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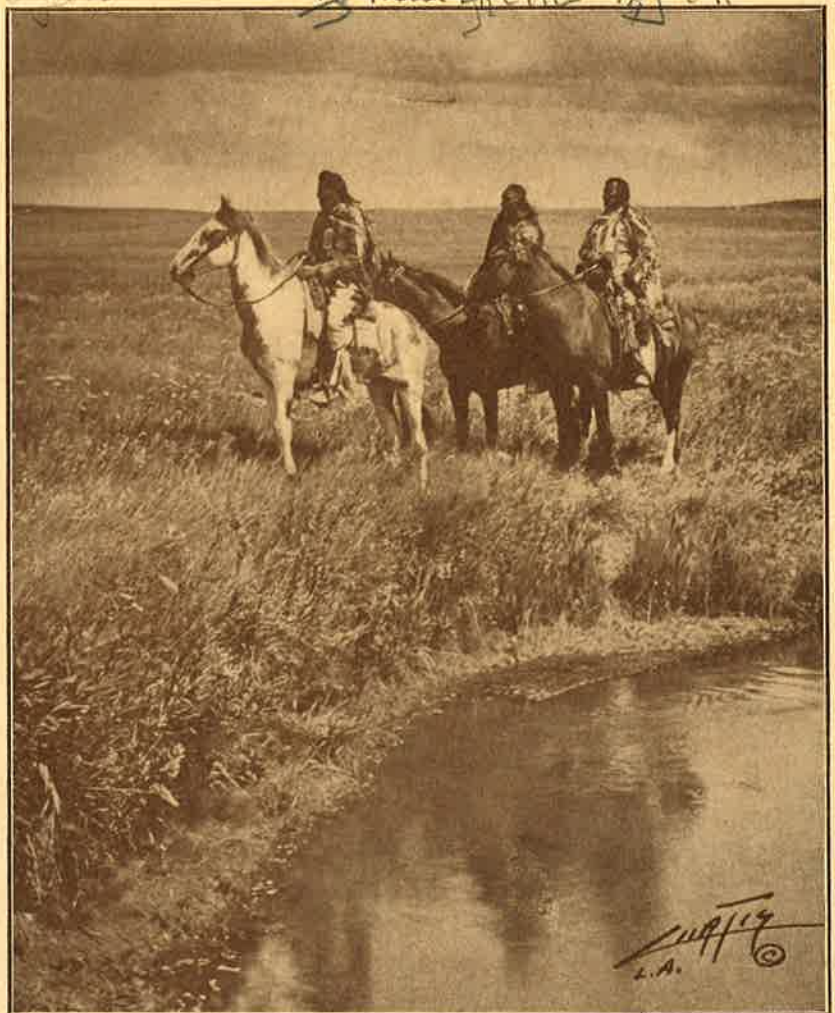
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FIRST AMERICANS

SOUTHWEST MUSEUM
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Ryan

by Marguerite Ryan



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THE THREE CHIEFS

First Americans

We have, in the American Indian, a tremendous force lost to the nation because of his unsettled status amongst us.

The government, that is, we, the white people and our fathers before us, have robbed him of his heritage, his land, water, timber, minerals, religion and liberty. In exchange we have given him new names for the ancient gods, a doctrine of eleventh-hour repentance to add to his spiritual beliefs, and numberless acquired tastes with no means of satisfying them.

His is a great and individual race—interrupted by us on its upward path. His racial advance has been deflected by our arbitrary laws from the paths of natural development along which our own prehistoric ancestors walked unnumbered thousands of years ago.

"If the Indians had been enemies instead of friends the Revolution would not have ended in American independence."—George Washington.

Occasionally a scion of this curbed and fettered people breaks from tribal and government barriers (a most difficult proceeding for primitive man) and astonishes Caucasians by the vigor of his mentality.

