

The Red Man's Last Roll-Call

Charles M. Harvey

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WHEN, on March 4, 1906, the tribal organization of the Cherokees, Choctaws, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Seminoles is dissolved, and their members diffused in the mass of the country's citizenship, the final chapter in the Indian's annals as a distinct race will have been written. These are very far from comprising all the red men in the country. They number a little over 86,000, while the total Indian population of the United States, exclusive of Alaska, is about 270,000. They do not even include the entire Indian population of their own locality, the Indian Territory. In the territory's northeast corner there are fragments of the Peorias, Shawnees, Quapaws, Wyandottes, Senecas, Modocs, and Ottawas, numbering in all about 1500.

Numerically, however, the Five Civilized Tribes are more important than any other aggregation of red men. They are of immeasurably greater consequence socially than all the rest of the Indians in the United States put together. The middle term of the designation here given to them means just what it says. They are civilized Indians. In each tribe for itself, for two generations, they have been conducting their own affairs in their own way. They have their own legislatures, executives, and courts; also their own churches and school system. Subject to the requirement that they must keep within the limitations of the Constitution of the United States and must recognize the United States government's paramount authority, they have been supreme in their own domain.

This ascendancy ends with the dissolution of the tribal governments on March 4, 1906. United States laws will then be immediately extended over the Indian Territory, the terms Seminole, Cherokee, Choctaw, and the rest of them will vanish, and their bearers will gain the same privileges and be subject to the same responsibilities as their white neighbors in Oklahoma and the other territories. Very soon after that date they will probably, jointly with Oklahoma, enter on the larger privileges and penalties of statehood.

To most persons east of the Mississippi, and to many of those west of that stream, the names Five Tribes and Indian Territory give wrong impressions. Many of the Indians are such in but a constructive sense. Of the 86,000 who are classed as Indians only 25,000 are full bloods; 41,500 are of various shades of mixture, most of whom would pass anywhere as pure whites; 1500 are whites who have been adopted into the tribes through intermarriage; and 18,000 are of negro or of mixed negro blood, the slaves of the period prior to 1865, and their descendants. Nor are the Indians, actual and constructive, in the majority in the Territory. Its white residents -- immigrants from Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Illinois, and the rest of the country -- out-number the Indians, actual and theoretical, of the Indian Territory more than five to one.

The Five Tribes' idyllic seclusion was doomed by the entrance of the railways on their lands. They tried to keep the roads out, but the pressure on the Territory's barriers on all sides was too strong for them, and they were forced to consent to the invasion. The first toot of the whistle of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad's first locomotive, speeding through the Indian Territory in 1875 on its short-cut from the East and the world to Texas and the Southwest, pronounced sentence of death on the red man's isolation. Like Horace's rustic on the banks of the river in Italy, waiting for the water to roll by, the Indian watched the stream of settlers flowing into Texas and New Mexico, but saw no chance that it would end. And then, wiser than the rustic, who may be waiting yet, for all we know, the Indian bowed to manifest destiny, and agreed to lease some of his lands. It was civilization marching on.

The towns built along that railway and on the roads which afterward entered the territory -- the St. Louis and San Francisco, the Chicago and Rock Island, the Oklahoma, Choctaw and Gulf, and the rest of them -- compelled the government at Washington to prepare for the new necessities, and constrained the red man to accept the inevitable. By agreements with the Indians, supplemented by acts of Congress, most of the obstructions to land purchases by the whites were removed; Oklahoma in 1889, enlarged by subsequent accretions from the same source, was set off from the Indian Territory's westerly end; allotments of land have been made to the Indians as individuals; the federal authority has been extended over the territory in an elementary way; United

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States citizenship has been conferred on the members of the Five Tribes; and all the preliminaries leading to the dissolution of the tribal governments on March 4, 1906, have been arranged.

Necessarily the Indians have had a profound influence on the history and the development of the American continent. They were never anything like as numerous as the earlier explorers and chroniclers supposed them to be. Within the territory comprised in the mainland of the present United States they probably did not number more than 600,000 or 800,000 when Columbus landed. But they outnumbered the whites hundreds of times in the generation immediately after the establishment of the Jamestown and Plymouth colonies. Notwithstanding a few sporadic outbreaks, for which the blame often belonged to the whites, the red man with the giant's strength refused at the outset to use it like a giant.

