

NEW BOOKS

FROM SOONERS
AND THE O.U. PRESS

Reviewer—Dick Smith

Covered Wagon Geologist by Charles N. Gould, University of Oklahoma Press

WHEN he died in 1949 Charley Gould was Mr. Geology of the Southwest—one of the most geologically significant areas of the world. And no doubt children would be spelling gold with a “u” today, if Mr. Geology had been as shrewd as he was smart.

The founder of O.U.’s geology school, Charley Gould was about the only geologist in The Territory who knew an anticline from his behind. But for some reason Gould contented himself with a Ph.D., with Oklahoma’s Geological Survey (which he founded also), and with traipsing all over Oklahoma looking for cement, building stones, and water resources, when most of his students and associates were making enough oil money via Charley’s anticline lectures to set up a thousand geology schools.

It is doubtful, as the publishers of Gould’s posthumous autobiography romanticize, that the reason Gould was such a reluctant opportunist was that he simply “disliked oil, just as he disliked money.” Charley Gould certainly tossed off drilling recommendations cheap and even free to anyone who was interested, but he hardly disliked oil or money.

Leaving the University and the Survey for 13 years, Gould set up a consulting office in Oklahoma City during the State’s heyday of drilling. True, he priced his services reasonably enough, but he always insisted on checkerboard leases as part of his client’s payment. Unhappily, his clients seemed to be better checker players than Charley—particularly when an adamant Texas Panhandler talked him out of the lease-payment plan before drilling in the Amarillo gas and oil field (which owes its origin to a Charley Gould survey).

These disappointments, coupled with Gould’s own ironic drilling ventures (he picked loaded areas but failed to drill deep enough) encouraged him to resume the

“treadmill” of the Survey and the University . . .

It turned out to be a rewarding retreat. His reverential, bonanza-hitting students reminded him of other wealth by spreading the legend of Gould the pure scientist who scorned money and tossed off old-timer homilies and sublimer drilling recommendations for the asking.

Gould became famous through those students. And Gould, the proud, ambitious product of book-respecting farmers and chip-on-the-shoulder Kansas cow college professors, could appreciate and was gratified by this recognition.

“Whatever you do or do not do, Gould,” advised one of his early Hero-Professors, “begin to publish. I have watched scientists for twenty years, and it is my experience that it is the scientific damnation of any young person starting out in a scientific career to go five years without publishing. The world does not know, nor does it care that you are alive, and the world is not going to give you the glad hand. It is up to you to take the world by the throat and make it recognize you.”

When Gould asked this eminent Wheat State scientist what he should publish, he was told: “That does not matter. The essential thing is to break into print, get your thoughts into type, get them on paper . . . It does not make so much difference what you print, as long as you get into type.”

Gould considered this one of the most valuable bits of advice he ever received. But to a reader less indulgent than the hundreds who owe their wealth and careers to Charley Gould, his autobiography is the garrulous signature of a man who followed the wrong advice. Charlie Gould should have been writing not autobiographies but checks.

RECOMMENDED: But only to his many friends. There’s more gab than gold in this Gould mine.

The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de Leon, translated by Harriet de Onis, edited by Victor W. Von Hagen, University of Oklahoma Press

ENCOURAGED by University Press Director Savoie Lottinville, explorer-author Victor Wolfgang von Hagen has edited the first two Inca chronicles of Pedro de Cieza de Leon into a one-unit chronicle. The new chronicle, *The Incas*, is a superb book which the important but neglected observations of Cieza deserve.

Cieza, a late-arriving conquistador in Peru, prepared four chronicles of first-hand information about the then-recently crush-

ed Inca kingdom; but Spain’s sensitivity to the Black Legend caused three of the chronicles to be suppressed. Although later Spanish historians pilfered freely from Cieza’s manuscripts in preparing “approved” accounts of Spain’s South American colonies, Cieza nearly slipped into oblivion until non-Spanish historians (particularly America’s Prescott) rescued his reputation as the finest historian of the Incas.

The Press’ book—with Editor Hagen’s interesting introduction-history of Cieza; with Cieza’s preface, dedication, and will; and with Harriet de Onis’ readable translation—is valuable not only as our best record of the Incas (this new volume, incidentally, is the 53rd addition to the Press’ Civilization of the American Indian series), but it gives the reader the added savor of seeing two civilizations in one reading: The Peru of the Incas through the Spain of Cieza. Both are fascinating in a volume that in its own way vies physically with the Press’ beautiful book on the Aztecs.

RECOMMENDED: Books like *The Incas* make the Press’ signature (Books Worth Keeping) its reputation.

Engineering Manual, Robert H. Perry, editor-in-chief, McGraw-Hill

RECOMMENDED: A compact and handy compilation of methods and data in the architectural, chemical, civil, electrical, mechanical and nuclear engineering fields.

The Chisholm Trail by Ross Mc-Laury Taylor, Grosset & Dunlap; *Born of the Sun* by John H. Culp, William Sloane Associates

THESE two books by O.U. authors deal with the lightning-quicksand-carpet-bagger-tornado-bandit-Indian-city-slicker-flood-besieged fortunes of two Texas kids who get lessons in manhood while helping to drive cattle herds across the Indian Nations. Taylor’s juvenile-market kid gets a disaster at the end of each chapter, and it’s small wonder that once in Kansas the kid sets the example for his young readers by going off to St. Louis to attend a normal school—with his kissin’ cousin. Culp’s kid, on the other hand, is meant for adult readers and Culp wends him back to Texas, wiser, older, and soft on miscegenation (sweet, therapeutic Morning Star back in

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JUST A SMALL REQUEST

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thought Keyserling, the human spirit might indeed be restored, once again to its proper place as ruler of all things human.

