want to see painted warriors on horseback and vast herds of buffalo, and, discovering that these no longer exist, assume that the Indian as he once was no longer exists, and that he now walks straight down the white man's road. So the disappointed tourist leaves the West, "knowing all about redskins."

Those of us who suddenly become experts on the Indians of the Southwest by driving at ninety miles an hour through Arizona and New Mexico, stopping long enough to take a picture of Taos Pueblo and a Navajo *hogan,* are deluding only ourselves.

Many of the Indians who live in that country still make a religious hegira to their sacred lake, the lake from which their ancestors came. Listen to their stories of Bear, the sacred animal who can talk with man; ask a simple question about a Navajo sand painting and see how completely you are shut out, wondering what it was you said wrong. It all makes sense only when you realize that many Navajos believe, simply and implicitly, that when the last secret of the sand paintings is revealed to the white men, the Navajo (or *Dineh*—The People—as they call themselves) will cease to exist.

Those of us who pass in haste through the South Dakota reservation country and shiver inwardly at the memory of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse and Red Cloud, pausing only long enough to buy a Japanese-made "Indian" belt or headband for the youngsters, are deluding only ourselves. Many hundreds of these people gather every summer to see the great curing ceremonies of the Sun Dance, or to feast and sing and play the ancient hand games. Watch the old men at these intertribal gatherings—the Sioux, the Crow, the Cheyenne, the Blackfeet, the Shoshone, the Arapaho—and see their old hands talk with that eloquent and moving sign language, the universal tongue of the plains Indian. Listen to their stories about the *uwipi* men and their medicine powers. See a Sun Dancer faint and

fall forward from exhaustion and hunger and know that never a move will be made to pick him up because he is sacred and he is being tested and he is proving himself a man.

Those of us who keep a tight timetable through the Northwest may tire after several hours on the road and stop at a cafe to have a cup of coffee and to stretch our legs a bit. Sitting next to us at the counter may well be a dark young Yakima—unmistakably Indian, but shorter than the plains people and very powerfully built through the chest and shoulders. He drinks his coffee alone, completely oblivious to everything around him. When he gets up quietly and his hand goes into his pocket for change, perhaps we watch him closely. As he brings his hand out filled with loose coins, we may notice that he is also holding four small, round pebbles. If we are very curious, we may think those pebbles rather out of place in a man's pocket and wonder if this means anything in particular. It does. It means that he has a pregnant wife at home, and that he carries the pebbles to insure that the child not miscarry or be stillborn. It further means that throughout his wife's term, he will have to be as careful as she not to have an untoward experiences. Not only will any mishap to his wife mark the child, but any similar experience to the husband can mark the child as well.

Thus the legends and the stories, the songs and

the games, the rituals and the ceremonies still exist. Anthropologists, ethnologists, and sociologists have probed and pried into these practices and beliefs, always with the idea of laying bare the most secret thoughts of a fine people. But the Indian talks only when he wants to, and he says, to a large degree, only what he figures the white man wants to hear; he keeps a secret very, very well. So there still remain today stories which no white man has heard and ceremonies which no white man has seen.

Some of these practices are, to us, dark and dreadful. As an example, I have been told by an informant whose word I trust implicitly that among his people, the Florida Seminoles who live in the remote fastnesses of the Everglades, the younger of a pair of twins is still regarded as not quite human. The birth of twins was highly suspect among most Indian tribes, and it was once widely believed by the Seminoles that around the birth of twin girls hovered an ominous threat to the manhood of the father. If both girls were allowed to live, this would "take the strength of the father and make him weak like a woman." Therefore, the younger of the pair would be abandoned—thrown away at birth—and thus left to die. This informant, a young man not yet twenty, tells me that *he has seen this practice carried out within the last decade.*

So our Indian may drive a late-model car and be

an avid cowboy-and-Indian fan of movies and TV, but if he has been brought up in a predominately Indian culture, there will be an almost unbelievable degree of "Indianness" under the sophisticated overlay. He may well have, packed away in a trunk sitting in the attic of a completely modern home, a uniform which bears the proud battle stars of Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima, of Sicily and Omaha Beach, of Inchon and Pork Chop Hill. Packed away with his uniform may be his "medicine," made by a cult priest to guarantee his safety in battle beyond the far waters.

He may well work in a highly responsible position, and be extremely proficient at his job; his fellow workers may notice a rather dark complexion and know him to be "something," but little suspect that the "something" is American Indian. Yet take him out into the woods on a fishing trip, and very likely he will break a cigarette and scatter the tobacco on the water before he ever wets a line, in propitiation to the old gods who governed the lives of his ancestors.

His accomplishments have been many and varied in his own tightly restricted society; he had been equally successful when he throws himself completely into the modern age. Charles Curtis, Vice-President of the United States under Herbert Hoover, was a Kansa; Jim Thrope, called by many the world's greatest athlete, was a Sac and Fox; Will

Rogers, one of the foremost entertainers our nation has known, was a Cherokee; Maria Tallchief, one of the few *prima ballerinas* to be developed within the United States, is an Osage; Ira Hayes, whose hands reached upward toward the Stars and Stripes when it was planted on Iwo Jima, was a Pima. The roll call might go on and on.