But he was a far more formidable warrior than any of the other "inferior races" ever encountered by the empire builders of Spain, France, England, Holland, or America. From King Philip the Wampanoag, down to Sitting Bull the Sioux, Chief Joseph the Nez Perce, and Geronimo the Apache, the Indians of the United States have produced a race of warriors unequaled by the aborigines of any other land. The Indian of the United States surpassed all the other members of his race on the American continent in fighting qualities. Neither did the Spaniards in South America, nor the French or the British in Canada, encounter as fierce warriors as were met by these races and by the Americans between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico; as fought the Spaniards in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, and as blocked the way of the Americans for many decades on the great plains and the mountains between the Missouri and the Columbia.

The Gentleman of Elvas and other members of the expedition tell us of the adventures of the "Adelantado Hernando De Soto, Governor and Captain General of the Kingdom of Florida," in his attempt to conquer that realm for himself and for Charles V. When De Soto, with his men picked from the best fighting element of Spain and Portugal, landed in what we call Tampa Bay in 1539, he had a far larger and far better equipped army than was with Cortez when he made the conquest of Mexico, and it was also greatly superior in numbers, armament, and enthusiasm to the force under Pizarro and De Soto when they overran Peru. Experience, cupidity, and cash, in ample measure were on the great conquistadore's side. Nearly everything "out of doors," with all the gold that it held, was offered to him as a lure, for the "kingdom of Florida" of Charles V's patent to De Soto comprised all the territory between the Gulf of Mexico and the North Pole. The advent of the French and the English in those days was far in the future.

Yet De Soto was harried and baffled from the outset by the ancestors, then residing in the Gulf states, of the Chickasaws, Creeks, and the rest of the Five Tribes of the Indian Territory of to-day. As told in the Anabasis of the Gentleman of Elvas, the flight of De Soto's followers in their canoes down the Great River, after the midnight burial of their commander in its waters near the present Memphis, pursued, ambushed, and attacked on all sides all the way by their fierce foes, is as thrilling a tale as the retreat of Xenophon's Ten Thousand through the Persian empire. Many of the elemental passions -- greed, cruelty, hatred, revenge -- were there. It does not need much historical imagination on the reader's part to tell him that the cry, "The sea! The sea!" of that far-away day, by the crushed remnants of the dead Adelantado's proud army of Spanish and Portuguese hidalgos at the sight of the Gulf of Mexico, must have been as joyful as that uttered by the Greeks nineteen centuries earlier, when they got their first glimpse of the Euxine.

All this would probably have been widely different had De Soto, instead of encountering the warlike Chickasaws, Cherokees, and their neighbors when he made his foray into the Mississippi Valley, met the feeble followers of Montezuma or of the Incas. In that event Charles V might have erected another Mexico between the Gulf and the Great Lakes; Gosnold, Newport, and Captain John Smith would have been shut out when they approached the Chesapeake; and Carver, Bradford, and Miles Standish would very likely have struck a Spanish "No thoroughfare" barring the entrance to the Bay of Cape Cod.

When Champlain, as an ally of the Ottawas and Hurons of Canada, fought the Mohawks at Ticonderoga in 1609, he aroused the wrath of the "Romans of the West," the powerful confederation of the Iroquois, or the Five Nations, as the British and Americans called them, whose easternmost member was the Mohawk tribe. Champlain's act put the confederation on the side of the successive owners of New York, prevented the French in Canada, with their feudal military system, and their long line of warlike governors, from cutting the scattered and discordant British colonies on the Atlantic coast in two, and saved the United States for the English-speaking peoples.

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"By the arm of St. James!" exclaimed Simon of Montfort, proudly, when he beheld Edward and his army, all pupils of his, advancing to crush him at the battle of Evesham, "they are coming in a wise fashion. They learned this from me." "They learned this from me!" could Tecumseh the Shawnee, the most skillful and intrepid commander on the British side in the Canadian campaign in the war of 1812, speaking for himself, for Little Turtle, for Pontiac, and for other red warriors, stretching back in a long procession to King Philip, have exultantly and truthfully exclaimed, as "Old Tippecanoe" Harrison's Kentuckians, Virginians, Pennsylvanians, and Ohioans were enveloping and overwhelming him at the battle of the Thames. With Tecumseh's death at that battle and the killing or the scattering of his braves, British fighting in western Canada, even for defensive purposes, collapsed.

Long before the cant phrase "modern style of fighting" — the open formation, individual initiative, and the use of natural objects for cover in advancing or retreating — had been invented, the American red man taught the American white man how to fight in the modern way. The real military genius of Lord Dunmore's war of 1774, which ended with the battle of Point Pleasant, was not Lewis, Morgan, Christian, or George Rogers Clark, all famous fighters then or later, who were on Dunmore's and the colonists' side, but Cornstalk, the Shawnee commander, against whom they battled. In New Mexico and Arizona, before President Roosevelt's grandfather was born, the Apache Rough Riders hit the Spaniards oftener and harder than Roosevelt and his Tenth Legion did in Cuba. What the British learned in a provisional and partial way from a long series of humiliating beatings by smaller bodies of Boers in 1899– 1902, and what the Hereros' repeated defeats of the German troops in Germany's section of Africa show that the Kaiser's soldiers have not learned yet, the Americans had learned by Boone's day.