One historic character alone is enough to demonstrate the wonderful mental power of the race when once awakened. Sequoyah, a pagan of the Tennessee forests, with no word of any language but his own, who, on seeing a letter in possession of a white war prisoner and being told its silent message, at once concentrated on evolving a written language for his own tribe.

In all the records of antiquity we have no historic character to compare with his. Thoth of the Egyptians was a myth, Cadmus of legend was merely an arranger of written symbols—not an inventor. But our great Cherokee used eighty-two symbols for syllables—not letters, and these symbols, once memorized, enabled anyone who knew the language to write it within a few days. The simplicity of it would have been a great achievement for any group of linguists, yet this red man of the wilderness did it alone—to the outspoken disgust and ridicule of the missionaries and white settlers.

Such mental attitude is a fair sample of that directed by the white invader toward Indian culture. His study of the stars was to the white a weird and absurd pastime, as was his nature worship, his medicine, and his uncanny knowledge of woodcraft. His psychic powers—the trained telepathic communications of the medicine men—were regarded as the gifts of some Indian Beelzebub.

In the far south, where climatic conditions were more favorable to intellectual development, ruined palaces remain today in the jungles of Yucatan as evidence of Indian culture under favorable conditions. The astronomical calculations of the Mexicans in the 15th century were equal to any known in Europe at that period.

And a few—a very few—Mayan illuminated manuscripts are cherished in the great libraries of the world that we may surmise the beauty of sixty thousand others burned in one town alone by the Spanish because the craftsmanship was pagan, and therefore, of course, evil. This was followed by destruction of the scholarly class—priests and writers—that no teachers of the Indian written language be left alive to promote revolt against the colonizing plan of the invader.

These are only fragments of records of the past, but Indian history just as shameful, though not so daringly murderous—is being made today in isolated corners of our land.

"I submit for your special consideration whether our Indian system shall not be remodeled. Many wise and good men have impressed me that this can be profitably done."
—Abraham Lincoln.

Every other tribe and clan of the world landing on our shores is permitted his own religion, but because of the American Indian's tribal bonds, and in many instances, steadfastness to the gods of his fathers, he is made an out-

cast from privileges accorded without hesitation to the scum of Europe.

On certain Indian reservations the term "pagan" is regularly interpreted as meaning "hostile," to give outsiders an erroneous idea of placid courteous old people who decline to accept the new creeds of the white strangers.

Our white-egotists would be spiritually enriched if they could acquire the serene philosophy and tolerance expressed by one Indian priest of the desert to two religious factions of his tribe:

"You of the Antelope altars and you of the Serpent altars must build your shrines apart. But the prayers said over the shrines will meet and ascend to the gods in one straight tongue."

As a warrior—whether fighting our battles or his own—Indian bravery and initiative have won commendation from the greatest generals of America and Europe, and the only tribes ever dealt with by us in even a promissory spirit of fairness, were the fighting tribes who took the war trail until it was red, and made us call a halt.

The tribes of peace who put aside their arms and trusted to the sacredness of white treaties, have fared as such tribes and such nations have ever fared in the world's history—they are merely let live a little longer as sources of revenue for their over-lords.

In the "World War" over eight thousand Indians—six thousand volunteers—furnished a ratio unsurpassed, if equalled, by any other race or nation.

Ten American Indians were given the Croix de Guerre. One hundred and fifty were decorated for bravery. One Indian, offering himself as a living sacrifice for world freedom, stripped, painted himself in protective coloring, and crept across open fields, exposed to enemy gunfire, placing a bomb to a bridge the Allies could no longer defend. He checked the enemy by that act, saved the battle line, and died there.

One winner of the Croix de Guerre was Sergeant O. W. Leader of Oklahoma. He was selected by the French government as the model original American soldier of whom an oil painting was made to hang upon the walls of the French Federal building with those of all allied races.

The most brilliant instance of personal bravery recorded during the awful four years was Alvin York of Tennessee. The second was Joseph Oklahombi, a full-blood Choc-taw, who received the Croix de Guerre under Marshal Petain, Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the East.

