THE STORIES, ORATIONS, AND MUSCOGEE FOLKLORE OF ALEXANDER POSEY (CHINNUBBIE HARJO)

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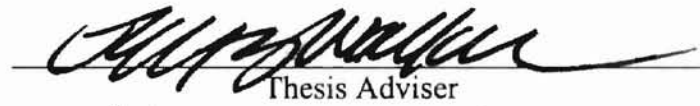

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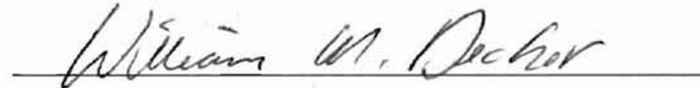

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I. INTRODUCTION

Alexander Posey: A Muscogee Life

It is 1887; a fourteen-year-old Muscogee (Creek) Indian boy runs home to his family's Indian Territory ranch for supper. Always ready for a meal, the boy sits at the dinner table with his parents and six siblings, anxious to tell them of his exciting day of horse-hunting on the tribal lands surrounding their home. His mother, a Muscogee-Chickasaw, takes special pride in this boy, her first child. His father, a white farmer raised in Muscogee territory from infancy, is a loving but serious man who served the Confederacy in the American Civil War, and later was a Captain of the Muscogee lighthorse police. After witnessing great change in Indian Territory over the years—much of it violent— his father knows that only education will help his children succeed.

Alexander Lawrence Posey. Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

As the family enjoys their dinner, the boy, in his native language of Muscogee, eagerly begins to relate his account of the day's exciting hunt—but is cut off by his father who promises to whip his son if he does not finish the tale in English after supper. The boy, who studied English earlier in life with mixed success, quickly loses his appetite and

excuses himself from the table. He then goes about completing the chores of bringing water from the well and caring for the cattle, hoping that his father might forget the threat. His father dashes this hope as he emerges from the house ready to hear his son's story—in English. The frightened boy relates the tale and his father smiles, so pleased that he never allows his son to speak Muscogee again in his presence. Thus began Alexander Posey's use of the English language; a language he would use for the next twenty-one years of his short life to run newspapers, write poetry, create biting political satire, deliver orations, and craft humorous stories drawn from his rich Muscogee heritage.

Posey was born in the Tulladega Hills of the Muscogee Nation on August 3, 1873 to Nancy and Lewis Henderson "Hence" Posey. Nancy, and therefore Alex, was a member of the "progressive" White Upper Creek town of Tuskegee, and they were also members of the influential Wind Clan. In keeping with Muscogee tradition, his mother's family, town, and clan exerted considerable influence on Alex's upbringing, especially his knowledge of Muscogee culture. Posey enjoyed an idyllic childhood divided between the family ranch located at Bald Hill and the family's Tulledega Hills homestead. Posey attributed much of his values and appreciation for nature to his childhood explorations of the family homestead and also to the traditional Muscogee stories his mother, a talented storyteller herself, passed on to him. The Muscogee "medicine men" or "prophets" who frequented the Tulladega Hills area also greatly influenced Posey, and he wrote fondly about two of them, Chalogee and the Alabama Prophet. Posey published accounts of these two prophets at various times in a number of newspapers. The version included in this edition is the account entitled "Two Famous Prophets" published in the September

1900 issue of *Twin Territories*. This story showcases Posey's mixture of romantic idealism and sly humor in recalling the prophet Chalogee:

> I remember him well for he passed our place almost daily on his way to the next settlement to blow medicine for the sick or locate by divers strange signs and mutterings a lost hog or cow or horse. He passed and re-passed so much that Tom and I knew almost to the minute when to expect him and hid out lest we come under his evil influence. But one day we made bold to lay a rattlesnake one of the farm hands had killed across his path. Pretty soon Chalogee came along and actually stepped on the snake! And, mind you, he was barefooted! Eighty or ninety years was no burden to him then. He jumped backward further than Tom could jump forward hop, step and a leap, made a wide detour and plodded on in the same fashion as though nothing had happened, while Tom and I held our hands over our mouths and rolled over each other. To his dying day, I think, Chalogee believed he stepped on a live snake. Tom and I had the idea that

Alexander Posey, Age Twelve. Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

a man who could prophesy and make it rain would not be afraid of a little thing like a harmless six-foot rattler, but we found we had an erroneous idea.[1]

Despite the treatment of Chalogee in this account, Posey greatly respected those Muscogees who held fast to the traditional ways, and throughout his life he often visited such people to keep in touch with the old ways he felt were in danger of being lost forever.

Posey's father continued to advocate education, first sending him to the Creek National Boarding School, then to the Baptist run Bacone Indian University in Muskogee. Alex's literary talent emerged at Bacone where he created the nom de plume of "Chinnubbie Harjo" and began to publish poetry, short stories, and smaller pieces in the university's paper, the *B. I. U. Instructor*. Posey's poor imitation of European romantic models such as Robert Burns severely weakens his poetry, but such a failing is understandable considering the circumstances of Posey's education and upbringing. Despite this unfortunate weakness in his poetry, he quickly earned a considerable local reputation as both a writer and an orator of merit. Posey's first oration, a speech delivered at the 1892 Bacone freshman commencement, was titled "The Indian: What of Him?" In this speech Posey attacks racist white stereotypes of Indians by arguing that "the Indian is yet progressive and his prospects are brilliant. The stars that deck his sky are the constellations of a grand future."[2] The speech was popular enough to be published in the *Indian Journal* and also disseminated in pamphlet form. Over the next few years Posey delivered two more impressive commencement addresses, "Sequoyah"

[1] *Twin Territories* 2 (September 1900) 180-182.

[2] *Indian Journal* June 1892, undated clipping, scrapbook, item 4626.31, Gilcrease.

and "Room at the Top," along with a eulogy for D. N. McIntosh[3] heavily influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine. Later that year he gave a political speech in support of Isparhecher's[4] run for principal chief in 1895.

Though Posey apparently enjoyed school, he left Bacone in 1894 and did not receive a degree. In 1895 he was elected to the Creek National Council's House of Warriors and was soon appointed as superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum, a position held until 1897 when he became the superintendent of the Muscogee Tribe's public schools. On May 9, 1896, Posey married Minnie Harris, a white schoolteacher from Arkansas. Alex and Minnie had two children, a daughter named Yahola Irving Posey, and a son named Pachina Kipling Posey, both of whom took their middle names from their father's favorite writers. Pachina died in infancy and the Poseys buried him in Eufaula. Posey devoted much of his time during these years to writing poems and short stories, many of which he published in various local newspapers such as the *Indian Journal* and the literary magazine *Twin Territories*.

Pachina, Minnie, and Yahola Posey. Courtesy of Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr.

In 1902 Posey bought the Eufaula weekly newspaper, the *Indian Journal*, and began a journalism career. For the most part, Posey abandoned poetry for prose and

[3] D. N. McIntosh (1822-1895), Muscogee statesman and Confederate colonel.

[4] Isparhecher (pronounced Spi-e-che) (1828-1902).

infused his journalistic writing with his great wit and humor, creating a style particularly popular with this readership. In the fall of 1902, Posey published the first of his "Fus Fixico" letters, which were written as a response to the illicit dealings of the Dawes Commission. The fictional Muscogee full-blood author of the letters, Fus Fixico or "heartless bird," wrote letters to the editor in Muscogee dialect called *este charte* or "Red Man's" English. Fus Fixico's letters recount the conversations of Fus's friends, Hotgun and Toofpafka Micco, and spoke for the conservative "Snake" Muscogees who opposed allotment. According to noted Posey scholar Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., Posey's Fus Fixico letters are his greatest literary accomplishment because they "made him the best of his [literary] contemporaries and one of the best Indian humorists of all time" (*Fus* 1).

Posey put his journalism career on hold in 1904 to work as a translator and fieldworker for the Dawes Commission. He traveled Muscogee territory and worked to update the tribal rolls needed to establish allotments. Often his job was to convince reluctant Muscogees to accept their allotments and also to sign up new tribal members, many of them infants, so that they would receive their share of the land. With statehood in 1907, the work of the Dawes Commission ended, and Posey, for reasons that remain unresolved, went to work as a real estate agent, a move that perplexes the Muscogee people to this day. Posey returned to his work as editor of the *Indian Journal* in April 1908, but his tenure was cut short on May 27, 1908 when he drowned attempting to cross the Canadian, or Oktahutche, River. Muscogee literary critic and writer Craig S. Womack writes that "Some Creek traditionalists believe that Posey's death came about as the result of his real estate dealings after Oklahoma statehood when Posey was beginning to become involved in the sale of Indian allotments. For these reasons, some say, Posey

was drowned by Tie-Snake, swallowed up by the very river he loved" (133). Though Posey's life was cut tragically short, his significance as a writer endures. He wrote a larger body of poetry than almost any other contemporaneous American Indian writer, yet it is not the quantity of Posey's imitative poetry that secures his place in the literary tradition; it is the quality of his prose, particularly the dialect works that reveal a unique voice, a voice that rose from the Muscogee Nation.