In peace, too, the American Indian gained victories which ought to be as renowned as those he won in war. Hiawatha the Onondaga, and Dagonosedaga the Mohawk, evolved a confederation for the Iroquois under which the affairs common to the Mohawks, Cayugas, Oneidas, Onondagas, and Senecas were regulated, and this went into operation over three centuries before Washington, Hamilton, Madison, and their associates met in Philadelphia to devise the federal scheme under which we live. While at work in the convention Morris, Wilson, Madison, and the rest of the constitution framers, said much about the Amphictyonic, the Lycian, the Achaean, the Dutch, the Swiss, and other confederacies of ancient, medieval, and modern days, but they overlooked one that was nearer at hand than any of them. The League of the Iroquois, as Jefferson wisely intimated, could have given valuable points to the Philadelphia convention of 1787.

While leaving their local capitals at home, their national capital — their Philadelphia or Washington — was at Onondaga, near the middle of the confederation's territory, where the chiefs and other representative men of the confederation met at stated times and managed the general concerns of the league. This gave them peace at home and allowed them to make effective war abroad. They drove out Champlain's old allies, the Hurons and Ottawas, exterminated the Eries, brought the Algonquins into subjection, and carried their victorious sway from New England to the Mississippi, and from the Ottawa and the Saguenay to the Tennessee and the Savannah. Their power in war was due almost as much to the wisdom of their governmental organization as it was to their activity, intelligence, and intrepidity as fighters. It is possible that, if the discovery of the continent had been postponed two or three centuries, the Kinsmen of the Long House would have dominated all the tribes from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, and the work of white colonization would have been harder, or would have had to proceed on different lines.

The Indian has incited a distinctive and many-sided literature, — scientific, sociological, and adventurous, — which fills libraries in Europe and America. More than a century ago Charles Brockden Brown, in his Edgar Huntley, declared that in that book he was the first to utilize for literary purposes, the "incidents of Indian hostility and the perils of the Western wilderness." He has had a long line of followers — Cooper, Paulding, Robert Montgomery Bird, William Gilmore Simms, Captain Mayne Reid, Emerson Bennett, and scores of others, down to Edward S. Ellis, whose heroes in 1906 chase long-extinct buffaloes over abolished prairies, and across whose pages scurry Indian hunters who are as dead as the men who built the Pyramids.

Gail Hamilton said if there never were to be any railroads it would have been an impertinence in Columbus to have discovered America. The Indian's knowledge of the location and direction of the rivers and lakes and of the positions of the portages, and his readiness, under the right sort of persuasion, to put this knowledge at the service of explorers, missionaries, and settlers, "stood off" this stigma from Columbus before the railways came. Indians guided Captain John Smith, Champlain, and La Salle through the wilderness. Indian trails blazed pathways for the

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pioneers through forests and over mountains. Sometimes these trails were utilized by the railway builders. At the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis, and at the Lewis and Clark fair at Portland were monuments to the heroic Shoshone girl, Saccajawea, who piloted Lewis and Clark across the Rocky Mountains and through the wilderness on each side of that range, in their exploration to the Pacific a century ago.

What have been the relations of the races since the establishment of the United States government? One writer has said specifically — and many have said virtually — that our treatment of the Indians has made our record a "Century of Dishonor." Despite the evident sincerity of its author, this book was extravagant and misleading. So far as it obtained credence, its influence, on the whole, was mischievous. Said Jefferson, at the outset of his service as President: "I am myself alive to the obtaining lands from the Indians by all honest and peaceable means, and I believe that the honest and peaceable means adopted by us will obtain them as fast as the expansion of our settlements, with due regard to compactness, will require."

This has been the spirit displayed and the policy pursued by the heads of the government, from Washington onward. The purpose has been to win the continent for civilization with the least possible embarrassment to its barbaric original occupants. In carrying out this policy presidents and congresses have sometimes made mistakes. More than once they have selected incompetent or corrupt instruments. Blunders and crimes have occasionally been perpetrated by these agents. But the crimes and the blunders have assailed the spirit and the letter of their instructions. Moreover, these have been fewer than is popularly supposed, and all were rectified by changes in agents and methods, while the government's practice of the past quarter of a century has sometimes been characterized by a generosity which has been quixotic in its extravagance. Through land accumulations and investments the Osages are the richest people on the globe. If all of Uncle Sam's white children had as much money per capita as these Oklahoma red men, the \$112,000,000,000 which represents the wealth of the United States in 1906 would be advanced to at least \$200,000,000,000.