Many words have been written about the Indian and his disappearance from our national scene. Scholars have lamented his passing, Hollywood has shot millions of feet of film presenting him as he never was in the first place, and countless well-intentioned persons in well-intentioned organizations have wept sorrowfully over the noble red man who has departed from us.

The Indian has not departed, nor does he have any intention of departing. He was here first, and he is a member of a very old and a very proud race—older by far than we, and more proud than we can possibly imagine. He will tell us, with quiet confidence, that he intends to be here as a people long after we are gone. His heritage, his history, and his endurance suggest that he may very well be right.

APPENDIX
SELECTED FOLKLORE

ONE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING a people is by looking into their folklore; those aspects of a culture which are handed down through the oral tradition are sometimes deep and significant. And, too, the shadowy figures of history can take on a new dimension when the old stories told by their descendants are heard with new ears.

Throughout the text of this book one theme has been the relationship of the Indian with a spirit world—a world inhabited by powers which were very real and which exercised a vital force in his everyday life. That this relationship still exists is evidenced by the legends and tales which follow. These were not gleaned from books; rather, they

were told to me by young Indian people within the last year. These are the stories today's young Indian knows and tells and, to some extent at least, believes.

The troubles of Osceola (Chapter 5) touched upon white-man-red-man-black-man relations, and the Kiowa legend of the creation of these three races reveals an early awareness of differences (and a hierarchy of value because of those differences). This same basic story, but with a multitude of variations, is found among widely-scattered tribal groups today.

The heart of the Seminole man-making ceremony involves the taking of the black drink, from which Osceola's name was derived. This description of that ceremony also demonstrates the strength with which the Florida Seminoles cling to their traditions.

The Sioux story of the white buffalo is an example of the "spirit buffalo" stories once common among all of the buffalo-hunting Indians and still found existing today not only among the elders of the tribe but among the teenagers as well. The Nez Perce creation legend is a typical example of the "Coyote" stories—that crafty animal is the prime mover in the folklore of many of the American Indians. It also repeats the point of in-group superiority made in most creation myths around the world.

The Water Baby story is a grim contribution from the land of Wovoka, the Indian Messiah, and the Potawatomi *man-doz-it* story is an excellent example of the power of medicine, which has been mentioned often throughout the book.

I draw no deep inferences from these stories, what they mean or do not mean. They are included because this is a work about Indians from the point of view of history; yet these stories were told to me by young Indians, contemporary in our history. I feel that in a sense they complement each other.

A Blackfoot Legend
How the Horse Came to the Blackfeet

In the long-ago time before the horse came to the Indians, life was very hard. Travel was long and difficult, and the great buffalo hunts were dangerous.

In those days lived a young Blackfoot woman who was married to one of the hunters of the tribe. He was a stern man who did not understand their son and who was very harsh and cruel to him. The woman was greatly unhappy about this, and since she had no one to talk with, she would pour out her troubles to a star. She came to depend upon this star as a friend and guide.

The men of the tribe were preparing to go on a buffalo hunt, and one evening the woman went out by herself to seek consolation from her star. "Oh Spirit Star," she prayed, "help the hunters to be successful and help my husband to bring back much meat. And help him to understand our son, and to be kind and gentle to him."

The hunting party left, and the next day the woman, together with a friend, went out to gather wood. Her friend wandered away in her search for firewood, leaving the woman alone. As she was working, there suddenly appeared before her a tall, handsome, kind-eyed warrior. As she started to turn away in surprise, he spoke to her in a gentle voice.

"Do not be frightened of me," he said. "I am the Star Man to whom you have poured out your heart. I have watched you and I have loved you for many moons. Now I have come to take you away with me to my home in the sky. Take my hand and close your eyes, and do not open them until I tell you to."

The woman was startled to hear these words, but her life had been so unhappy and his voice was so kind that she placed her hands in his, closed her eyes, and went willingly with him to his home in the sky. Here she was very happy in her new life, and bore the Star Man a fine son who grew quickly to be a strong young brave.

One day she spoke to the Star Man, saying, "As I was walking near the woods yesterday I saw a good patch of wild turnips. I think that I'll go dig some today."

"Very well," answered her husband, "but there is one turnip in the patch which you must not pick. It is larger than the rest, and you must leave it alone."

So the woman went that day to dig turnips, and she saw the one which was larger than the others. She wanted it very much, but remembering that her husband had forbidden her to dig it, she took those which she had gathered and returned home. The following day she went back to the same place, and there she again saw the big turnip. This time she could not overcome her curiosity, so she dug it up.

When she lifted the great turnip out of the ground, its root went so deep that, when it was removed, it made a hole in the sky. Looking down through the hole, she could see her people the Blackfeet as they went about their daily tasks. A great wave of homesickness came over her, and she started to wonder about her first-born son, and she sat down in the turnip patch and cried for her people.

When she went back to her tepee that night, the Star Man saw that she had been crying and knew what had happened. "I know that you miss your

people and long to be with them, Earth-Woman Wife," he said to her. "And that is where you should be. Take our son and go back to the Blackfeet, and I shall live alone in the sky forever."

Saying this, he took a great buffalo hide and cut it into many long strips. He tied the strips together to make a rope, and through the hole in the sky where the great turnip had been, he lowered the rope until it touched the ground. The woman bade the Star Man good-bye and, taking her son, went down the rope toward the earth.