Historical Background

Alexander Posey's literary voice sprang from centuries of Muscogee oral tradition, and an understanding of Muscogee culture and history is crucial to any productive approach to Posey's writing. In his examination of Muscogee literary culture Womack writes:

> According to traditional Creek storytelling, the nation was born when the earth opened up in the West near the Continental Divide and spit the people up from below its surface out into the broader landscape. The people journeyed eastward on a quest to discover the origin of the sun until they reached the Atlantic and could travel no more. Turning back, they decided to settle in the area of the Chattahoochee River in Alabama. (26)

Soon the Muscogee Nation spread to cover the area presently known as the states of Alabama and Georgia. In his poem "Chasers of the Sun," Louis Littlecoon Oliver recounts this journey: "From out the navel of the earth / They poured like ants to chase the sun / To its beginning" (21). According to A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, the name Muscogee comes from "Is-te-cm-us-suk-c-kee or 'people of the Holly Leaf

Confederacy,' from the Gulf holly used in their ceremonials" (*Wynema* xxxi). Due to the tendency of the Muscogees to place their towns beside bodies of water, especially creeks, the Europeans chose to refer to Muscogees as "Creeks." Womack explains the cultural structure of the Muscogees:

> Traditionally Creeks are a matrilineal culture. Clan identity is passed down from one's mother. Clans, on a pragmatic level, provide a means of keeping track of relations and avoiding intermarriage. No one can marry within the clan from a traditional perspective. On a social and spiritual level, clans provide instruction and identification with a totemic element of nature. To name a few examples, there is the Raccoon Clan, the Bird Clan, the Wind Clan, the Sweet Potato Clan, the Alligator Clan [...] Traditionally, a person's clan uncle—her mother's oldest brother—would be her most important relative [...] A Creek not only views himself as a Creek and a member of a particular clan but, traditionally, is also a tribal town member. (42)

Womack's explanation shows how Muscogee culture consists of a complex interweaving of loyalties to nation, clan, town, and family.

Traditional Muscogee culture influenced virtually all of Posey's writing. A clear understanding of the social structure of Muscogee life helps the reader understand Posey's perspective, a perspective passed down from generation to generation like many of the stories themselves. The "Creek Confederacy" that the whites first encountered was divided into what were called "Upper" and "Lower" towns. The Upper Muscogees occupied towns on the Coose and Tallapoosa Rivers while the Lower Muscogees were located on the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers. Despite this division of towns, the

Muscogees usually acted together. The Muscogees amplified their population and influence by implementing an ingenious policy of absorbing conquered tribes into their nation. The Muscogee Nation, based on towns, ensured a divided-yet-healthy governmental atmosphere. Debo states that "The Creeks recognized peace and war as separate governmental functions and the towns were classed as White or Peace towns and Red or War towns [...] Each group regarded its members as 'people of one fire' and developed a feeling of rivalry that was almost hostile" (6-7). Towns were often situated at the center of several villages and each constituted a part of the Muscogee government. Daily town councils attended by local leaders with the *micco*, or "town chief," were common. Incorporated tribes were often designated as White towns; this helped ensure continued peace from conquered tribes and also allowed these tribes a place in Muscogee government. White towns were places of sanctuary and no harm was supposed to come to those who took refuge there. Red towns held the responsibility of declaring war and devising foreign relations. Towns were the basic unit of Muscogee social and political life and were the cultural center of tribal events.

An important town-based social event that Posey writes about is the *chunky* game. A chunky yard could, and can still, be found in each Muscogee town. The game requires players to hurl poles at a rolling stone disc. Such discs are considered valuable town property that remain with the town for generations. Other games and contests are played in the public portion of the town such as feats of archery or ball games involving both genders. Posey refers to these ceremonial practices in such stories as "Jes 'Bout a Mid'lin', Sah," and "A Creek Fable." In 1905 he penned a newspaper article relating a particularly vicious contest between two rival towns. He reported that when "the game

was finished and the smoke cleared away there was not a man on either team but what carried a wound of some kind."[5] Posey estimated that 2,500 spectators watched the game and that after the brutal struggle, the town of Eufaula claimed victory.

In addition to acting as the site of culturally important games, towns were also the seat of a complex governmental system. Traditional Muscogee town leadership consisted of the *micco* or "town chief," sometimes a second chief called *micco apotka* or "twin chief," and several lower miccos. In addition to these miccos, there were according to Debo "'the beloved men,' a very influential group, apparently made up of those who had formerly distinguished themselves in war and council but were too old for active leadership" (12-13). The *henehas* constituted those who directed ceremonial and public events and services. The most accomplished speaker among the henehas also served as the orator for the chief during ceremonial addresses. Debo explains that "although the micco and his councilors had risen to their position largely through their prowess in war, their duties were mainly civil and their influence was usually for peace" (13). The military leaders sat apart from the town leadership yet also retained a large measure of power. Their main duties were to enforce sentences decided upon by the council, arrange the often brutal ball games with rival towns, and to serve in time of war. Predictably, due to the importance of military exploits in the advancement of officials and cultural esteem, war was common.

In 1733, after several years of trade and neutral relations, European settlers began to create plantations in the Georgia area of the Muscogee Nation. Despite intense efforts by the Europeans, the Muscogees were determined to remain neutral both in the whites' wars against each other and the wars between the whites and other Indian Nations. The

[5] "Arbekas Meet Eufalas," *Muscogee Phoenix* 19 Oct. 1905.

English did manage in 1747, through the trickery of an Indian agent named James Adair, to convince a single Muscogee war party to assist in a raid on French settlements. When the French attempted to influence the Muscogee chiefs to punish those responsible for the raid, the Muscogees responded with a defiance that permeates their history, and according to Debo, sent a message "that they were all people of one fire and would stand together; and unless the French should cease their evil design to foment a civil war among them as they had among the foolish Choctaws, their garrison would be wiped out and the river would carry their blood down to Mobile" (27). The Muscogees could easily have made good on this threat; in 1770 they were the most powerful Indian nation known and that in the previous years, they grew in strength due to both their flourishing natural growth and their skillful adoption of defeated tribes. They were a deadly force in the wilderness of the Southeast, having through impressive military prowess cowed the Cherokees into "a perpetual state of defense" (31) and all but vanquished the once powerful and abundant Choctaws. Despite the potent combination of Muscogee intelligence and ferocity, Ruoff writes that in 1783 "what became a long history of large cessions of Muscogee land began when the royal governor of Georgia demanded that the nation cede two million acres of the upper Savannah River as payment for trade debts." (*Wynema* xxxi). Twenty-eight years later, Tecumseh visited the Muscogee Nation and quickly gathered converts to his vision of a pan-Indian coalition bent on driving Europeans from the continent. Tecumseh, relates Debo, told his followers their "use of magic red clubs would make invulnerable all Indians who would join in the holy war to expel their enemies, while [...] unseen powers would lead the white men into quagmires and drive them back to the Savannah" (77). Tecumseh's preachings and the continued

loss of land from the Muscogee Nation to the Europeans resulted in the brutal Red Stick War of 1813-1814. The war subsided only after several bloody confrontations between the hostile minority "Red Sticks" and the allied Muscogee, Choctaw, and Cherokee forces led by Andrew Jackson and James White.

In an attempt to slow the loss of Muscogee land to the whites, the Muscogee Council banned any future sale of land, but chiefs William McIntosh and Etommee Tustennuggee along with several lesser chiefs and tribal members—many with no tribal authority at all—covertly signed the Treaty of Indian Springs. The treaty relinquished all Muscogee claim to their land in Georgia and the upper two-thirds of Alabama in substitute for a section of land in the west. McIntosh also signed an additional treaty that ensured him "$25,000 for his residence and 1,640 acres of improved land in the ceded tract" (Debo 89). McIntosh, who ironically in 1811 advised the death penalty for any chief responsible for the sale of tribal land, was given a sentence of death by the tribal council and was gunned down outside his home which was then burned. Though the Muscogees declared the Treaty of Indian Springs illegal and refused payment, by 1827 they had ceded all of their land in Georgia to the United States. Debo writes that only five years later, "Opothle Yahola and other Upper Creek leaders went to Washington and signed the famous Removal Treaty of March 24, 1832" (98), which surrendered the remainder of Muscogee land in Alabama and led to their forced removal between 1834-1836 to Indian Territory in present-day southeastern Oklahoma.

Posey esteemed the elder Muscogees who had lived through Removal. He spent much time with one such man, Yadeka Harjo, whom Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. describes as "a blind medicine man…who had made the removal trek from Alabama nearly seventy

years earlier" (*Alex* 201). Yadeka Harjo's father served in the War of 1812 under the leadership of Andrew Jackson, and Yadeka still smoked a tomahawk pipe that his father received after fighting the "Red Sticks" at Horseshoe Bend in 1814. Posey enjoyed listening to men such as Yadeka Harjo, Chitto Harjo, and Hotgun, and though he did not share their "traditionalist" politics, he greatly admired them and used their wisdom in his writing. Posey's respect for his elders spanned his entire life. In what is probably his last published work, an article for his newspaper the *Indian Journal*, Posey wrote of meeting Is-chas Harjo, another Removal survivor, who had lived most of his life among the Cherokees.[6]

The Grand Council of United Nations of Indian Territory signed a treaty with the Confederate States of America in 1861 allowing both passage to Confederate troops and the right to request Indian nations, including the Muscogees, to help combat the Union Army. Those Muscogees faithful to the United States renounced the treaty and even attacked the homes of Confederate sympathizers. After the war, the 1866 Treaty of Cession and Indemnity ensured that the Muscogees shared the fate of the other tribes that supported the Confederate cause; as punishment they lost more land to the United States. Unfortunately, as Michael D. Green points out, "the document made no distinction between the Union and the Confederate Creeks, thus failing to recognize the sacrifices the loyal faction had made during the war. Rather all Creeks were treated alike, as ex-Confederate enemies" (58). The Union demanded that the Muscogees cede half their territory, using the partial involvement of the Muscogees in the Civil War as an excuse to claim more land.