With Jefferson, just after the purchase of Louisiana, originated the idea of transferring the Indians to the west of the Mississippi, by an equitable exchange of the lands occupied by them for lands in the new province, and this purpose was carried out in 1834, in Jackson's day, by the creation of the Indian Territory. To that region were removed the Cherokees and the rest of the Five Tribes, and there they have remained ever since. Through modification and expansion the Indian Territory idea generated the reservation system for the Indians outside of the Five Tribes, and this, though in a rapidly diminishing area, exists to-day. The reservation system, which was conceived in a spirit of benevolence toward the Indian, was at length, through its free rations, its annuities, and its idleness, found to pauperize and emasculate him; and then began the change of policy by which he is being prepared for citizenship.

In the latter part of his service as President, after pointing out that the Indians are "our brethren, our neighbors," and that they may be valuable friends and troublesome enemies, Jefferson said: "Both duty and interest enjoin that we should extend to them the blessings of civilized life, and prepare their minds for becoming useful members of the American family."

In this, as in some other things, the third President was ahead of his generation, but we have caught up with him. As a preliminary step in advance, we abolished, in 1871, the practice of dealing with the Indians as independent nations, of sending out embassies to negotiate with them as we would with England or Germany, and since then Congress has had direct control of all intercourse with the red men. The formal treaties prior to that day have given place to agreements, but the 370 treaties from the founding of the government to 1871 remain as valid as the eighty or ninety agreements which have been entered into between 1871 and 1906.

To tempt the Indian into individual ownership Congress in 1862 passed an act to protect him in the enjoyment of his property if he would abandon his tribe and live the white man's life. As a further incentive Congress in 1875 passed a law to give him a share of his tribe's property if he would give up the tribe and settle on a quarter section of land under the free homes law signed by Lincoln in 1862. In 1877 an act was passed making appropriations to educate Indians for citizenship, and in 1887 one granting citizenship to all Indians who, separated from their tribes, accepted lands in severalty, and adopted civilized life. This act was extended to the Five Tribes of the Indian Territory in 1901, and thus covered all the red men in the United States.

From 1789 to the end of the current fiscal year on June 30, 1906, the government will have expended \$420,000,000 for the Indians, and, in greater part, this means for those outside of the Five Tribes, who have been practically self-supporting in all their activities for two generations, except that in recent years Congress has been

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making small appropriations for them for educational and other purposes. The Indian appropriation bill for 1906 carried an outlay of \$8,000,000, of which \$3,777,000 was for the support of schools, and all this was for the Indians outside of the Five Tribes, of those in New York (whose schools are controlled by that state), and of Alaska. Congress's appropriation for education in 1877, when this policy started was \$20,000.

What use is the Indian making of his opportunities? Let these facts answer. Outside of those in the Five Tribes, in New York, and in Alaska, 30,000 Indians are attending school, or one out of every six of the population. Of these, 26,000 are in the government's 257 schools, and 4000 are in schools supported by churches or by contracts with the government. Civilized clothes are worn wholly by 116,000 Indians, and are worn partly by 44,000; nearly all of these reside in dwelling-houses; 70,000 talk English enough for ordinary purposes, and most of them can read it; and 40,000 are members of churches.

In the Five Tribes, of course, and among the Indians of New York, all wear the garb of civilization, all have good school facilities, all dwell in the same sort of habitations as white men, and most of them, either actually or theoretically, belong to some Christian denomination. Only 26,000 blanket Indians are left in the United States. Since 1877 the Indians, under the common-sense tutelage given to them, have made more progress than the whites ever did in any equal time. Under the improved sanitary conditions, too, and in the absence of wars, they are steadily increasing in numbers.

Both out of and in the Indian Territory the Indian has at least ceased to be

An infant crying in the night; An infant crying for the light, And with no language but a cry.

In the division of the turkey and the buzzard the white man, in his deals with his red brother, can no longer shove off the buzzard on all of the red men all of the time. There are politicians among the Five Tribes who, in the tricks of the trade, have nothing valuable to learn from Murphy, Platt, Gorman, or any other boss. Lobbies are set up by them at Washington. They pack caucuses at Tahlequah, South McAlester and Chickasha. Coming to politics of a higher order, they frame constitutions, as they did in the latter part of 1905, under the leadership of Pleasant Porter, the chief of the Creeks, -- who is a more astute personage than was his famous Machiavellian precursor. McGillivray, of the Creek nation of a century ago, -- for the proposed state of Sequoyah, comprising the Indian Territory.