His citation reads: "Under a violent barrage he dashed to the attack of the enemy frontier, covering two hundred yards through barbed wire entanglements. He rushed on machine-gun nests, capturing

"The American Indian is just as much entitled to a square deal as anyone else in the Republic. If we are called to responsibility, he will get it."—Warren G. Harding, Marion Star, 1920.

one hundred and seventy-one prisoners. He stormed a strongly held position containing a number of trench mortars, turned the captured guns on the enemy and held said frontier four days in spite of the constant barrage of large projectiles and gas shells. He covered No Man's Land many times to get information concerning his wounded comrades." When asked what he thought of the army he said: "Too much salute—not enough shoot!"

One of the most appalling examples of what a human body can endure and yet survive, was the remains of a Sioux Indian carried to a platform that a speaker for the Victory Liberty Loan might give illustration of Hun kulture to the men and women protected from a like fate by our soldiers overseas.

The speaker—a Westerner—had been told that the shattered helpless hulk was an Italian, but after a glance at what was left of the face, he ventured a word of Sioux greeting, and the remnant of a man—so broken as not to be known except as labeled—could only tremble with pathetic joy at hearing again the words of his mother tongue, while tears coursed down the brown cheeks of the speechless Indian stoic.

To this end had he come, and many, many more of his race, fighting to protect us in a freedom we withhold from him and his brother.

Is it not time to pay our debt?

Our ancestors did not pay theirs, but we scarcely dare pass to the children of the future another generation of shame.

The war service of the Indians who stayed at home was also out of all proportion to their number in eager generous evidence of loyalty.

"In the fifth or Victory Loan the Indians' applications for liberty bonds was to the extent of nearly four millions, making their total subscription approximately twenty-five millions, or seventy-five dollars per head for the entire Indian population."—Department of Interior Report 1919, Vol. II.

There were ten thousand Indian members of the Red Cross. One hundred thousand garments were knitted by Indians.

One old Ute Indian woman had sold for a donation to the Red Cross her one possession of value—an exquisite example of basket weaving. It brought her five hundred and thirteen dollars. She was over seventy years of age. The money was carefully divided by her in two portions, and the larger portion given for war service. "I am old," she said, "the thirteen dollars will be enough for me."

Yet those of the six thousand volunteers who lived to return to their native land found themselves politically voiceless and powerless.

It was even necessary to pass a special legislative enactment in order that they might have the right of applying to our country for citizenship.

On a California reservation, in 1921, Indian men were arrested without warrant, and thrown into jail without trial, for merely asking permission of the local

government representative to meet for a harmless summer ceremony of their tribe—the fire dance.

Sickening reports have come to us this winter of old people and children dying of starvation on the Blackfoot Reservation in Montana. Yet in every State of the Union funds were collected for charity to Europeans.

Over ten thousand Indian families lived in tents and other temporary shelter.

Over fourteen thousand live in poor houses with dirt floors.

One in every ten has tuberculosis.

Nearly twenty-one thousand eligible children are barred from an education through lack of facilities.

Yet the Indian children of the Rio Grande Reservation schools all have three languages at twelve years of age—Indian, Spanish and English—evidence that they do respond when opportunities offer.

“Even today with the utmost care exercised at Washington, the remnant of Indians left in this country are still victimized, their credulity capitalized, and the intelligent supervision they have a right to expect is far from being accorded them.” — Franklyn K. Lane.

There are today 340,000 of these first Americans (less than half are full-blooded). They are peaceful and loyal. Many of them progressive and ambitious.

They are governed by a bureau employing 5,500 people, exclusive of 12,000 Indian employees. Among

these white officials have been overseers of agriculture whom the Indians had to teach how to plant corn.

The salaries of these employees aggregate nearly four and a half million dollars a year.

The bureau was a departmental agency, organized in 1832 to take care of an emergency.