[6] "Lost to his Tribe for Many Years," *Indian Journal* 15 May 1908.

The Confederate and Union Muscogees reunited in 1867 and agreed to live as a single nation. Later that year on October 12, the Muscogees drafted a constitution and code of laws based upon the Constitution of the United States. The Muscogee constitution called for a council consisting of a House of Kings and a House of Warriors; there would also be a head chief "whose duties were similar to those of the governor of an American state" (Debo 181). Before the Civil War, each town chose its chief and government officials in the fashion customary before removal from their homeland in Georgia and Alabama. Some of these chiefs were appointed to the House of Kings. Although towns retained control of certain ceremonial duties, the Muscogee form of town-based government with no official capitol was at an end.

Chief Isparhecher. Courtesy Muscogee Indian Museum.

Peace for the Muscogees ended again when a civil clash ensued in 1879. This so-called Green Peach War developed from the grievances of an estranged faction of Muscogees who despised the constitutional form of government. These mostly full-blood conservatives, led by the talented leader Isparhecher, participated in a brief and mostly bloodless confrontation in July and August of 1882. Debo explains the nature and name of the conflict: "A few 'battles' were fought with much medicine and few casualties, and

when the hungry constitutional 'soldiers' helped themselves to the orchards in the negro settlement on Pecan Creek, Indian humor bestowed upon the conflict the name of Green Peach War" (272). The conservative uprising ended by the middle of August 1882, and to accommodate white demands for the opening of more Indian land, Congress approved the purchase of more land from the Muscogees. Against this sale, councils for the Five Tribes as well as other area tribes attempted to draft a constitution for an Indian confederation. In 1887, Congress passed the General Allotment Act, which provided for the allotment of Indian land to tribal citizens. This act made additional tribal land, the Cherokee Outlet, and other unassigned lands available for settlement by non-Indians. Littlefield details the post-General Allotment Act landscape: "After 1890, the region was known as Oklahoma Territory, leaving the lands of the Five Civilized Tribes, the Osages, and the small tribes in the northeastern corner of the territory to compose Indian Territory" (*Fus* 4). To protest the authority of the General Allotment Act, representatives of the Five Tribes declined an 1893 meeting with the Dawes Commission to discuss the proposed allotment of land. A year later, the Muscogee Council once again rejected the proposals of the Dawes Commission. To counter this opposition, Congress gave the Dawes Commission the power to compile tribal membership rolls without the consent of the tribal council, allowing the commission to proceed with allotment. The ultimate objective of Congress in instituting the Dawes Commission was to destroy tribal governments and force Indians to become United States citizens while making a fortune in illicit land deals. Unlike the Choctaws and Chickasaws, who in 1897 agreed to allot land to tribal members, the remainder of the Five Tribes, including the Muscogees, signed no such agreement and were able to again stall the Dawes Commission. Congress

fired back with the 1898 Curtis Act, which required the people of dissolved Indian nations to succumb to allotment. Following the passage of the Curtis Act, Muscogee towns were sold, placing their public establishments under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior.

Womack writes that Muscogee "history is a history of resistance, and [they] fought vigorously against these efforts of legislative genocide" (36). One great figure of this resistance is Chitto Harjo, also known as "Crazy Snake." Harjo, a veteran conservative who took part in the 1870s and 1880s uprisings against constitutional government, lead an allotment opposition group of full-bloods called the "Snakes." Harjo argued for a return to traditional Muscogee government, maintained that tribal treaties with the United States granted permanent tribal ownership of the land, and contended that the Muscogee Nation held the right to self-government. According to Womack, "Harjo became a powerful and bothersome presence in Washington, showing up in senators' and congressmen's offices and spreading the treaty of 1832 out on their desks, demanding they explain why it was no longer valid" (37). Harjo and the Snakes attempted to organize a new tribal government based at the Upper Muscogee town of Hickory Ground and even established a lighthorse police unit to enforce their rulings. This resistance,

Chitto Harjo. Barde Collection, courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

called the Crazy Snake Rebellion, eventually led to the imprisonment of ninety-four Snakes, including Chitto Harjo, in a Muskogee jail. The Snakes eventually agreed to accept their allotments in return for suspended sentences, but out of resistance, many never recognized their ownership of any land. Despite the efforts of Chitto Harjo and his followers, the Muscogees realized that the battle over allotment was lost, and they signed the allotment agreement in 1901 in an effort to save as much of their land as possible. According to the agreement with the Dawes Commission, each person of the Muscogee Nation, including women, children, and freedmen, received a 160-acre allotment.

In one last effort to fight joint statehood with Oklahoma Territory, a number of Indian Territory representatives, including Alexander Posey, met at the 1904 Sequoyah Convention in the town of Muskogee to write a constitution for separate statehood of Indian Territory. Littlefield describes the result of their effort as "a document of about thirty-five thousand words, containing—among other provisions—a bill of rights with thirty-one articles, the prohibition of child labor and the farming out of convicts for labor, and a provision for a vote on women's suffrage" (*Fus* 227). This document stands as a testament to the forward thinking of the drafters who included two issues—eliminating child labor and women's suffrage—that the United States government did not address until 1920 and 1938 respectively. Congress disregarded the tribe's demand for a separate state due in large part to pressure from whites who illegally held land in Indian Territory, and the railroads that stood to gain much from joint statehood. At Posey's suggestion, the Indian state would have been named for his hero, the creator of the Cherokee syllabary, Sequoyah, but as Donald E. Green writes "the Enabling Act passed by

Congress in 1906 required joint, rather than separate, statehood" (86) and quickly ended any hope for an independent Indian state.

For the most part, historical accounts of the Muscogee people tend to end in 1907 with Oklahoma statehood and in doing so ignore almost a century of important tribal development. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 allowed the restoration of tribal governments, and in 1936 Oklahoma recognized the Muscogees as a self-governing entity. The United States government—after sixty-four years of presidentially-appointed chiefs—finally allowed the Muscogees to freely elected their own Principal Chief, Claude A. Cox, in 1971. Womack remarks that "contrary to *The Road to Disappearance*, the title of one of the most comprehensive books about Creek history, the Creeks have anything but disappeared" (25). The population of the tribe continues to grow, and as of February of 2002 Muscogee enrollment was 52,169,[7] a vast increase from the estimated 13,537 after Removal in 1859.[8] Considering the hardships caused by the United States government, this increase stands as yet another testament to the resilience of the Muscogees. Perhaps one of the strongest aspects of the Muscogee culture is its literary heritage. S. Alice Callahan's 1891 novel, *Wynema*, is not only the first novel written by a Muscogee woman, but also the first novel written by an American Indian woman. Posey was the first American Indian to own and run his own newspaper. Many accomplished contemporary Muscogee writers continue what Callahan started. In addition to Craig Womack, the work of such poets as Louis Littlecoon Oliver and Joy Harjo draw from their rich cultural knowledge while simultaneously adding to the strong Muscogee

[7] *Muscogee (Creek) Nation Web Page*. 13 Apr. 2002. Muscogee (Creek) Nation. <http://www.ocevnet.org/creek/index.html>.
[8] Foreman, Grant. *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1953. 107.

culture. The work of Alexander Posey is an important link both in this chain of tribal literary accomplishment and in voicing the concerns of a deeply-wronged yet indomitable people.

Muscogee Freedmen

Many of Posey's stories center around characters of African descent and his opinion of former African slaves or "freedmen" is an important, if unflattering, component of his work. Posey's dialect tales portray Muscogee freedmen in what can only be called a racist manner. Stories such as "Uncle Dick and Uncle Will," "Uncle Dick's Sow," and "'Jes 'Bout a Mid'lin', Sah'" display blacks as little more than dishonest and lazy people. In his story "Mose and Richard" the title characters are two black children who are too lazy to succeed in school and upon whom education is a wasted effort. In perhaps the most flattering of freedman stories, "A Foxy Old Buck," a freedman is able to shoot a deer, but then loses his coat to the animal as it manages to get up and bound away. Posey despised those of African descent because he saw them as yet another factor in the abrupt changes taking place in Muscogee culture, a culture he paradoxically ridiculed and praised in both his writing and actions.

During Posey's time, racist feelings toward blacks were not uncommon among Muscogees. Before Removal, most Southeastern tribes, including the Muscogees, took prisoners during times of war and incorporated them into their tribe. These captives, while sometimes treated harshly, were considered spoils of war and were used to replace tribal members lost in battle; therefore they were considered to be adopted tribal members, regardless of race, and not slaves. It is theorized that first contact between Indians and Africans predated traditional European contact with the New World by

several hundred years. J. Leitch Wright states that "Large Indian stone heads discovered in Meso-America displaying pronounced Negroid characteristics, presumably carved several centuries before Columbus's voyage, lend support to such a theory" (257). Though black slaves under the control of whites became relatively common toward the end of the seventeenth-century, it was not until the 1760s that Muscogee ranchers first began to keep a small number of slaves. Claudio Saunt estimates that "the black population in Georgia and Florida more than quadrupled, from 4,100 to roughly 18,000, rapidly surpassing the estimated 14,000 Creeks in the vicinity" (51). Despite the influence and prolonged example of the whites, the number of slaves controlled by Muscogees remained extremely small and slavery only became more common in the 1790s.