As the two were descending from the sky, a small boy on the earth saw them. He ran as quickly as he could to his mother, shouting, "Look! Look! People are coming down from the sky!"

But his mother did not believe him, and told him to run away and play. He told everyone he saw about this wonderful thing, but they all laughed at him and turned aside. Finally an old man looked to see where the boy was pointing, and he too saw the Earth-Woman Wife returning to the Blackfeet, together with the son of her flesh and of the Star Man.

All the people gathered to welcome her, and as she came close to the ground she bade them scatter sweet-grass on the earth before she touched it, so that no spirit would come with her from the sky. When this was done, the woman came safely to the ground and greeted her first-born with great joy.

The husband, however, had not changed in his ways and was still very cruel to his own son. The woman's second son, son of the Star Man, took charge of his older half-brother and provided him with food, and the two boys came to be very good friends and spent all of their time together.

One day while the two boys were in the woods, they became separated. The Star Man, who was very lonely in his home in the sky, appeared to the older brother. "I am the Star Man; I am the father of your younger brother," he said. "I am very lonely in the sky. It is right that your mother live with her people here, but I want my son to be with me. Will you let me take him away so that a father can be with his son?"

"I cannot do that," the first-born son replied. "He is my friend and we share all things together. We will never part."

"I know how you feel," the Star Man said. "But I will give you something in return. I will make you and your people masters of a great animal. It will be as large as a buffalo and as fleet as a deer. You can ride upon its back and hunt game and you can use it to carry your burdens. You will be able to catch much meat, and this animal, the horse, will be my great gift to the Blackfeet."

The older son thought carefully about it. It would be a great thing for his people, and a father whose wife had been taken away should have his son with him to comfort him. "All right," he

agreed. "You may take your son who is my half-brother and whom I love very much, if you give me this wonderful animal."

"Good!" the Star Man said. "Here is what you must do. Tomorrow morning before daybreak, a beautiful palomino mare will come up out of the lake. You must take a long rope and capture her. She will fight to get free, but you must not let her go. She is the leader of the horses, and if you keep her all the others will follow. If you do this, the Blackfeet will always have horses."

So the Star Man took his son back up into the sky, and early the next morning the older son was waiting at the lake. Out of the water came a beautiful palomino mare, and the youth threw the rope over the head of the mare as he had been told to do. She fought the rope desperately and it was all that the youth could do to hold her. But finally she grew tired, and the young Indian went to her and put his hand upon her, and she was quiet under his touch.

As soon as she was touched by the youth, all the other horses came out of the lake and followed the older brother and the palomino mare back to the village. The whole village was filled with joy and wonder at the appearance of these wonderful animals, and they soon grew to love them and to depend greatly upon them. And that is how the Star Man gave the first horse to the Blackfeet.

A Navajo Legend
The Bear and the "Shoes" Game

Before man came up out of the sacred underground lake through a hole made by the cicada, the earth was ruled by animals. One day the animals had a great meeting in a large cave, where they conferred about a very serious problem. Those animals who were night prowlers, like the owl, the bat, the kangaroo rat, the desert mouse, and the wolf, wanted darkness to be eternal. The daylight-loving animals—the deer, the rabbit, the eagle, the crow, and so on—wanted the sun to shine forever.

The animals talked together for a long time, but they could not come to a decision. Finally they agreed to play a "shoes" game to decide whether the world should be all darkness or all light.

This game is perhaps the most popular of the Navajo games today; it is a variant of the hand game found among almost all tribes. The game is played by two teams, with each team having four shoes filled with sand. One group of shoes is placed in the north half of the hogan, the other set in the south half. While a blanket is held up to shield one set from the view of the opposing players, a small ball made from a yaqui root is hidden in one of the four shoes. The blanket is removed and the guess-

ing team points out the shoe in which the ball is thought to be. The elaborate scoring system involving 102 pieces of yucca as counters is presided over by a banker, who keeps score and holds all bets. (The Navajos believe that 102 is the greatest number of years a person can attain, hence the number of counters.)

The game progresses until one team has won all of the counters. When this happens today the money, the richly worked silver and turquoise jewelry, and an occasional fine saddle horse change hands. The game was once played with four holes scooped in the sand; the ball would then be placed in one hole and all of the holes filled back up. The object of the game, of course, was the same—to guess which hole the yaqui-root ball was in. This older version was the one played by the animals in their "shoes" game to decide the fate of the light of the world.

The rules of the game between the animals were established. They would start their contest at sunset and play until sunrise, and if neither team had won by that time the game would end in a draw and the world would continue to have both daylight and dark.

The game got under way, and back and forth the yaqui-root ball passed, and back and forth the banker moved the yucca counters. When it appeared that one team was going to win, Coyote would go over to the side of the team which was

ahead; when his new team hit a losing streak and fell behind, Coyote would change sides again. That is why today Old Coyote prowls during both daylight and dark.

As the long night drew toward its end, the Daylight team was down to its last two counters. They could not afford to make a mistake, or the world would be plunged forever into darkness. After holding a conference, they decided that they could not take a chance on losing so they sent Groundhog to burrow underneath the earth and check to see which of the four holes filled with sand contained the yaqui-root ball.