That emergency no longer exists. Yet the agency has grown in power, complexity and costliness year by year.

And the full-blooded Indian population **decreases** steadily!

The cost of the Indian to the government thirty-four years ago was \$800,000.

The appropriation for the same purpose of 1920 was \$15,346,108.84. Over \$4000 for each man, woman and child. Yet Indians are going hungry! (4/7)

In these days of necessary retrenchment we could much better afford to scrap our Indian Bureau than to scrap our battleships.

But the Indian Bureau has been difficult in the past to even modify or limit in its power, because it is the recognized field on which politicians depend to pay their political debts. The reservations are far from Washington's political circles, and many undesirable things can be hidden there. The system exists today

solely because the light of publicity has not been turned strongly enough on those among the Bureau officials who abuse their power. If a superintendent is exposed locally for dishonest or brutal dealings, his patron merely has him transferred to a tribe of a different language.

And we, the taxpayers, continue to sign checks for his salary.

Below are three specific instances of failure of the present system to protect Indian interests—three out of hundreds. The first is the inside story of the uprising of the Ute in 1906. It is attested by one of our committee.

“The Utes had built homes, dug wells and planted crops on part of their reservations, where their whole lives had been spent. The Department of the Interior decided to open a portion of that reserve to white settlers, and sent for the Indians to come to Washington to arrange details. The Utes pleaded to retain their homes, and the commissioners promised that the Indians could file on, and record their homestead claims on August 1st, and the white settlers could file

“We have endeavored in every way to correct the situation, but the laws under which the Indians are being supervised through the Indian Bureau are of such a character that it gives the Commissioner of Indian Affairs the power such as no Czar ever had.”—Homer P. Snyder, Chairman of House Committee on Indian Affairs.

on what was left September 1st, and that they would pay \$1.25 per acre into a fund to be used for improvement of the Indians' claims. Then the Indians went back home, trusting the Indian Agent to attend to the carrying out of the agreement. On August 1st, the Indians appeared at the agency for filing their claims for homestead rights. The office was locked, the agent had gone to the mountains on a six weeks' hunting trip. There was no one to record their Indian names and save their homes. The result was that

“The Indian's native sense of honor and his unswerving adherence to individual tribal pacts or treaties are noble traits that have become well known.”
—Theodore Roosevelt.

September 1st the white settlers swarmed over the land and filed on every improved tract. When the Indians protested they were reported as “hostile,” and troops were sent to protect the white families

in the Indians' homes: The latter were treated practically as prisoners of war, and were herded by cavalry when they marched toward the Sioux country, seeking fortunes in some new wilderness. The old mother of the Ute interpreter was among the refugees.

These details of double dealing were known to this member of our committee personally because the interpreter dared not return to his tribe lest they kill him on suspicion that his tongue had been crooked in the council. The member of our committee conducted a correspondence with the Indian Bureau in this In-

dian's behalf, and that of the tribe, but while receiving courteous replies—his complaint was ignored.

Another agent of the Southwest has for nearly twenty years been practically above the law in his dishonest stewardship, which has been notorious. But he had been so fortunate as to pick a Vice-

"There is but one hope of righting this wrong. It lies in the appeal to the heart and the conscience of the American people. What the people demand Congress will do."—
Helen Hunt Jackson.

President of the United States for a school friend, and every complaint against him was alibied or pigeon-holed in Washington—he could not be touched! His official protector has passed on to his reward, and at last the agent has been run to earth. He has been indicted lately and at present is out on \$5000 bail. He has offered to plead guilty to the years of his misappropriation of Indian funds if he is let off with only one year in the penitentiary. His record of trickery is beyond belief. Yet he was for years the sole and only law for Indian men and women.

Another illustration of what can happen under the present system was an appropriation by Congress of \$20,000 to help the starving Seminole Indians in a crop failing emergency. By the time this fund had passed through the various official hands on its way to the tribe it had dwindled to \$463.42.

