



The University Press Indian Civilization Series represents the most ambitious publishing project of any university press.

Recording the Indian's Civilization

By Joseph A. Brandt

PERHAPS when time gives the proper perspective, the story of the subduing of the American Indian will have to rank as one of the world's most tragic conquests. The Indian has been the constant victim, both of his friends and his enemies; his enemies have regarded him as an eternal nuisance, a philosophy best expressed in the infamous words that "a good Indian is a dead Indian." The friends of the Indian have erred on the side of either making him a great romantic figure, thus disgusting the realist, or devoting themselves to special pleading, thus losing the effect of what they have to say in the multitude of special pleadings to which the modern American is subjected.

To arrive at the true story of the American Indian has been the goal of the Civilization of the American Indian Series which the University of Oklahoma Press inaugurated in 1932. Oklahoma, the first Indian state of the Union, in point of population as well as in tradition, seemed the most logical place from which such a truth-seeking venture could emanate. The Indian in Oklahoma numerically ranks larger in population than in any other state. He has been more readily accepted as a citizen capable of sharing in the development of the commonwealth than in any other state. This is true in spite of the fact that the fullblood Indian has been subjected to a tremendous pressure of exploitation should he be so unfortunate as to have land rich in mineral wealth, which could be alienated. Despite this, the modern state of Oklahoma

has had its full share of Indians who have helped in the building of the state.

Yet despite the acceptance of the Indian as a part of daily living by Oklahomans, there is even in this state, a tendency to quarrel whenever the "Indian question" is raised—without going into the merits at all of Commissioner Collier's reforms. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that his program could not be more objectively considered by Oklahomans. Nationally, any effort at Indian reform immediately arouses tremendous debate and in the case of the Collier proposals, the commissioner's opponents went so far as to try to make him out a Communist. Now, the goal of the Civilization of the American Indian Series of the University of Oklahoma is entirely removed from the current debate. We are interested solely in arriving at the truth concerning the Indian. The duty of the scholar who seeks the truth about the Indian is three-fold, it seems to me.

First, he must consider the aboriginal status of the Indian to understand the culture pattern which made the Indian what he was.

Second, he must consider the development of the Indian both in his tribal and national relations, and in his relations with the conquering white man.

Third, he must consider the maladjustment which the disturbance of a primitive economy and a primitive culture has undergone as a result of both conquests and inadequate assimilation into the dominant white culture.

Thus the story will seem to be a con-

tinuous tragedy, but once recognizing the inevitability of a primitive culture like that of the Indian yielding to the aggressive dominant white culture, the problem becomes merely that of making the modern adjustment easier and more humane and this can be accomplished, it seems to me, only if we have a thorough understanding of the three phases of Indian development.

The Civilization of the American Indian Series is built around the three-fold program necessary for complete understanding of the Indian. Most of the books thus far published—and to date, fifteen titles have been published in the Series—have been largely concerned with the problem of history and the attempt of adjustment of the Indian into white culture. The Series has had a rather spectacular career thus far. It is one of the most ambitious publishing problems undertaken during the depression by any university press. Several of its titles have had signal success. Thus *Wah' Kon-Tah* by John Joseph Mathews was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection in 1932. It was and is the only book of a university press which has been chosen as a full selection. Six other titles of the series have been recommended by the Book-of-the-Month Club. One of the titles, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic* by Angie Debo was declared by the American Historical Association to be the best contribution to American history published in 1934. The works of Grant Foreman which have appeared in this Series have

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 39)

The Indian's Civilization

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18)

completely revised the basic story of the State of Oklahoma, as well as have presented with rare objectivity the tragic destruction of the Five Civilized Tribes which probably had reached the highest stage of civilization, as we know it, of any of the great Indian tribes.

Archives from Spain to Mexico, from Washington to London and Paris have been explored by scholars, and tribes from Labrador to Mexico have been studied to make the Series the reality it is today. The work that Alfred Barnaby Thomas did, whose *Forgotten Frontiers* inaugurated the Series in 1932, was done principally in the archives of the Indies at Seville. Professor Thomas translated and published for the first time the long drawn reports of Juan Bautista de Anza, who was governor of Mexico from 1777-87. De Anza is perhaps better known as the founder of the city of San Francisco. In *Forgotten Frontiers*, we obtain a vivid first-hand account of Spain's relations with the Indians who were then neighbors of No Man's Land, which the State of Oklahoma now occupies. Again in *After Coronado*, Professor Thomas uses documents from Spain and Mexico to reveal the extraordinary story of Spain's exploration even as far north as Labrador as early as 1696-1727. Here again while the casual reader will find a fascinating story of daring exploration into virgin land, a student of the Indian will get rare description of Indian life and customs as reported at first hand by people seeing them for the first time.

Grant Foreman's work has been principally with the archives in Washington, although indefatigable scholar that he is, every source from the Huntington Library to the British Museum in London has been explored by him as well. From musty and neglected documents which had been forgotten even by the custodians of them in Washington, Mr. Foreman painstakingly resurrected the story of Southwestern Indian life. From his pages emerges the real story of what is now Oklahoma. Vividly and accurately he presents a civilization and culture in the Indian Territory part of Oklahoma existing a century ago with almost the same richness that characterized New England. This frequently strikes the Easterner who is prone to think of Oklahoma in terms of "runs" or even in terms of "statehood" with surprise. It is difficult for him to realize that a vigorous society was functioning in the neighborhood of Fort Gibson, for instance, in the 1840's. We are prone to forget the early distinguished residents of Oklahoma like Sam Houston and Jefferson Davis, although we do recall the famous visit of Washington Irving.