So underground he went, quickly and carefully made his way to the other side of the cave, checked from beneath each of the four holes, and came back to report that the yaqui-root ball was in none of them! As the Daylight team heard this news, they realized that the Darkness team had been cheating them. They looked carefully over the opposition and agreed that the most likely place for the ball to be was under the wing of the owl. So one of the Daylight players took a stick and hit Owl sharply on the wing, and sure enough, out from under his wing rolled the ball.

It was just a few moments before sunrise, so the game was called a tie and the sun would continue to rise and set every day as it always had done. The Darkness team, anxious to get to their hiding places before daylight caught them, bolted out of

the cave and ran. Bear, who had been taking a little nap, awakened and realized that he had better be getting back to his mountain. He grabbed his shoes, which he had taken off, but in his great haste he got them on the wrong feet. And to this day, if you look closely at the tracks of the hind feet of a bear, you will see that they look as if they are wrong-footed. Bear dashed out of the cave and scrambled for his mountain, but just as he was a stride away from the cover of the woods the sun broke over the rim of the world and its rays slanted along his back. Today, then, you will see the lighter fur along the back of Bear, showing where the sun struck him on the morning after the "shoes" game of the animals.

A Kiowa Legend
How Dau-ke (The Great Spirit) Created Man

In the beginning *Dau-ke* created the world and all that was in it, but he was lonesome because there was no man upon earth. He decided to create a perfect man to have power over the lesser animals.

He looked around for materials to make such a being. He constructed a big oven in which to bake this creature, and then set out on a search for some clay from which to mold man.

Under the maple tree he found clay—light in color and fine in texture—and from this he molded the figure of a man and placed it in the oven. After he had waited for a while, he took the man out. But this being was pale in color and did not satisfy *Dau-ke,* so he called him *t'ah-koy-k'ee* (white man), and set him aside.

Under the hackamore tree he found more clay—dark and sticky gumbo, and from this he molded a second being. This time *Dau-ke* resolved to let him bake longer, and when he opened the oven he saw that the man was black, and this was not what he wanted. So he called the second man *kon-ge-on* (Negro), and set him aside.

Finally, after much searching, he found an oak tree which grew strong and mighty in the forest. From under the oak tree he took the rich reddish-brown clay, and with this he molded a third being. And *Dau-ke* took great care to bake him properly. The white man had been baked too little, the Negro had been baked too long; but when *Dau-ke* opened the oven the third time, he was pleased with the results. For out of the oven came a strong, tall, reddish-brown man who had the strength of the oak tree and the knowledge of the earth.

"Ah," said *Dau-ke* to himself. "I have created the perfect man. I shall call him *ge-gool-daw* (Indian)." And this is how the races of man came to be upon the earth.

A Seminole Custom
The Man-Making Ceremony

Coming-of-age ceremonies are found among primitive peoples all over the world. Most of the United States Indians today no longer observe such a ceremony in its strict sense; it is found only where the old cultures have held fast. It is still observed in parts of the Southwest, where large groups of people have lived in remote areas, and it is still found among the Seminoles of Florida.

The following is an edited transcription of a tape recording in which the author discussed this ceremony with an eighteen-year-old Seminole youth who had undergone it at the age of twelve.

"A Seminole boy must undergo this ceremonial in order to become a full man. If you haven't gone through it, you will always have a woman in you—I don't know what part of a woman, but you'll have some part of a woman in you and you won't live as long and be as healthy as if you'd gone through the man-making ceremony.

"I went through it about six years ago—I was about twelve years old—and I was one of the youngest boys in the group. It is held just before Christmas and it lasts eight days. If a boy wants to go through this ritual, he will arrange to find other boys who want to go through it and will ask the medicine man, and it will be held.

"The ceremony took place far out in the swamp on a small hammock (island). The medicine man had prepared the place ahead of time, and had built a small shed, facing east, and covered on all four sides. This was where the boys slept, on wooden beds about a foot wide and about six feet long. When we slept we had to lie flat on our backs, and we couldn't roll over. Also we were not allowed to scratch ourselves with our hands, and we had to lie very still. If we had to scratch, the medicine man gave us a small stick for this purpose.

"Before sunup every morning, we had to arise and go out and wash our faces in some special kind of water which the medicine man had prepared. When we had washed ourselves, we had to drink this same water. A short distance from the camp were some holes dug in the ground, one for each boy, and by each hole was a pole to hang onto. While the medicine man sang his ritual songs, we drank this water which made us vomit into the hole. When we first started the ceremony, we could tell what we had eaten by the vomit. But we ate nothing for the eight days except a small cup of *sofke* (a thin corn meal gruel) every day. After two or three days, all the food was cleaned out of our bodies and the vomit became black.

"This same thing was done every night before we went to bed. While the boys were doing this, the medicine doctor sat away from the camp and sang medicine songs to us. These songs were cures

for specific ailments and concerned various parts of the body. He would name the purpose of the song and then sing it, and the boys were devoting all their efforts to memorizing the song as he sang. We were supposed to cleanse our minds of everything else and concentrate on the songs and on thoughts of becoming a complete man. This continued at night after we were in bed—we had to lie still, and not turn over, and not scratch, and think only about the songs."