Posey's stories never relate any mistreatment of the blacks by Muscogees and this, according to the few accounts available, was apparently not far from the reality of the relationship between these two races. Apparently the Muscogees never fully emulated the brutal treatment of African slaves by the whites. Debo explains that "except on the plantations of a few mixed bloods, slavery rested very lightly upon the Creek Negroes. The easy-going Indians found the possession of slaves a great convenience, but they saw no reason to adopt the white man's ruthless system of exploiting and degrading them" (115). While the slave narratives recorded by the WPA in the 1930s do not portray slavery as an experience that "rested very lightly upon" the slaves, the accounts do seem to support the claim that Muscogees treated their slaves with a relative amount of kindness. Mary Grayson, an ex-slave born and raised in Indian country, recounts that:

> We slaves didn't have a hard time at all before the War. I have had people who were slaves of white folks back in the old states tell me that they had to work awfully hard and their masters were cruel to them sometimes, but all the Negroes I knew who belonged to Creeks always had plenty of clothes and lots to eat and we all lived in good log cabins we built. (172-3)

Another ex-slave, Henry Clay, who was brought to Muscogee Territory only after serving as a slave to whites in both North Carolina and Louisiana, recalled that "it seems like the slaves in the Creek country had a better time than most of the Negroes in Louisiana, too. They played more and had their own church and preachers" (83). As tensions concerning slavery grew in both the United States and in Indian country, the Muscogees, especially the Christian-intolerant Upper Creeks, began to oppose such religious freedoms for the slaves.

After Removal the Muscogees created a "slave code" of laws regarding the treatment of slaves. This code became stricter as a result of both the impending Civil War and the problem of slaves fleeing the harsher, surrounding tribes—particularly the Cherokees—to live in the Muscogee Nation. In many ways the slave code became stricter as the cultural dominance of the Muscogees weakened and the population of the blacks increased. The slave code mandated, among other things, that blacks who killed Indians were to be punished by death, while Indians who killed blacks were required to pay the slave owner the value of the slave or face execution. Littlefield asserts that "the code increased in severity, but only in the two or three years before the outbreak of the Civil War did it approach the severity of the codes in the slave states and even then it did not approach very closely" (143). Intermarriage between the Muscogees and the blacks

best illustrates this leniency on the part of the Muscogees. Racial mixing was common, especially among the Upper Creeks. This intermingling caused some confusion among the 1832 United States census takers who according to Littlefield "asked whether an Indian living with a black wife who was his or someone else's slave was to be considered a head of a family and to be enrolled as entitled to a reservation" (114). Former slave Mrs. Patsy Perryman married three men in her lifetime: "My first husband was Charley Clark, a full-blood Creek Indian, living on the river near Yohola; the next man was a black African, but we couldn't get along so I let him go, and married Randolph Perryman" (Baker 316).[9] As the Muscogee slave code became stricter, miscegenation and intermarriage such as that related by Mrs. Perryman became less accepted. Nevertheless, the influence of the African population upon the Muscogees grew over time. According to the census of 1832, there were 22,694 Muscogees and 902 black slaves. By 1890, ravaged by disease, the rigors of Removal, and the harshness of the Oklahoma climate, the Muscogee population fell to 9,999, but the population of freedmen and black immigrants swelled to 4,621.[10]

Muscogee slaves witnessed many of the tribe's practices and provide fascinating insight into the daily life of the Indians. Former slave Lucinda Davis's testimony of her life with the Muscogees shows the interaction of Indian, African, and white culture—in this case revealed by the selection of language:

> I belong [ed] to a full-blood Creek Indian and I didn't know nothing but Creek talk long after de Civil War. My mistress was part white and knowed English talk, but she never did talk it because non of de people talked it. I heard it

[9] Randolph Perryman is listed on the Dawes rolls as a Creek freedman.
[10] May, Katja. *African Americans and Native Americans in the Creek and Cherokee Nations, 1830s to 1920s: Collision and Collusion*. New York: Garland, 1996. 172.

> sometime, but it sound like whole lot of wild shoat in de cedar brake scared at something when I do hear it." (Baker 108)

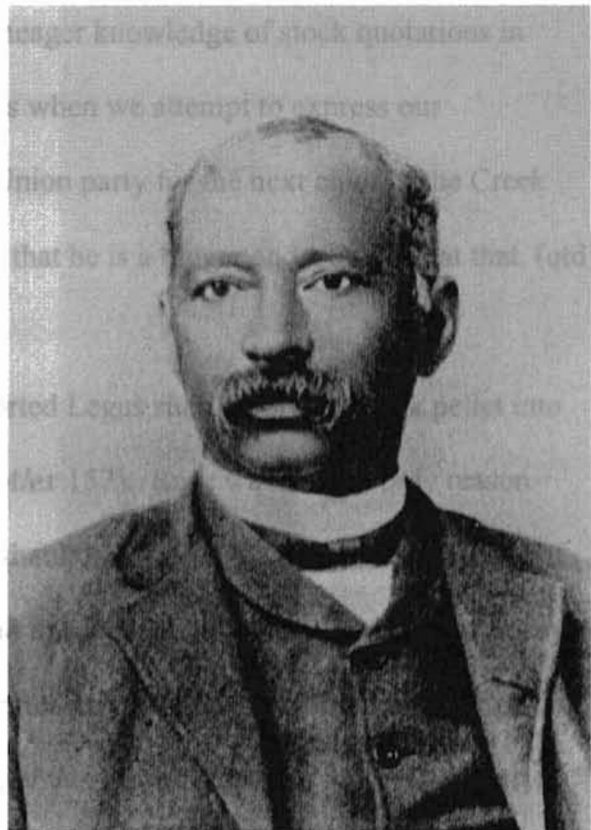
Though Davis was immersed in Muscogee culture, lived almost her entire life with the Muscogees, and was enrolled as a member of the Creek Nation in 1902, most of her recollections are told from the point of view of an outsider:

> Everybody dress up fine when day is a funeral. Dey take me along to mind de baby at two-three funerals, but I don't know who it is dat die. De Creek sho' take on when somebody die!
>
> Long in de night you wake up and hear a gun go off, way off yonder somewhar. Den it go again, and den again, jest as fast as dey can ram de load in. Dat mean somebody die. When somebody die dey jest go back in de house and let de fire go out, and don't even tech de dead person till somebody git dar what has de right to tech de dead. (Baker 110)

After the Civil War, the Treaty of 1866 forced slaveholding tribes to make former slaves members of the tribe; all but the Chickasaws complied. The Union also required tribes to pay damages to ex-slaves in the form of land and "blacks—formerly both slave and free, but mainly from the Upper Creek settlements—submitted and were paid claims for sizable amounts of property" (Littlefield, *Africans* 154). Many of these freedmen settled in the three Indian Territory towns of Arkansas Colored, North Fork Colored, and Canadian Colored. The Muscogees, whose former strength rested upon a policy of assimilating others, found it difficult to accept the blacks. As the population of the Muscogees dwindled, the population of both freedmen and black immigrants increased sharply. Faced with cultural extinction, the Muscogees increased their awareness of

racial differences as a cultural defense mechanism. Just as many whites found comfort in seeing themselves as superior to the blacks in order to preserve a misguided form of dignity, so too did the Muscogees boost their self-esteem by viewing the blacks as subordinate and inferior. Posey's stories are good examples of this racist mindset and ironically their value rests in their ability to illustrate this outlook.

The Muscogees' tended to dislike Christianity and this was also a factor in the division between Muscogees and blacks. Muscogees, though known for their leniency with their slaves, frowned upon the tendency of blacks to convert to Christianity—this was especially true for the Upper Creeks. Though intermittently enforced, Muscogee law stipulated that blacks and Muscogees who attended Christian services were to be given fifty to one hundred lashes as punishment. The Muscogees saw missionaries and Christianity as a threat to the authority of the Chiefs, but according to Littlefield, "still, small groups met secretly, sang spirituals in English and hymns in Creek, and listened to the black preachers" (*Africans* 141).



Legus Perryman. Courtesy of the Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman.

To say that Posey shared these general Muscogee sentiments concerning blacks would be an understatement. Posey was a fierce racist when it came to

blacks, and these feelings were most venomously expressed in his writing. His patronizing freedman dialect stories such as "Mose and Richard" and "Uncle Dick's Sow" exhibit this racism in their portrayal of the real-life family of freedmen, the Graysons of Coon Creek, as simpletons and thieves. As Littlefield points out, Posey acquired many of these stories, and perhaps no small amount of his racism, from Hence. In probably Posey's most obvious display of racism, he vehemently opposed the 1903 candidacy of Legus Perryman for principal chief on the grounds that Perryman was part black. Posey's vicious pen attacked Perryman in the pages of the *Indian Journal*, writing a number of racist remarks concerning the candidate:

> Our command of Creek is fluent and we are more or less familiar with English and Choctaw, to say nothing of our meager knowledge of stock quotations in Greek and Latin, but language fails us when we attempt to express our disappointment of the choice of the Union party for the next chief of the Creek people. All that we are able to say is that he is a nigger and a bad one at that. (qtd in Littlefield, *Alex* 156)

Posey went on to write that those who supported Legus should "drop a black pellet into the ballot box for Legus" (qtd in Littlefield, *Alex* 157). Race was not the only reason Posey disliked Perryman. In 1895, the year that Posey began his tenure in the House of Warriors, Perryman had been impeached, and this was probably another cause of Posey's hatred for the candidate. Indeed, Pleasant Porter, the candidate that Posey supported and who ultimately won the race for principal chief, also had a degree of African ancestry, but Posey did not seem to mind. Despite these non-racial motivations, the decision to attack Legus on racial terms and with incredible malice shows one of his least-flattering

sides. Posey, like many of his contemporaries, detested freedmen because he saw them as representatives of the drastic changes the Muscogee people were forced to endure. Despite Posey's racism, it would be a mistake to belittle his contribution to both Muscogee and American literature.