Nobody in or out of the Indian Territory is saying that Green McCurtain, chief of the Choctaws, or Douglas H. Johnston, governor of the Chickasaws (alone among the Five Tribes the Chickasaws call their head man governor), is as picturesque a personage as were their forerunners who fought De Soto and who blocked the path of Bienville and his French successors; nor will John Brown, the Seminole chief of to-day, hold such a large place in story as that filled by Osceola; while Edward VII is not likely to invite William C. Rogers, of the Cherokees, to England to talk great matters of state, as George III did Rogers's illustrious precursor, Oganasdoda. All these dignitaries, however, are meeting the demands of the situation better probably than could their predecessors, if they were here.

Warlike deeds make a more seductive appeal to the popular fancy than the exploits of peace, and no great Indian wars have taken place since Geronimo and Natchez, the Apache chiefs, led Crook, Miles, and other fighters through Arizona's deserts and hills in the campaigns of 1882-86, which resulted in Geronimo's overthrow; except the rising of the Sioux at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, in 1889-90, on the report of the approach of a conquering Indian Messiah; and that conflict, in which Sitting Bull was killed, lasted only a few weeks. And, of course, nothing like this can take place again.

The visitor to the Indian Territory in 1906 has more exercise in dodging automobiles and electric cars than he has in getting out of the way of arrows, bullets, or lassos. The only feathered headdresses which he sees are in women's hats on shopping tours or on the way to balls or theatres. The Territory has 1500 miles of railway, and 1000 miles more are projected. It has churches, schools, banks, newspapers (one of them in the Cherokee language), and all the other accompaniments of the highest order of civilization. Ardmore, Muscogee, South McAlester, Tahlequah, Coalgate, Chickasha, and other towns of the Territory, are as modern in their ideas and their appointments as are places of the same size in Massachusetts or New York.

Tibet and Korea lagged behind, and were removed from the map. In the world's economy of to-day there is no room for hermit nations. The Seminoles, Cherokees, and their neighbors of the Indian Territory have bowed to this decree of destiny. If the Indian, out of as well as in the Indian Territory, is capable, he will keep his place in the procession, but with him or over him the procession will move on.

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There is a fair prospect that the Indian will keep his place in the procession. The Carlisle school's football players have recently beaten West Point, and they have often defeated other white colleges. A basket-ball team of full-blooded Indian girls from the Fort Shaw (Montana) reservation school have, in playing that game, taken a long string of feminine scalps from the girls of white universities in the West. The educated red men are displaying a camaraderie and an adaptability to the new conditions which promise success to them in civilization's struggle. One or more of them will represent their end of the coming state of Oklahoma in Congress. This is right. They are to the manner born. The real F. F. A.'s are the Indians. Some of them, in the coming time, will sit in Roosevelt's chair.

Three quarters of a century ago, at the time that the Cherokees moved from Georgia to their present locality, the region west of the Missouri was about as blank as that referred to by Swift, when

Geographers, in Afric maps, With savage pictures fill their gaps, And o'er unhabitable downs Place elephants for want of towns.

On the maps of that day the whole expanse from the westerly border of Arkansas, Missouri, and the present states of Iowa and Minnesota, to the Rocky Mountains, the boundary of the United States in that quarter, was designated "The Indian Country." All that wilderness has since then been organized into states, except Oklahoma and the Indian Territory, and they are about to join the roll.

Down in the foothills of the Wichita Mountains of Oklahoma the Comanches' Epictetus, the aged Quanah Parker, discourses philosophy and stoically awaits the end. Like the Moorish king Abu Abdallah, looking mournfully backward at his lost Granada, Geronimo, from Fort Sill, gazes westward across prairies and hills to the Arizona of his great days, which he will not see again. Up at Pine Ridge agency the Sioux nonagenarian Red Cloud, the most famous of living Indian warriors, who could tell as many marvels as Aeneas told to Dido, refuses to accept the government's offer of an allotment of land, and goes down, like Dickens's Steerforth in the storm at Yarmouth, waving his hand defiantly in the face of destiny.

Most of Hercules's labors looked light compared with the task which the late Henry L. Dawes undertook when he and the commission created under the law of 1893 started out to induce the Choctaws, the Creeks, and their neighbors to allot their lands to their members as individuals, to abolish their tribal government, and to merge themselves in the mass of the country's citizenship. That work has been grandly finished. The last councils of the Five Tribes have been held. The epic of the American Indian has closed.