At this point the informant, who is by nature a very amiable person and who has trouble remaining serious about anything over a long period of time, had this comment to make.

"You know, the whole thing lasted eight days. The worst part about it was that you couldn't talk to anyone inside the shelter. You were supposed to just lie there, and the only time you could talk was a little while in the evening. I guess I was always stupid, so I usually just giggled around. I never did become much of a man. You weren't supposed to laugh or anything. Most of the boys who were interested really got something out of it. But I wasn't interested, and still don't feel like a full man. Another funny thing, they made us wear a little old Spanish moss around our waists, and that was all. The weather was cold, but we got through all right."

Following this departure from the matter at hand, the informant got back to his story.

"On the fourth day, the medicine man gave each of us a bow and two arrows which he had made. We went out to some pine trees, and there the medicine man told us to shoot off a pine cone and to catch it before it hit the ground. That would make you an accurate man in your life, and whatever you did, you'd be successful. So we shot the pine cones and tried to catch them as they fell. Many of them hit the ground, but on the second time around most of us caught the cones. It was supposed to make us great—I don't know whether it made me great or not.

"On the fifth day, we started hunting. We were given special weapons and we could not return until we had killed something. We were to kill anything we could, and then bring the game back and give it to the medicine man, and it was his to do with as he pleased.

"On the sixth day, the medicine man had a white dog. This dog was supposed to be a great spirit, and powerful medicine. The dog had been doctored so that it stank, and we rubbed our hands on the dog and then rubbed ourselves. The dog was supposed to be pure white, and we had to rub the odor all off the dog and all over ourselves—this gave us courage and purity.

"On the seventh day we went out and shot pine cones again, and each day, of course, we started by washing ourselves in the special water, drinking it, and vomiting. By this time we were all pretty

weak, so we had to hold onto the poles while we vomited.

On the eighth and last day we did everything all over again, and the medicine man sang all the songs. We had to sing them back in chorus—we had to sing back what we had learned. Before the day ended, he had some buzzard feathers for each of us. The Seminoles believe that buzzards are almost impossible to kill and that if you swallow a buzzard feather, you will go through war without being killed. You may be wounded, but never killed. So the medicine man told the boys how brave the buzzard was, and how he had taken the sun up into the sky, and other stories about him. Then he gave each of us a little plume—a pin-feather—somewhat soft and juicy, and we each took the feather and swallowed it. We thought it was really something great, to be able to go through war without being killed and to come back and see our families. None of us cared about how messy it was, we just swallowed it and thought nothing of it. Then we went through the songs again, and again rubbed our hands on the dog and rubbed the smell on ourselves. And we were complete men.

"As I look back at it now, some things about it seem strange. We drank only one cup of *sofke* each day, and yet we lost hardly any weight. The medicine man said that was because, while we were there, we were concentrating on what we were

doing and the medicine we drank took care of us, and that this was the significance of becoming a full man.

"In addition to the nine boys who went through it, there were three old men. These men have gone through it many times—they do it to get rid of their ailments and to become better men, and to get power by learning the medicine songs. And the men who have gone through this ceremony look younger than those who haven't. You can always tell who has gone through it, because they are more rugged-looking than the others.

"We learned how to sing some medicine songs, and at the latter part of the ceremony we learned some of the songs of *Pon-si* (Poisoner), so that if we wanted to get rid of somebody, we could.

"All this I'm telling you is not the whole thing, because I have forgotten most of it, and in a way I couldn't express myself the way it really was. But it was the most exciting thing I ever went through."

A Sioux Spirit Tale
The Power of the White Buffalo

In the great days of the Sioux Nation, the buffalo was the source of life without which the Indians could not have existed. Not only did the great shaggy beast give them meat, but also from his carcass came clothing and shelter and warm robes

against the bitter nights, tools and weapons and fishhooks, sinew and games and musical instruments. Not the least important was his role as a provider of fuel—on the empty, windswept prairies where no wood existed, buffalo "chips" allowed the red man to sustain life where otherwise it would have been impossible. But when the white hunters came with their guns, the herds of buffalo started to diminish. Where the Indians had killed a half-score at a time, the whites slaughtered them by the thousands. Soon the herds became difficult to find, and the white men began to put pressure on the Indians to reveal the places where the buffalo grazed.

Once, the Sioux say, the White Buffalo roamed the West. He was twice as large as an average animal, and he was worshiped as the Great White Spirit. He protected the Indians and cared for them; the buffalo herds moved at his will. The stories about him are many; the following is a single example.

There was an old Indian man traveling alone, several days out of camp. A group of white hunters fell in with him and forced him to tell where the buffalo were. Fearing that the Indian might not be telling them the truth, they made him a prisoner in their camp.

That night, after the hunting party had gone to sleep, the Indian raised his thoughts in prayer. "O

Great White Spirit," he said to himself, "help me and my people now. If the *wasichu* (whites) kill the buffalo, there will be the black face of hunger in the tepees, and the long bundles of our dead will blossom in the gaunt cottonwood trees by the river."

No sooner had he breathed the prayer than he heard a great ghostly lowing. He looked toward the hill which rose up and crested two miles away. There, outlined at the top of the hill, was the huge shape of the White Buffalo.