Posey and the American Literary Tradition

Like many American Indian writers, Posey does not comfortably fit within traditional literary categories, but he probably best reflects a frame of mind similar to that of a number of culturally diverse regionalist writers. Posey's short stories and fables exhibit virtually all of the characteristics of local colorists or regionalist writers. Posey, just like better known regionalists such as Sarah Orne Jewett, Joel Chandler Harris, and Mark Twain, wrote about disappearing landscapes, created characters who speak in dialect, and attempted to preserve endangered customs. Coupled with the threat of the industrial revolution and the loss of the traditional farm-based family, the prevalence of fiction magazines fueled the production of regionalist writing in almost every other section of the continent. But in Indian Territory it was the abundance of small local newspapers and journals, such as *Twin*

Posey, 1905, lighting Yadeka Harjo's pipe.
Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Territories, together with the specter of impending Oklahoma statehood that drove Posey and other Indian regionalists such as Ora V. Eddleman Reed and Charles Gibson to write and publish their works. The expansionist pressure of the United States, particularly at the turn of the century, makes it no coincidence that Jewett published her regionalist 1900 masterpiece "The Foreigner" in the same year that Posey published "Two Famous Prophets," "Uncle Dick's Sow," and "Jes 'Bout A Mid'Lin', Sah," among others. Posey's lifestyle made him uniquely qualified to record the local character of the Muscogee Nation. As Posey grew up, he witnessed the local customs and quirks of those who populated the land of the Muscogees. He spoke English, Muscogee, some Choctaw and experienced firsthand the freedmen dialect of English delivered with a Muscogee accent. Posey's ear for dialect served him well when he wrote the "Fus Fixico" letters in *este charte* or red man's English and he was fascinated by the "traditionalists" of his tribe, such as Yadeka Harjo, whom he saw as a wise yet misguided fragment of Muscogee history. The "Fus Fixico" letters show how Posey respected the full-blooded Snake faction while retaining his idea that their resistance to allotment and the dissolution of tribal government was antiquated. A regionalist both in word and action, Posey chose to spend his short life almost entirely within the fifty-mile area around where he was born. In his biography of Posey, Littlefield recounts the young writer's first excursion to visit his wife's family in Arkansas: "Though he enjoyed the beauty of the Boston Mountains from the train window, little else pleased him. His dissatisfaction grew, and he quickly became bored by sightseeing with his father-in-law, Milton Harris. After one day he boarded a train alone" and went back to Okmulgee (*Alex* 99).

Humor, as with many local colorists, is an important component of Posey's writing. In virtually all of Posey's prose, humor is the key to his dualism concerning a number of tribal affairs, a dualism most boldly manifested in his great respect for Chitto Harjo and the other anti-allotment "Snakes" while he worked for the Dawes Commission and openly advocated allotment. For some reason, the old stereotype of the humorless Indian persists in the prevalent white perception of Native Americans. As early as Washington Irving's book *Tour of the Prairies*, American Indians were shown to have a healthy and unique sense of humor. Will Rogers, a contemporary of Posey, was one of the most popular humorists in American history; he also was one eighth Cherokee and born and raised in Indian Territory. Vine Deloria Jr. argues:

> One of the best ways to understand a people is to know what makes them laugh. Laughter encompasses the limits of the soul. In humor life is redefined and accepted [...] The Indian people are exactly opposite of the popular stereotype. I sometimes wonder how anything is accomplished by Indians because of the apparent overemphasis on humor within the Indian world." (146-7)

Posey's sense of humor was perhaps his greatest asset as a writer. Though many of Posey's short stories, especially those dealing with the Creek freedmen, do not hold the same humorous appeal that they did in Posey's day, they are not like the malicious attacks that Posey wrote in response to Legus Perryman's political campaign. Posey teased the freedmen in the same way that he simultaneously teased both whites and Muscogee full-bloods in the "Fus Fixico" letters. Deloria comments on the role of teasing in American Indian discourse:

> For centuries before the white invasion, teasing was a method of control of social situations by Indian people. Rather than embarrass members of the tribe publicly, people used to tease individuals they considered out of step with the consensus of tribal opinion. In this way egos were preserved and disputes within the tribe of a personal nature were held to a minimum. (147)

Posey teases those he disagrees with, but not in a disrespectful manner. His meticulous use of dialect is perhaps the best illustration of this. Posey's dialect is carefully constructed and specific to the people he writes about, respectful in its precision.

Posey's "Fus Fixico" letters come closer to the work of the African-American regionalist Charles Chesnutt than to other writers who worked in vernacular. This may be because the "Fus Fixico" letters, like the "Uncle Julius" stories of Chesnutt, attempt to capture a dialect—with which they are personally associated—within standard written English. Gavin Jones argues that Chesnutt's use of dialect is subversive and is "a mask behind which the sound of African spirituality operates to resist the repression of slavery and racism" (187). An explanation similar to this could persuasively be made for the Fus Fixico letters because they are in the dialect of Muscogee full-bloods, an ethnicity with which Posey strongly associated. Posey's Fus Fixico personae speak and joke in full-blood dialect about the oppression they are undergoing from the United States government, particularly the Dawes Commission. While Jones's argument holds for the Fus Fixico letters, this stance becomes complicated when associated with Posey's "Uncle Dick" freedmen stories. As Littlefield and Parins write, Posey's dialect humor is the vehicle for a sociological argument yet "it is not the overt propaganda of Charles Chesnutt's stories but is rather akin to the subtle ideas of racial competition or one-

upmanship that underpin much of Joel Chandler Harris' work" (29-30). Though technically Muscogee freedmen were tribe members due to the Treaty of 1866, they did not enjoy the full acceptance of the tribe, so subversion was probably not Posey's motive in writing those particular tales. Posey read voraciously and much of his reading consisted of newspapers that used dialect works as filler material. As Littlefield points out in his introduction to *The Fus Fixico Letters*, the regional newspapers that Posey read gave him a substantial introduction to the works of such dialect writers as C. B. Lewis, Alex E. Sweet, and Tom P. Morgan. Posey's library, kept at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, contains Ade's *Fables in Slang* which also probably influenced his Creek fables. Littlefield writes, "Despite comparisons of Posey's humor to that of his American contemporaries, it had more affinities to the work of older generations of humorists reaching back as far as the 1830s" yet Littlefield clarifies that Posey's influence by earlier dialect humorists "was probably indirect: many Indian Territory writers imitated these earlier forms and styles" (*Fus* 23).

Due to Posey's extensive reading, he was probably aware that his writing, as influenced as it was by Robert Burns, Joel Chandler Harris, and others, was directly linked to the long tradition of Indian dialect humor he witnessed in the newspapers of Indian Territory. Often these works of dialect humor are characterized by ethnic personae such as Unakah, who according to Littlefield "produced more than a score of letters between 1878 and 1886 for the *Cherokee Advocate*" (*Fus* 24). Other probable influences were the Choctaw freedman persona of Ole Si and the Cherokee freedman persona of Abraham Linkum Jones. Most of the humorous dialect letters deal with important political or social issues of the time, and it is not surprising that Posey would

eventually create the persona of Fus Fixico to address the debate over allotment. The freedmen stories that Posey wrote also address the social situation of that particular population of Indian Territory. In "Mose and Richard" Uncle Dick stresses the importance of education to his two sons:

> "Now, chillun," said Uncle Dick, on starting Mose and Richard to school, "I didn't had dese chances w'en I wuz er boy, kaze dem whar slabe time; an' now 'fo' I sen' you to school dis mawnin', I wanter gin you dis little talk: I wants you to larn somet'ing, kaze de time done git heah w'en if you grows up ignunt, de white man' an' Mistah Injin gwine to git de best ob you; an dey may git de best ob you anyhow, but hit aint gwine hu't you to go to school.[11]

On the surface, this example illustrates the understanding by the freedmen that in order to improve their position within the world, they must pursue education. Nevertheless, this story uniquely belongs to Indian Territory where two different cultures occupy a dominant social position over another race: the whites who threaten the Indians' right to the land, and the Indians, who though victimized by the whites, were also once the slave-masters and are therefore infused with latent authority.