The task of presenting these records of Indian abuses is not a pleasant one, and compared with the Indian record of loyalty and sacrifice it is humiliating. But there seems no other method of assisting our government in this inherited problem, than to turn the light of publicity on current Indian conditions.

Then let the people speak.

MARAH ELLIS RYAN,
Chairman of Publicity, Indian Welfare League.

As an outgrowth of the foregoing conditions, coupled with the unhappy spectacle of poverty, suffering and disease on many reservations, there has resulted the formation of our association, known as the Indian Welfare League.

"To those whose purpose towards the superseded race is neither robbery nor charitable exploitation, but honest unselfish practical help, I send out this appeal for action."—
Francis E. Leupp—
"The Indian and His Problem."

The primary object of the League is to encourage all efforts which make for the permanent good of the American Indian. Its work is accomplished through legislative and educational channels. It endeavors to achieve results by co-operation with the authorities and the administration wherever possible. The policy of the League is briefly as follows:

1. Securing of suffrage for all Indians of the United States and of such measures as may eventually give full citizenship rights to all Indians desiring them.

2. Increasing the legal rights and safeguards of all Indian wards.

3. Placing greater limits on the discretionary powers of Indian Agents and representatives.

4. Favoring legislation which will give to all tribes the right of bringing suit in the United States Court of Claims where such tribes can be shown to have been unjustly deprived of lands and other properties.

5. Encouragement of Indian associations.

6. Creating a system of old age compensation or pension for dependent elderly Indians.

7. Religious liberty for all Indians.

8. Decreasing the number of employees in the Indian Service, and increasing the salaries, so as to attract and hold individuals of increasingly higher attainments.

9. Securing of good land and adequate water for homeless Indians and increasing the holdings of those whose acreage is insufficient or of too poor a quality to insure a living.

10. Vigorous prosecution of all offenders against the rights, liberties and properties of Indians.

Many of these provisions are designed to facilitate the ultimate transfer of the functions of the Indian Bureau to governmental departments that are now performing equivalent activities for its citizens.

Through a wide variety of channels, including newspapers, magazines and lectures, the true story of the Indian is being told in order that the general public may have reliable information on which to base constructive action. Many organizations have elected delegates to act with the Council of the League. It is urged that additional groups be represented in order that the legislative program of the League may have as substantial a backing as possible.

Without this backing of an enlightened public opinion the hands of government officials and philanthropic citizens alike are tied.

The following quotation from the letter of a Yuma Indian expresses a pathetic hope that the American people should verify:

"This is an age in which the Indian is hidden from God. But we have taken new hope that we may be able to bring relief to the sufferings of our people through the help of the government, to which we are loyal and which we feel will give us redress. Through that hope our spirits march under a new command. We are loyal to something bigger than we are—something that swings the spirit to a star."—Arsenius Chaleco.

Membership in the Indian Welfare League is in five classes, as follows:

Delegate Members: Elected or appointed by clubs or organizations who are not obligated to pay dues.

Annual Members: Who constitute the active element in the association. Dues \$2.00 per year.

Contributing Members: Paying \$10 per year.

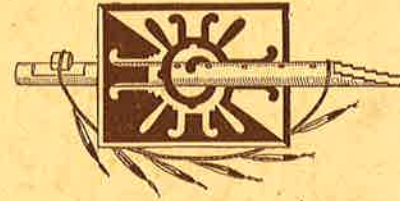
Benefactor Members: Paying \$100 per year.

Life Members: Who contribute the sum of \$1000.

The funds of the association are used only for the purpose outlined in the Constitution of the League and are managed by the Executive Committee. An accounting is made at each monthly meeting.

If the aims and purposes of the Indian Welfare League are such as to appeal to you it is urged that you take out a membership and interest others in the work of the organization.

INDIAN WELFARE LEAGUE



Executive Committee

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MRS. MARAH ELLIS RYAN
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