"Get away! Get away!" lowed the White Buffalo. "The evil white men will die!"

The Indian crept quietly from his blanket and started to make his way out of camp. One of the white men was aroused by a slight noise, and shouted out, "Where do you think you're going?"

"I'm going to water the horses," was the old man's reply.

At that moment, the faint rumble of hooves came to the two men. Each of them knew what it was—stampede! The Indian turned and ran as fast as he could, but he saw the dark river of buffalo flowing over the hill and toward the camp. His foot caught in a tangle of grass and he fell face down. He lay quietly, waiting for the mass to engulf him.

And then he sensed a strange thing. He did not look up, but he was aware of a strong and comfort-

ing presence near him, and there was a white radiance that penetrated through his closed eyelids. The onrushing buffalo split and went around his prone body, and he knew that the White Buffalo stood over him and guarded him.

When the thunder of hooves had died out, the Indian got up and made his way to where the camp had been. Everything had been destroyed—men, equipment, horses, all trampled into the South Dakota dust.

But after a few more years of the buffalo hunters, the vast herds were gone; the Indians went to the reservations, and the White Buffalo was no longer seen. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, so the story continues, a white miner was prospecting for gold in the Black Hills. He was exploring a sheer rock formation when a sudden storm came up, and he looked for shelter from the wind and rain. He saw a small opening in the rock wall, about head high. He squeezed into the narrow fissure, only to discover that it opened out into a cave. And there he found the skeleton of a huge buffalo, twice the size of an ordinary animal, and a few scattered tufts of white hair. The cave had only one small entrance; how the great beast had got into the cave the white man didn't know. But the Indians knew. They knew that this was the Spirit Buffalo who had had the power to help them, and when there were no more buffalo

on the plains and the Indian people no longer needed help, the White Buffalo had lain down to rest for eternity near his friends, the Sioux.

A Nez Perce Legend
How It-su-yah-yuh (Coyote) Created Man

In the long ago before there were men upon the earth, the animals lived together and could speak with each other. *It-su-yah-yuh* was the cleverest of them all and so was looked upon as their leader.

In the valley of Kamiah lived a great monster who was the enemy of the animals. This ferocious monster would capture the animals by opening his huge mouth and sucking in the air. This would create such a great wind that the animals would be drawn into the stomach of Kamiah.

One day *It-su-yah-yuh* the Coyote was traveling back toward his home, having been away visiting his friends in the east. As he trotted down the hill toward home, he was met by Crow.

"*It-su-yah-yuh! It-su-yah-yuh!*" Crow called loudly. "The great monster at Kamiah has sucked all the birds and animals into his stomach! I alone am left, and I escaped only because I was so high in the air!"

Coyote, knowing that the time had come for him to test his craftiness against the monster's strength,

followed Crow with great speed until they came out high upon the hillside overlooking the valley where the monster lay. As far away as they were, they could feel his hot, sucking breath pulling at them.

The crafty *It-su-yah-yuh* immediately took up a sharp rock and cut several strong vines. He crept as close to the monster as he dared. Then he tied himself securely to a tree with the vines he had cut, and anchored himself further with a number of sharp rocks which he tied around his waist.

"Kamiah! Monster!" shouted *It-su-yah-yuh.* "I am going to kill you."

When the monster heard these words from Coyote, he became enraged. He blew out all his breath and sucked in the air with such force that the grass shriveled and the trees bent low from the hot wind. The stout vines with which *It-su-yah-yuh* had tied himself broke, and he went flying through the air and was drawn into the stomach of Kamiah.

When Coyote's eyes grew accustomed to the darkness of the monster's stomach, he saw there all his followers, starving and thirsty.

"Why are you hungry?" asked *It-su-yah-yuh.* "There is plenty of meat here. Let us kill the monster."

But the other animals were afraid. The great bear was afraid, so Coyote kicked him in the face for his

fear, and that is why the bear's face is flat; the poisonous rattlesnake was afraid, so Coyote stepped on his head for his fear and that is how he got his flat head. Then Coyote took a sharp rock from his belt and plunged it into the heart of the monster. The hills surrounding the valley of Kamiah echoed with the death-sounds of the great beast, and the animals struggled to get out of the body of the threshing monster.

Fox came to the aid of *It-su-yah-yuh*, and together the two hacked their way out through Kamiah's side. Because of this brave act, Fox was made nearly as wise and clever as Coyote. The tiny mouse tried to escape through the mouth of Kamiah, whose great jaws were opening and closing in his death agony. Mouse was almost out when the teeth of Kamiah snapped shut, catching his tail, and that is why the tail of a mouse is so rough. Muskrat was making his exit through the rectum of Kamiah, but as he was all free except for his tail the anal muscles of the monster contracted sharply, and this stripped the hair from the muskrat's tail and left it bare. At last quiet fell over the valley, and Kamiah was dead.

Eventually all the animals escaped safely, and there was great rejoicing that their enemy had been killed. But *It-su-yah-yuh* still had one more thing to do, and that was to dispose of the body of Kamiah. He cut the body up and with his great

magic power he scattered the carcass, throwing the leg bones to the east; where the bones struck the earth the Blackfeet were created, a tall and stately people. The bones of the body he threw to the west and when they struck the earth the Yakimas came into being, a shorter, thick-bodied tribe. The bones of the arms he threw to the south, and when they struck the earth the Umatillas were born, a people with powerful shoulders and great strength in their arms. The skull of the monster he rolled toward the north, and the skull grew marvelously into the Flatheads, a people who shaped the skulls of their young on headboards.