Mr. Foreman has made every Oklahoman of this and future generations his debtor by rescuing while there was time

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE
ONLINE DUE TO COPYRIGHT RE-
STRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this issue
is available at call number
LH 1 .06S6 in Bizzell
Memorial Library.

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE
ONLINE DUE TO COPYRIGHT RE-
STRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this issue
is available at call number
LH 1 .06S6 in Bizzell
Memorial Library.

the story of this early hitherto unknown Oklahoma. It happens that Oklahoma is probably the only state in the Union whose early records are to be found principally in Washington. This is due to the fact that eastern Oklahoma was administered almost entirely by military force and Indian agents. These records consequently were deposited from time to time in Washington. The other great source of Oklahoma history has been that of missionary records. Mr. Foreman explores these as did Mrs. Althea Bass in her charming *Cherokee Messenger*, the moving and sympathetic life story of the great missionary, Reverend Samuel Austin Worcester, who had the honor of printing the first book in Oklahoma.

The anthropological aspect of the Indian in the study of the primitive culture has not had as wide a place in the Series as we would like. This has been due principally to financial limitations, but later on it is hoped that more studies of this very essential phase of the Indian can be included. Frank G. Speck, the brilliant anthropologist, who is now at the University of Pennsylvania and who spent many of his early years in the Indian Territory, gives in *Naskapi* a rare picture of an Indian group who after more than three centuries of contact with white people still remains as primitive as the day of the first contact. Mr. Speck spent fifteen years with the Naskapi Indians on the Labrador Peninsula, and his book is considered by many critics to be one of the finest studies ever published of the primitive Indian. Mr. Speck's primary approach is through religion which is basically the same approach that John Joseph Mathews uses in his *Wah'Kon-Tah*. Curiously enough it is this same phase, treated by both Mr. Mathews and Mr. Speck, which is probably least understood by the white man.

In addition to the documents published by Professor Thomas, the Press is fortunate to be able to publish the convincing and revealing documents relating to that strenuous period of Indian relations, the Sioux Wars, especially with Sitting Bull and the famous chiefs of that time—a period from 1850-91. While American readers are as a rule headline readers rather than document readers, nevertheless work like Stanley Vestal's presents a convincing as well as unbiased record of relations between Indian and white people which it would profit every American to read. In addition to the documents themselves, Mr. Vestal, who is probably the first American scholar to use the human document—the Indian himself—in a scientific manner, has a very illuminating essay in this book telling how he gathered and weighed his material.

In addition to Mrs. Bass' biography of Reverend Worcester, the Press has published a number of other biographies in the Series. No Indian series would be complete without an account of General Pratt,

the founder of Carlisle, whom Elaine Goodale Eastman calls *The Red Man's Moses*. Mrs. Eastman was the best person in the world to write this book since she herself had taught under General Pratt and had, both through her own interest and that of her famous husband, followed the Indian question most of her life. No modern reader can help being moved by the simple yet charming biography of Thomas Wildcat Alford, the great grandson of Tecumseh, a man who renounced the chieftainship of his absentee Shawnee Indians to follow the White Man's Road. It was told to Mrs. Florence Drake of Tecumseh by Mr. Alford, who himself lives at Tecumseh. Mr. Alford has a long and honorable record of service to his people, not the least of which was his brave stand in the famous Kickapoo Land Fraud case. Equally charming are the memoirs of the late John H. Seger, dealing with his experiences among the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians. Mr. Seger brought his memoirs in 1923 to the University of Oklahoma where his friend Stanley Vestal edited them. They were published as a university bulletin under the title, *Early Days Among the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians*. Incidentally this was the first appearance of Stanley Vestal as an author. Later when the edition of the bulletin ran out, the demand for it continued and it was reissued as a part of the Series.

The latest title published in the Series was the ironic and charming *Red Cloud's Folk* by George E. Hyde. Just as Miss Debo had told for the first time the rounded stories of an Indian nation, so Mr. Hyde tells for the first time the complete history of a Teton Sioux tribe. Mr. Hyde, who lives at Omaha, Nebraska, spent thirty years in Indian research, having been the research assistant to George Bird Grinnell. He is regarded by many people as one of the foremost authorities on the American Indian. Mr. Hyde illustrates the dispassionate nature of the authors who approach their task for the Indian Series. Thus he can assess blame on both white and Indian where he feels blame is due.

It has been the hope of the University of Oklahoma Press that when the Series is complete the American reader will have available in one series a rounded picture of a vanishing civilization. The entire project was conceived as a part of the dormant but not forgotten hope of establishing an American Institute of Indian Civilization at the University of Oklahoma. From two to three titles are issued annually by the Press. Still remaining to be published in the fiscal year's program are: *A Political History of the Cherokee Indians* by M. L. Wardell, professor of history and assistant to President Bizzell; and *McGillivray of the Creeks*, a series of documents edited by John Caughey of the University of California. Mr. Caughey is editor of the *Pacific Historical Quarterly*.