Sitting here quietly on my rug, it comes to me that I have seen all of his bad predictions and precious few of his good ones coming true in the 30 years since his book (*America Set Free*) was written. I have watched the world expansion of a culture of Cokes and Camels, soft drinks, soft cushions, soft living and soft heads; a mechanical materialism that in some ways is the most terrible this world has ever seen. Terrible in that it flatly denies the very existence of the human soul, asserting instead that a machine can always do it better, terrible in that, like the Purple People Eater, it proposes to eliminate man from his own working world.

I think here in Oklahoma, the spiritually youngest of all the States, we have, in some respects, compiled some of the most frightening records of all. I was born in Indian Territory and expect to go back to the Red Earth when I die: I am wistfully proud of my State, or wish to be. But there are some things we do of which I am not proud.

I am certain, for one, that a people without a literature will fail also to leave much history. As Dr. Samuel Johnson put it, "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." But in my Oklahoma, alas, save to a very few, a native author rates exactly nowhere and must go elsewhere to receive acclaim, while even an imported one fares scarcely better. Even the imports we value more by the distance they have come (and into which they will presently vanish) than by the message, if any, they bring us. While as for actually reading their works, what Oklahoman ever does!

I admire oil wells and grain elevators and football players greatly, and I wish I owned some of them. But I wish also a few gallons of Oklahoma oil, a few more gallons, would be used occasionally for the spiritual enlightenment of Oklahomans, for oil for the lamps of literature, as well as for the hurtling motors and throbbing, all too often deadly, engines. I wish a few grains of our wheat could be used for spiritual bread.

A crowd of 50,000 at a football game is a fine thing: I'm often one of it. But I wish we could get 500 to listen to a philosopher, or an artist, or an author.

Tall, shining, multi-million dollar buildings are mighty nice to have. But I remem-

ber, Christ sat on a lakeshore, Buddha sat underneath a tree, and Lao-tzu sat humbly on the good, black earth of ancient China to impart their messages. I do not recall that the kind of buildings, if any, around them, was recorded. I do recall the classic definition of a University, and it was not Mark Hopkins, gifted teacher, on one end of a television log and 50,000 Future Voters on the other end. One Mark, one log, one student, instead! And as an even more Dangerous Thought, a blackening heresy, I seem to detect a suspicious similarity between those shadows on the shining, silver screens and those other shadows which Plato's famous, chained slaves saw on the walls of their dark cave—and likewise took for real. Perhaps I shouldn't even think such things!

But I do not believe ability comes cheaper by the dozen, or, indeed, comes in quantity at all. Quantity and quality are entirely different measurements, in different worlds, even if there are those who think they add up just the same. Twenty thousand garbage wagon horses can't outrun one Man o' War, for all of that. I wish my state would quit looking at "Bigger," for a little while, just now and then (say 10 minutes' worth anyhow, every three weeks) and consider instead "Better."

Along with our new \$40 or \$50 million legal liquor bill, I wish we could find, say, \$400 or \$500 to put up some prizes, plus a small drink of appreciation and prestige, for the best novel produced by a native author still resident in Oklahoma, for the best poem, the best play, the best non-fiction, the best painting, the best statue. Only Old Grads will long remember our Best Beer Busts, and they're generally down in Big D anyway.

I wish my state would work a little harder at raising and keeping some truly Great One besides—and who else?—Will Rogers.

I wish my university, my Alma Mater, would some day be known as the Mother of Minds, as well as of the Big Brass Brain and the Big Red. If Oklahoma wanted that, I think it could be done. The faculties are available now to do it.

Sitting here humbly on my brand new, wall-to-wall prayer rug remembering all the faces, so many, many over the years, I make up my own small, private prayer:

"Oh, Lord, if I have taught just one of them to think, to find his soul and be an individual, the master of his mind, the captain of his fate, then I have not gone by this way in vain. Just one, Lord. Please!"

Now you-all can roll me back up in my rug, if you think you'd better, and replace me with an, ugh, computer.

But you gave me the rug.

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Indian country) with much humor, characterization, and Americana appealingly interspersed between the inevitable crises.

Although Taylor's book is a We-were-there type thing designed to instruct kids in history, it is interesting to compare it with Culp's more ambitious work as regards humor. Taylor, when writing about a kid for kids, makes very few jokes at his hero's expense. Culp, on the other hand, kids his kid constantly. And although Culp has an adult audience in mind, I think he's got a brand on something both kids and adults will enjoy.

RECOMMENDED: Taylor for the younger brothers; Culp for everyone.

William Dean Howells by George N. Bennett, University of Oklahoma Press

CONSERVATIVELY shocking, profoundly pleasant, and occasionally worth reading, William Dean Howells was one of the most popular authors of America's 1800s. The *Saturday Evening Post* of his day. Even close friend Mark Twain considered Howells his better. Now, of course, you never hear about Howells unless you take a survey course in literature; and then the poor man is only briefly dragged from a musty closet and rattled about as a father of American realism.

It's debatable whether Howells fathered anything in literature except debate about Howells and a way of writing in a felicitous manner (no little accomplishment considering the stilted styles of most authors at that time). The fascination professors have in evaluating the man suggests that like most controversial figures William Dean Howells was not black-or-white good-or-bad, but gray.

This seems to be the conclusion of George N. Bennett whose history of Howells' development as a novelist is about the most exhaustive and objective study that either friend or foe or the indifferent majority could possibly want. If for no other reason, Mr. Bennett should be admired for obviously having read all the words pleasant William Dean Howells ever wrote, which are evidence of no little dedication on the part of both Mr. Bennett and Mr. Howells.

RECOMMENDED: Now that a good study has been done, let's be done with the good man.