Despite Posey's regionalist characteristics, placing him within the American literary canon is problematic and perhaps ultimately impossible. His concerns and situation differed greatly from those of Jewett, Harris, and other canonical American regionalists because he was not "American"; he was a Muscogee man of letters who, despite being labeled as a "progressive" figure in Muscogee politics, never lost sight of his cultural identity. To place him within the current American literary canon or even the American Indian canon would remove him from the more appropriate Muscogee literary

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[11] *Twin Territories* 2 (November 1900) 226-228.

canon. As Littlefield writes in his article "American Indians, American Scholars and the American Literary Canon," the cultural context of American Indian writing must be preserved or else it becomes "easy to force the literature into traditional Western historical constructs so that it becomes what we want it to be or think it should be. [...] Our efforts to bring American Indian literatures into the canon are viewed by some Indian intellectuals as an ultimate act of colonialism because those efforts smack of appropriation" (104). Other scholars of American Indian literatures disagree. Arnold Krupat writes in his article "Scholarship and Native American Studies: A Response to Daniel Littlefield, Jr." that "Native American literatures [should] be included among the several literatures that make up American literature, and that American literature itself be included in the broader category of a global or international literature" (92-93). This view of inclusive literary canons ultimately argues for a single world canon that includes all literature. Womack argues against the perception that Indian literatures are excluded at all:

> tribal literatures are not some branch waiting to be grafted onto the main trunk. Tribal literatures are the *tree*, the oldest literatures in the Americas, the most American of American literatures. We *are* the canon [...] without Native American literature, there is no canon [...] let Americanists struggle for *their* place in the canon. (6-7)

Obviously, strong arguments wage on all sides of this issue, but while placing Posey exclusively in the American literary canon may both enrich that canon and further publicize Posey's work, it also threatens to remove it from the context of the Muscogee literary tradition populated by such authors as S. Alice Callahan, Charles Gibson, Louis

Littlecoon Oliver, and Joy Harjo, among others, not to mention centuries of oral tradition passed from one anonymous author to the next.

With the publication of the fourth edition of *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, an anthology that includes three of Posey's poems and one of his Fus Fixico letters, along with the works of numerous other underappreciated writers, the concept of inflexible canons has come under question. If, as even the existence of this edition of Posey's works argues, such almost forgotten writers as Posey, Charles Gibson, Ora V. Eddleman Reed, Susette La Flesche, James Roane Gregory, and many others deserve to be read by a diverse public then the traditional view of "the" literary canon must be abandoned for a new, flexible, inclusive way to envision these works as components as a stable yet permeable whole. One of the goals of this edition is to show how writers such as Posey, can be productive, and fairly, studied by scholars who approach his work from a number of literary traditions.

Posey himself seemed aware of the dilemma of literary tradition, context, and audience. A first chance at fame outside of Indian Territory came to Posey by way of his poetry, which was well received and reprinted in a number of newspapers. Soon his work began to appear in the *Kansas City Star* and the *New York Evening Sun*, and other such publications began to ask for contributions. Reluctant to take advantage of popular success Posey said, "I write exclusively of the West, of home scenes and places, and fearing that my local allusions might not be appreciated elsewhere, I have never made any attempt to get a hearing in the east" (qtd in Littlefield, *Alex* 118). After the success of the Fus Fixico letters, national newspapers once again approached Posey hoping to secure regular contributions and he was even asked to join a Native American lecture

circuit. Once again he rejected national exposure and wrote the editor of the South McAlester *Capital* that "Heretofore I have always made my letters of territorial importance only, using characters and incidents that all of our people are familiar with. I fear that eastern people would not understand me" (qtd in Littlefield, *Alex* 185).

Posey's contribution to the oral tradition of the Muscogees is most apparent in his orations. As in many other cultures, those skilled in oratory are highly regarded in most American Indian tribes; Posey was such a man. His three Bacone Indian University commencement speeches, all included in this edition, enjoyed immense popularity within Indian Territory and initially did more to elevate his local prestige than his poetry or other written works. In both a testament to his skill at oratory and to his quickly attained tribal fame, Posey was asked to make a political speech in favor of Isparhecher's campaign for principal chief and to deliver a eulogy at the grave of D. N. McIntosh. Both of these speeches, also included in this edition, were extremely well received.

Ruoff divides American Indian speeches into two general categories, ceremonial and non-ceremonial. She writes that ceremonial speeches are predictably "used to initiate ceremonies in whole or in part" (*American Indian Literatures* 49) while nonceremonial speeches "can include those made at council meetings, coups counts, formal petitions, addresses of welcome, battle speeches to warriors, and statements of personal feeling or experience" (50). Posey's orations fall into the broad nonceremonial category, but after that often resist classification. His speeches contain portions of most types of nonceremonial address. Often Posey's orations begin as statements of personal feeling that accumulate into passionate "battle speeches" calling Indians in general and the Muscogees in particular to fight against white oppression and stereotypes.

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Posey's understanding of the importance of oration also emerges in his other works, most distinctly in one of his earliest stories "Chinnubbie and the Owl." The story relates the tale of the "genius" Chinnubbie who wins a bow and quiver of arrows in a storytelling contest between several warriors. Much of Posey's description of Chinnubbie describes his oratorical prowess:

Posey, 1908. Courtesy Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr.

> Chinnubbie was a humorist of unquestioned excellence, as well as being renowned for other traits of character. Traditions claim that he was a story teller of extraordinary merit; that when he spoke, his hearers gave strict attention, for there was a charm in his speech that was truly admirable, and a something in his eloquent wit that captivated the gravest of his audience; that his actions when delivering a tale were as comical and laughable, almost, as the story he told[12]

Posey's description of Chinnubbie presents an idealized self-portrait of the storyteller as a "humorist of unquestioned excellence, who possessed "a charm in his speech that was truly admirable." It is not surprising that Posey after fashioning this character would

[12] Alexander L. Posey Collection. Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, OK. Folder 76, Cabinet B, Drawer 6, Reg. No. 4627.33.

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adopt the character's name as his own pseudonym for many years. Chinnubbie's story of the owl, framed within Posey's tale of the contest, presents a performance within a performance. Alexia Kosmider points out that "not only does the narrator tell a story about 'storytelling' as a story within a story, but he also informs his audience about the mysterious owl, signifying on other Creek stories. The narrator leads his audience into the world of storytelling where one story conjures up the stories of another story" (75). This early story shows the importance of oral tradition and performance to Posey, an importance that came from his childhood of listening to Muscogee stories and fables. Posey wrote:

> All of my people are poets, natural born poets, gifted with wonderful imaginative power and the ability to express in sonorous, musical phrases their impressions of life and nature. If they could be translated into English without losing their characteristic beauty and flavor, many of the Indian songs and poems would rank among the greatest productions of all time [...] the Indian talks in poetry; poetry is his vernacular—not necessarily the stilted poetry of books, but the free and untrammeled poetry of Nature, the poetry of the fields, the sky, the river, the sun and the stars. In his own tongue it is not difficult for the Indian to compose,—he does it instinctively. (*Poems* 53)

The difficulty of placing Muscogee concepts into the English language is best illustrated by Posey's poetry which in its imitation of European models never expresses a distinctive voice. Posey's prose succeeds where his poetry fails, and he took it upon himself to help translate untold centuries of Muscogee oral tradition into English. In a way, Posey's

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entire literary career was devoted to this endeavor; his Muscogee fables most obviously show this preservationist strategy.

Between 1900 and 1902 Posey published a series of Muscogee "fables." Most of these appeared in the *Indian Journal*, and three were entitled "A Fable." In publishing these stories, Posey passed on the tales of his childhood, the stories told to him by family and friends. These tales are part of the Muscogee oral storytelling tradition, and though Posey surely altered them to some degree, they are both his stories and the stories of his people. Fully aware of the similarities between the Muscogee fables and the Uncle Remus stories of Joel Chandler Harris, he intended to rewrite some pieces in order to avoid sounding like Harris. Posey, Littlefield writes, "had long believed that many of the Uncle Remus stories originated among the Creeks and were told among his people before the Africans arrived in the New World. As late as September 1907 he had discussed assembling a collection of Creek stories for publication, saying he already had enough material for a thousand pages" (*Alex* 257).

Posey's literary accomplishments, like those of many other Indian writers, are difficult to place into the conventional categories of the American literary tradition. It is impractical and perhaps even destructive to simply write Posey's name beside Jewett and Harris in anthologies of "American" literature. William M. Clements argues that "Native American writers developed a verbal art that used Euroamerican forms and themes but did not abandon the indigenous oral heritage" (133). Decades of Indian Territory dialect humor and centuries of Muscogee oral tradition echo in Posey's stories, orations, and folklore, placing his work within a much larger unwritten canon that honors the Muscogee people. Ultimately, the work of writers like Posey shows that the concept of

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an inflexible canon—or even a revised canon—cannot function as a viable method for categorizing diverse works of literature. The question is not which canon to use when dealing with Posey, but how can we study such a writer without resorting to this antiquated approach.

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

This edition includes all of Alexander Posey's known stories, orations, and folklore except those thought to be lost (e.g "Chinnubbie Harjo the Evil Genius of the Creeks" and "Chinnubbie's Courtship"). Most of the works that comprise this edition originate from a variety of newspapers and magazines initially published in Indian Territory between 1892 and 1902 and are now housed in a number of archives. No attempt has been made to include either Posey's poems or his satirical letters because the poems, though out of print, are available in book form, and his "Fus Fixico" letters are available in Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. and Carol A. Petty Hunter's edition: *The Fus Fixico Letters*.

Sorted into stories, orations, and folklore, these works are organized by category then placed in chronological order. As Posey's earliest works were sometimes undated, these particular texts (e.g. "The Origins of Music According to the Creek Medicine-Men") are presented first in their category. The orations are placed in chronological order according to the date Posey delivered them.

