

## Belles lettres and bell ringers

WARPATH, by Stanley Vestal. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin. \$3.

**W**ARPATH is the life story of White Bull, a Sioux chief, who is now a very old man. He told this story to Stanley Vestal as they sat cross-legged in the shade of a log cabin on the plains.

Mr. Vestal has recorded the story in short sentences, just as it was told to him. He has conscientiously remained faithful to the spirit of the story. As the old chief dreamed under the burden of his thrilling memories and told his story in his own way, Mr. Vestal remained the instrument by whose agency these adventures were to be conveyed to the reading public. In doing this he has given more than mere words. Something of the old chief's psychology and philosophy of living are evinced throughout the book. Mr. Vestal has caught everything except one of the most important things in Indian storytelling. That is the very expressive pantomime. Without this pantomime the written word loses its force and sometimes gives the impression of flatness.

However, the absence of this vitalizing force is certainly not the fault of Mr. Vestal, as there is no adequate way to interpret Indian gestures by the written word. One mentions this simply to indicate to the reader of *Warpath* that he must expect a consciousness of something lacking in an Indian story even though it be as faithfully recorded as this one certainly is.

It is only recently that books about Indians have pictured the Indian as a human being. A human being whose life is filled with play, war, love, tragedy and religion, instead of as a devilish mechanism whose only thought and activity was the scalping of virtuous white men. Or pictured on the other hand as Lo, the poor Indian, a saintly, down-trodden animal over whom people sentimentalized.

Among the authors of recent books who portray the Indian faithfully, Mr. Vestal is very prominent, and we are grateful to him for his scholarly and sincere work.

*Warpath*, as stated above, is the life story of one Sioux chief, but his life was an active one and a very long one, having for a background the most active period of commercial development on the Great Plains and in the Black Hills. Chief White Bull lived through the intensest period of struggle between the two races. He tells in detail the story of the Wagon Box Fight, the true story of which has always

been hazy because of the terrible strain which was imposed upon those who took part; their statements naturally were wild and exaggerated.

No story of adventure could be more thrilling than the old chief's description of his people waiting in ambush for Fetterman and his men, of the United States army, and the terrific battle that ensued, wherein not a soldier got back to Fort Phil Kearny alive.

But the story is not of war alone. The reader hears from the chief the story of his boyhood and the little tragedies of a child's life. He will laugh to himself about White Bull's marital troubles and gain an insight into feminine characteristics of the Sioux women. The reader will ride with the raconteur on a horse-taking expedition against the Crows, and swim with a party of Sioux warriors, the Yellowstone flowing with mush ice.

The reviewer recommends *Warpath* to the reader interested in Indians and human struggle and especially to the reader who loves Homeric adventure.

—John Joseph Mathews, '20as.

### ▲ Playhouse Presents Final Play of Season

"The Witch," a three act drama by John Masefield, will be the fifth and final Playhouse production of the season. It will be directed by Miss Ida Z. Kirk.

The play will be presented during the seventh regional meeting of the National Theatre conference which will be held April 13 and 14 on the campus. Actors, directors, playwrights and dramatic art teachers of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana have been invited to the regional conference of which Rupel J. Jones, director of the school of dramatic art, is chairman.

### ▲ Mathews Works on Second Book

John Joseph Mathews, '20as, Pawhuska, whose first book last year was selected by the Book-of-the-Month club for distribution, is completing a second book which will go to the publishers this month.

Mathews' *Wah'Kon-Tah*, published by the University Press, received an enthusiastic audience nationally and the young Oklahoman has been urged to complete his second volume for an eastern publishing house.

He has been in Norman during March completing the book. During his stay, he has addressed numerous literary groups in Oklahoma City and Norman.

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