As *It-su-yah-yuh* paused from his labors he saw that he had created all these people, but he knew that there must be one more tribe brought to life. As all of the body of Kamiah had now been used, he looked around him—and there on the ground was a pool of the heart's blood of Kamiah. *It-su-yah-yuh* dipped his paw into the blood and scattered it over the valley, and where the drops struck the earth the bravest and finest tribe of all the Indians was created—the Nez Perce.

Shoshone-Ute-Paiute Spirit Tales
The Water Baby

Water Baby tales are found among the Shoshones, the Utes, and the Paiutes; the Shoshones know

the creature as *Bah-o-hah,* to the Utes it is *Pa-a-puch.* It is described as a night roamer which is the size and form of a human child, but covered with green, shaggy hair over its entire body. It lives in swampy places and along water courses; its feet and hands are webbed. The cry of *Bah-o-hah* is like that of a human baby, and the sound sometimes paralyzes those who hear it. It is a vicious killer, and kills and eats both animals and human beings.

A Ute boy of eighteen told the following story that had been related to him by an uncle who had seen a Water Baby:

"My uncle was coming home from a summer cattle drive through the mountains of eastern Utah when evening caught up with him. He set up camp by a deep, clear stream, caught a few fish for supper, and turned in for the night in his tent. He was startled out of his sleep by the strange cry of *Pa-a-puch.* Picking up his gun and flashlight, he went out into the night which was dimly lit by weak moonlight. Seeing something move along the bank of the stream, he walked toward it and turned on the flashlight. The creature slipped into the water before he had a chance to shoot, but there was no question about its being a Water Baby—the green shaggy hair, the webbed feet, and the cry like that of a human child.

"My uncle decided to leave that place as soon as he could, so he struck camp. When he went to get

the horses, he discovered that his pack horse had already been killed by *Pa-a-puch*. He threw all his belongings on his saddle horse and left quickly, and he has never gone close to that place again."

The Paiute version of the Water Baby differs in that it is represented as having dark green skin, smooth like that of a man child. Its hair is black and long, but grows only on the head just as does a baby's hair. It has long and sharp animal fangs, and cannot be caught or killed because of its great speed and agility—it dies only from the natural cause of old age. The hands and feet are not webbed; it leaves tracks in the moist earth near water which are wholly indistinguishable from the tracks of a two-year-old child.

Water Babies are sometimes seen in groups and upon occasion will attack their prey in groups. Most often they prey upon children and the young of other animals, but can kill any animal or man they choose. These creatures live in caves back under the banks of streams, but the entrance to the cave can be reached only under water. Of particular interest is the Paiute belief that the Water Baby is the offspring of a human mother and father—an illegitimate child conceived near water will be born a Water Baby.

A rather horrible Water Baby story was told me by a Paiute girl of nineteen. The girl said that she had once heard the cry of a Water Baby when she

was playing as a child near the Owens River on the Paiute reservation in California. Her great-grandfather told her what it was and warned her to run quickly away from the water, because the cry was that of a thing of evil.

When she was older and could understand, she was told the story of how the loathsome creature had brought death to a Paiute woman. One evening at dusk, a woman who had a baby of her own in a wickiup in the village was walking along the bank of the river. She heard the soft cry of a child, whimpering to itself. Looking about in the grass, she came upon the quiet form of what she thought was an abandoned baby, crying as if it were hungry. She picked the thing up in her arms and it snuggled close to her, still whimpering.

The light was failing fast, and as the small, warm creature nestled against her, she did what any Indian mother would do with a hungry child—she gave it her breast to suck. Instantly the Water Baby sank its sharp fangs into her breast, tearing at the woman and gorging itself upon her flesh. Its powerful fingers dug into her and clung as she tried to hurl the hideous thing from her. At last she dislodged it and cast it away, and the Water Baby skittered into the river, still crying. The woman ran to the village, blood streaming from the gaping wound where her breast had been. That night she died from loss of blood.

Small wonder, then, that the Paiutes fear the voracious little monster which cries like a child, which has unlimited strength and agility, and which cannot be destroyed by man.

A Shoshone-Bannock girl gives yet a different account of *Bah-zee-zee,* as she calls the Water Baby. She was told as a youngster that mothers should never lay their nursing children down near the water lest a *Bah-zee-zee* steal the child and take its place. Then, when the mother went to nurse the child, the *Bah-zee-zee* would not eat of the mother's flesh but would suck the life forces from her breast and thus bring about the mother's death.

A Potawatomi Spirit Tale
The Man-doz-it (Powers of Darkness)

Among the Prairie Band of Potawatomis exists today a very complex belief in the age-old struggle between the forces of good and of evil. The spirit of evil is called a *man-doz-it,* and those men who can control this spirit are called by the same name. They are what we would understand by the term "makers of bad medicine."