In an effort to present these works as Posey originally intended, editorial changes have been kept to a minimum. Footnotes clarify the few instances that might be confusing, but for the most part the reader should have little trouble understanding Posey's use of language. Attempts to eliminate any awkward punctuation or sentence structure along with nonstandard spellings (e.g. somerset/somersault, Mohamet/Mohammad, ivey/ivy, extoled/extolled, intrusted/entrusted, moulding/molding) and even misspellings (e.g. peace/piece) have been avoided in order to retain the flavor of Posey's work. Printer's errors such as doubled marks of punctuation have been silently

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corrected. Though standardized for this edition, the format reflects the goal of presenting these works in an accessible-yet-accurate manner. The only incomplete work in this edition is "Chinnubbie Scalps the Sqauws" and in this case the ellipsis [. . .] represents missing passages.

Footnotes are used to explain obscure references or allusions and to give biographical information when needed. In view of the fact that readers may not read this collection front to back, the footnotes are numbered separately for each work, and at times, are repeated when a particular reference occurs in more than one work.

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II. THE STORIES

> *warriors, a good story, however ancient, is always new, and the more frequently it is told, the more attractive it becomes, and is destined to never be obliterated from the memory in which it lives*
>
> —Alexander Posey, "Chinnubbie and the Owl"

Written over a period of nine years, 1893 to 1902, the eight short stories collected in this edition are presented in roughly chronological order according to known publication dates. The first two stories, "Chinnubbie and the Owl" and "Chinnubbie Scalps the Squaws," are the second and third stories of a four story sequence originally published in the *B. I. U. Instructor* while Posey was a student at Bacone Indian University in Muskogee, Oklahoma. No copies of the first of the series, "Chinnubbie Harjo the Evil Genius of the Creeks," and the fourth, "Chinnubbie's Courtship," have ever been found, but Posey alludes to both in the extant "Chinnubbie" stories, and William Elsey Connely mentions them in his brief memoir of Posey in *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*. A single copy of "Chinnubbie and the Owl" exists in pamphlet form at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In addition to this, the American Native Press Archives at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock houses the only known copy—a faint, incomplete photocopy—of "Chinnubbie Scalps the Squaws" from the May 1893 *B. I. U. Instructor*.

The "Chinnubbie" stories present the enigmatic Muscogee character of "Chinnubbie Harjo," a man who according to his description in "Chinnubbie and the

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Owl" "was a humorist of unquestioned excellence [and] a story teller of extraordinary merit." Posey describes his character in "Chinnubbie Scalps the Squaws" as one who was "possessed of every trait common to man, with a strong unnatural leaning to traits characteristic of neither man nor beast." At times a villain and at others a hero, the ambiguous character of Chinnubbie is always a quick witted "genius" of the kind Posey most desired to emulate. Remarkable in part because of its framing within the Muscogee tradition of oral storytelling, "Chinnubbie and the Owl" recounts a storytelling contest between a group of Muscogee warriors, placing Posey's story itself within this verbal convention. Kosmider writes, "The storytelling contest that frames the narrative [...] enables Chinnubbie to tell his story and also mirrors Creek verbal tradition" (*Tricky* 72). Due to the nature of such oral traditions, the stories change each time they are told, by— as Posey writes in the story— "the keepers of the oral library."[1] Chinnubbie's story wins the contest because, unlike the other warriors, he relates a story in such a way that it is not plagiarized. Repeated telling, and therefore altering, does not destroy the story; it enhances the value of the tale. Posey illustrates this concept when Chinnubbie states that "a good story, however ancient, is always new, and the more frequently it is told, the more attractive it becomes."[2] For the Muscogees tribal stories are not owned by any individual; the tales constitute a communal heritage that is both authored by and about the people who listen to and retell the stories. Posey's work, in particular his stories, were written with oral tradition in mind. Conventionally European concepts of individual authorship and fidelity do not usually make room for this type of literary progress.

[1] Posey, Alexander. "Chinnubbie and the Owl." Alexander L. Posey Collection. Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, OK. Folder 76, Cabinet B, Drawer 6, Reg. No. 4627.33.
[2] Posey. "Chinnubbie and the Owl."

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Perhaps Posey attempted to distance himself from authorship by adopting the name "Chinnubbie Harjo" as his nom de plume for most of his life.

"Chinnubbie Scalps the Squaws" is a story that owes both its bloody nature and ambiguous character to the stories of Muscogee oral tradition. Chinnubbie massacres the women of an enemy village, scalps them, and robs the absent men of their most prized possessions. In this story Posey presents a character that fully reflects the ambiguous "tricksters" of many traditional Indian stories. For the Muscogees the trickster was usually the rabbit, "Chufee," who often antagonized the sanguinary mountain lion known as "Big Man-eater." One traditional Muscogee tale involving Chufee describes how the rabbit tricks Big Man-eater into believing he is a man-eater himself by scaring away the inhabitants of a village, placing war-paint on himself, and then killing an orphaned child. Chufee then tells Big Man-eater that he has eaten everyone in the village except for the body of the child, which he presents to Big Man-eater. The mountain lion eats the dead child and when they both defecate together, Chufee quickly switches their feces which makes the mountain lion believe—from the contents—that Chufee truly is a man-eater and that he himself—who apparently only defecated grass—is dying.[3] Larry Ellis writes that Rabbit is "a schemer, a womanizer, a pest, and an infinitely entertaining social reprobate who lives on the margins of the composite society of holy people, creatures, and prototypical human beings that defines the myth-times of many Native American cosmologies" (4). This description also encompasses Chinnubbie who Posey most likely modeled—at least partially—after Chufee from the Muscogee stories he heard as a child.

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[3] For this and other similar tales see Swanton, John R. *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1929.

Posey's stories of the Muscogee freedmen of Coon Creek diverge somewhat, though not entirely, from Muscogee trickster tales. These stories typically involve a trickster character, yet traditional motifs are replaced by Posey's commentary on the freedmen and their place, or lack of one, in Muscogee culture. These stories, written in dialect, are similar to those of other local colorists of his day. The first of these stories to appear was "Uncle Dick and Uncle Will," which was originally published in the July 13, 1894 edition of the *Indian Journal*. Posey later incorporated a large portion of this early story into "Uncle Dick's Sow," which he published in the January 1900 issue of the American Indian literary magazine, *Twin Territories*. is edition includes both stories because they differ enough to merit individual study and help present a complete picture of Posey's prose work. Throughout 1900, several other stories appeared in *Twin Territories*: "Jes 'Bout A Mid'lin', Sah" in April, the partially autobiographical "Two Famous Prophets" in September, "A Creek Fable" in October, and "Mose and Richard" in November. Though he published them in 1900, Posey probably wrote many of these pieces in the spring of 1897 while he worked as the superintendent of the Creek Orphan Asylum and Littlefield argues that "these works paint a picture of Creek society much different from the realities of the Creek Nation in 1900." (*Alex* 122). Most, if not all of the stories published in 1900 are based on people and events of Posey's childhood at Bald Hill. The freedmen settlement located just east of Bald Hill at Coon Creek was home to the real-life Graysons: Uncle Dick, Aunt Cook, Uncle Will, Richard, and Mose. Posey acquired the stories involving these people from both first hand experience and also from his father, Hence. Littlefield relates that Alex "enjoyed Hence's dialect narratives about Uncle Dick and Uncle Will Grayson and their descendants at Coon Creek" (*Alex* 95).

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The final dialect story, "A Foxy Old Buck" appeared in the May 23, 1902 edition of the *Indian Journal.* This story bridges the gap between Posey's dialect stories and his fables which are usually cast with animals and borrow heavily from the Muscogee oral tradition. This story of a deer that makes off with Uncle Dick's coat also recalls Posey's earliest Rabbit-influenced stories, the Chinnubbie tales. Uncle Dick attempts to outsmart the buzzards by putting his coat on the supposedly dead buck, but his ploy backfires as the deer miraculously revives and bounds away taking his coat along. Though there is no explicit moral, this story connects Posey's local color writing and his animal fables in a manner heavily influenced by oral tradition.

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Chinnubbie and the Owl

We have learned in a previous story that Chinnubbie was a humorist of unquestioned excellence,[1] as well as being renowned for other traits of character. Traditions claim that he was a story teller of extraordinary merit; that when he spoke, his hearers gave strict attention, for there was a charm in his speech that was truly admirable, and a something in his eloquent wit that captivated the gravest of his audience; that his actions when delivering a tale were as comical and laughable, almost, as the story he told. Yet his genius, as versatile as it was, bore its richest fruits in the circumstances of necessity only and to one of these exigencies are we indebted for the story following this proem, which is supposed, on the authority of the prophets[2]—the keepers of the oral library—to have been actually experienced by its author and rehearsed to the warlike multitude on an occasion of which we shall presently learn.

It was in the twilight of a lovely summer day, while the chiefs, medicine men, and warriors were grouped in a circle around the blazing campfire, discussing the success of a recent chase, parleying over various topics, and relating numerous anecdotes, that the prophet arose and offered a costly bow and twelve arrows to the one who could relate the best story of his own experience, or the best he could make on the spur of the moment. Of course the offer was readily accepted by scores of valiant warriors, and Chinnubbie was not to be left out among the rivals for the prize. Quickly arising from his grassy lounge and shaking the ashes from the tomahawk that he had just been smoking,[3] he thus

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[1] The story referred to is probably "Chinnubbie the Evil Genius of the Creeks" which was published in the *B. I. U. Instructor*. No copies of this story have been found.
[2] A "prophet" is another word for a medicine man.
[3] Some tomahawks were also pipes.

conjured the generous sage in his favorite phrase: "By the bears, I wish a part in this myself."