The human *man-doz-it* must undergo a long period of training before he becomes the master of his craft. The secret of *man-doz-a-jen* (bad medi-

cine) is a closely guarded one, and is known only to a select circle of nine men. There are nine principal clans among the Potawatomis—Lightning, Thunder, Eagle, Hawk, Bear, Wolf, Coyote, Rabbit, and Fish; a member of each clan must be a *man-doz-it* or all of them lose their control over the spirits. When a member dies, a neophyte is recruited before any further power can be exercised by the remaining members.

These *man-doz-its* are both masters of, and slaves to, the evil which they control. When the decision is made and one step is taken down the *man-doz-it* road, a practitioner forfeits all hope of an eternal salvation and knows that his soul is condemned to burn in hell. But the temptation is great, and a Faustus is always ready to barter immediate power for the loss of a happy hereafter.

The medicine man makes his medicine with the old rituals and the secret knowledge rooted deep in the lore of these people. This carefully guarded medicine is put into a small buckskin bag that is attached to a broad buckskin band. On the band with this particular bag will be other similar bags, each filled with a medicine for a specific purpose—love, good health, success in the hunt, and so on. The band is worn over one shoulder, and is fastened to a belt at the waist. The practitioner never wears this openly, but behind closed doors the

Indians know who the *man-doz-its* are; however, this information is never revealed outside the tribe.

Differing from many tribes in their beliefs about medicine, the Potawatomis feel that once the medicine is made it has a life of its own, and must be nourished or it will turn upon its master. The *man-doz-it* spirit must be kept active; it must be called upon to perform its evil often.

The medicine man can loose this spirit against those who have offended him personally. Three times he will overlook an offense—an unintentional jostling, a remark which wounds his sensitive vanity—but a fourth offense against him calls for the death of the offender. It is also possible for anyone to go to a *man-doz-it* and arrange for an enemy to be disposed of. Not very long ago, a fine horse would change hands between the two and the deal would be consummated; now (in 1964) it is a matter of three or four hundred dollars finding its way into the pocket of the medicine man.

When the medicine man is ready to loose the powers of darkness, his first step is to obtain the hair of the victim. A casual hand on the shoulder in a seemingly friendly meeting, and a strand or two of hair comes away in the hand of the *man-doz-it.* This hair is mixed with the medicine, and the spirit of evil in the buckskin bag now knows the person whom it must seek out. The medicine man himself

need never again associate with the victim; he goes into a deep, trancelike sleep and his spirit is now one with the spirit of evil in the medicine.

He will assume the form of a common animal—a wolf, a dog, an owl, a lowly frog—and in this form will contact the victim. Once the contact is made, the medicine starts its fiendish work. Perhaps the end will come mercifully soon—a matter of four or five days. More often, the deep-set hatred which prompts a desire for revenge and death will demand that the sickness be a long and agonizing one, drawn out over a period of several years. But the end result is the same: the victim is dead, and the spirit of evil has been *almost* satisfied—almost, but not quite. The *man-doz-it* spirit is still hungry.

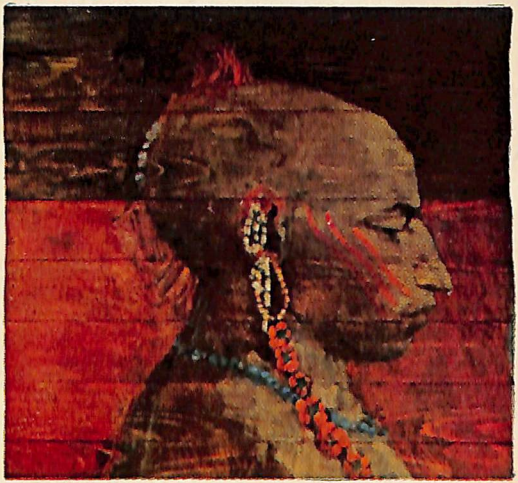
When a death occurs, the friends of the dead sit up with the body. One of the purposes of this deathwatch is to guard the corpse against further attack by the spirit. But the spirit has great power, and it has one more thing to accomplish. It causes the watchers to sleep, and when they are no longer on guard, the *man-doz-it* spirit enters through the mouth of the corpse and gorges itself upon the tongue of the person whom it has killed. Now satiated, it returns to the small buckskin bag on the broad buckskin belt worn over the shoulder of the practitioner, who is both its master and its man.

There is, however, no Fountain of Youth for the

medicine man, and as he grows toward old age he may reflect upon what he has done. He may wish to make amends, but he took his fateful step long ago, and there is no way by which he can escape the consequences of that step. He may burn his medicine and devote the rest of his life to good works, but his end echoes with the overtones of a Greek tragedy. He will suffer what he has made others suffer. His death will come with a horrible, creeping slowness, a soft moccasin-step at a time. He will long for it, but it will be a shadowy and elusive thing. And when it does come, he knows that there will be no rest after death, only total damnation. That was the bargain he struck long ago with the dark spirits.

When he dies, the eight living *man-doz-its* will cast about in search of one more—young, virile, ambitious for quick power, with a long life stretching ahead of him. And they will always find him, for such are the powers of darkness.

HE WAS SMART, HE WAS TOUGH, HE WAS TRICKY. HE GAVE THE U. S. ARMY THE WORST MAULING IN ITS HISTORY, AND CAUSED TWO GENERALS TO RESIGN!



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