His desire was immediately granted, and the contestants one by one rehearsed their tales in a plausible manner, and exerted every power within them to accomplish their end. But all, save one, Chinnubbie, the last though not the least were accused of unscrupulous plagiarism. They each had plucked a gem from memory's treasury of old traditions to veneer the imperfect portions of their unpremeditated story. The guilty rivals became the objects of ridicule and sarcastic remarks, while Chinnubbie, in whose well told tale no ill-gotten thoughts had been detected, received the praise of the chief and prophet in every manner of endearing expression. The prize was awarded to him with bows and obeisances due the gods. Chinnubbie became the autocrat of the evening's entertainment, and every word that was lisped was lisped in admiration of his wonderful tale. He had touched the chord whose reverberations echoed fame.

We must not after all be persuaded to believe that Chinnubbie became and remained a favorite of his countrymen. His fickleness and perfidiousness caused his popularity to be very precarious. He would be extoled today for a noble act and execrated tomorrow for a bad one. Whether famous or infamous, Chinnubbie cared but very little. He was content anywhere and under all circumstances and conditions.

Chinnubbie's Story

"It has been quite awhile since this incident, which I am about to relate to you, was experienced. But, warriors, a good story, however ancient, is always new, and the more frequently it is told, the more attractive it becomes, and is destined to never be

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obliterated from the memory in which it lives. The campfire is made more cheerful and happier when such stories are told, and the mind is released from the bonds of its cares and solicitudes. So, this one, from that time to present has been an evergreen in my recollection. None but my most intimate friends have a knowledge of this tale, and I have cautioned them never to communicate the same to others, as it would doubtless excite the jealousy of the prophets, who are my superiors in the creation of such narratives. But whether it will be envied by them or not, the time has arrived when it must be publicly declared.

On one of my first wanderings away from home in foreign lands, I lost the course of my journey, and went astray in a pathless forest, through which, I thought, no man had ever passed. It was a solitary waste, a jungle, and a lair of ferocious beasts and reptiles. Even at noonday, its vast interior seemed dark and dusky, with only a sunbeam here and there to illume its gloom, invigorate its rank epicurean growth. Had I been otherwise than an ingenious bowman, I would not have escaped the savage greed of the puma that clung in his hunger to the arching bough, and the wolf that tracked and sniffed the course I took. At night I sought to rest my wearied limbs in the fork of some lofty oak, but found no repose. Thus I roamed and prowled in hunger, fruitless search, and despondency.

Finally, on the last evening of my almost helpless wandering, a strange but fortunate incident befell me. The sun was just disappearing in the gold of the western sky, and twilight was gathering its sombre shades over the unhunted woods, when my attention was suddenly attracted by the weird hoots of an owl, perched upon the bough of a desolate oak, beneath which I had been standing quite a while, listening to the dreamy

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far-off song of the whippoorwill. He seemed as grave and solemn as death itself; his large saffron eyes appeared prophetic of my fate. Recalling to memory the strange stories that had often been related to me in childhood, of such birds, I stood bewitched and motionless in a trance of awe and silence. The owl likewise maintained a gravelike stillness that was broken only by the flutter of his wings. He grew, I thought, exceeding twice his real size; this so increased my horror, that had anyone been near to observe me in this situation, he would have declared that my head too, grew fabulously huge. Like the squirrel, when charmed by reptile fascination, I could neither move nor wail a voice of despair. Ultimately, like morning mists ascending from the streams, swamps, and morasses, the fog of my stupidity slowly vanished into serene sunlight of consciousness. At this moment of my recuperation, I thought myself the happiest brave that ever twanged a bow. But yet, I could not forbear thinking: "This enchantment is ominous of my end, if not the determination of my career, a misfortune that shall darken all my future years."

I hope that while mortals have a knowledge of my existence I will never undergo another like experience.

Having now a full possession of my senses, I walked around the tree to quit the bewitching spot, and turned my head in various directions. This was mimicked by the mysterious bird in a most consummate manner, who still seemed to bespeak my untimely fate. Becoming desirous to know the extent of his imitations, which now excited my fancy, I exclaimed in a tremulous tone "Who are you?"

The owl replied: "Who are you?—whoo, whoo!, whoo, whoo!!"

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A smile, at this dubious response, forced itself upon my countenance. Again, in a more vehement voice, I asked: "Answer, by the bears and all beside, who are you?"

As the echoes of my impassioned words reverberated through the sable forest, the amber feathered bird imperiously rejoined: "Answer, by the bears and all beside, who are you?"

He thus continued and repeated all that I said, but would give no answer to my interrogations. Our conversation was the reiteration of one thought. Finally, I thought the task of endeavoring to cause him to converse with me an irksome waste of time, and began to walk around the tree, to note how long he would mimic my action by turning his head without reversing, and keeping his body at the same time in one position. I continued to walk incessantly around the oak, and still he imitated me with apparent ease and alacrity. Presently, I became somewhat fatigued in my curiosity, being wearied already by my long rambles; but knowing that perseverance triumphs, I did not forsake my singular fancy. When lo! to my surprise and sudden fright, his head fell severed from the body to the ground; exclaiming as it fell, "Take my head and place it in your belt, it will guide you to your home in safety!"

Like a child obeying the command of its affectionate mother, I heeded the behest of the falling head, and fastening it securely in my belt, I journeyed in safety to my home, from which I had long been absent."

Chinnubbie, at the conclusion of his story, departed immediately from the applauding multitude to slack his thirst in the neighboring brook. Upon his return, the bow and twelve arrows which had been pledged to the victorious brave were awarded to him with congratulatory speeches, Chinnubbie, as he received the costly prize, extricated

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from his buckskins the featherless head of an owl and ejaculated in a most triumphant voice: "Doubt if you will, the authenticity of my tale, here is the head of its hero!"

"Doubt your tale? never, never—absurd," rejoined the prophet much amazed at Chinnubbie's earnestness, never, never, it is as true as the reality of day and night!"

"Few, few there are on whom such a fortune smiles and many, many on whom it frowns. Few are born to win. Warn, ye gods, if such as ye there be, warn, I pray, the bears, the fallow deers, the bisons, the pumas of the forest, and the foes of my heroic clan!"

Chinnubbie Scalps the Squaws

The barbarous custom of scalping, so long admired and tolerated by the Red man, has been long forgotten. It lives only in his war songs and legendary epics and the more elaborate verse and romances of his superior brother.

Traditions claim that this savage mode of warfare was originated and brought into fashion by the notorious wit and drone Chinnubbie Harjo; who appears to have been, indeed, possessed of every trait common to man, with a strong unnatural leaning to traits characteristic of neither man nor beast. Traditions present no character to vie with him in the peculiarity of habit; in this realm, he stands alone, unique and pre-eminent. It is well, perhaps, to instance a few examples to corroborate the affirmation.

It was Chinnubbie's daily custom when lodging in the neighborhood of his tribe and relatives, and very often while sojourning at the homes of strangers, to swing and dangle on a grape vine; or, if such could not be had near at hand, to climb an oak and sway to and fro in the breezes on the outmost bough, smoke, and chant war songs until weary of the diversion. He took also a special pleasure in building little dams in the trickling channel of brooks and springs. In the afternoon of each day of his sojourns, he would indulge in a nap of several hours—a custom which he had formed in early life—and suffer no one to molest his dreams, as he could bear no taunts when awake. His usual couch of rest was beneath some wide-spreading tree, where he would frequently lie for hours, before closing his eyes in a sleep, gazing far into the heavens and winging his pensive thoughts on misty ships afloat in the aerial seas. Or perchance, conning over the prospectus of another tramp, or planning tremendous lies of former feats in a hunting expedition or at some great war-dance. As he possessed some poetical gifts, a natural

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itinerant propensity, and a consummate faculty for lying, it is quite likely to be either. When arisen from his siesta, he would always remember to relate his dreams to the warriors around the campfire.

[...] and strange were his [...] that, according to [tradition, many a] brave sacrificed his [...] popularity in unsuccessful attempts to emulate his vanity.

Chinnubbie's Adventure

In the afternoon of a sultry autumn day, Chinnubbie, on one of his idle, aimless ramblings, came cautiously creeping to a magnificent tepee, which was the abode of a notorious chieftain, who had in wars proved himself the equal, if not the superior, and a dangerous enemy to the tribe of which our pilgrim was a member. Of this fact, Chinnubbie was well aware. He, from time to time, had been counseled by the prophets and heads much older than his,[1] to forbear making a journey to this part in particular. But as hunger, in this case, was very compulsive, he was forced, despite the wisdom of the prophets, to make his unbidden call, or else run the risk of sauntering several days without food. He had already undergone the extremes of poverty in the way of nourishment. To accept his own statement, the only thing that had appeased his hunger before reaching this richly laden habitation was a polecat, which he had managed to murder on the evening previous.

The chief and his warriors were absent, on the war-path with another tribe, and the only occupants of the royal wigwam were his wives, daughters and lady servants.[2] On becoming aware of this, a flush of joy came over Chinnubbie's uncouth visage, who

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[1] A "prophet" is another word for a medicine man.
[2] A wigwam is a hut framed by poles covered in bark, hides, or other material.

thought to make himself appear very bold, and to make every moment of the opportunity, that presented itself just when most desired, a pleasure. Having a small supply of war paint about his person, he rubbed his face in motley colors, drew forth his time-eaten tomahawk and crept with a princely air into the tepee. Quelling the excitement of the squaws, he audaciously demanded his dinner, whereupon, they refused by exclaiming, "We perceive that you are a worthless beggar, and boldly intruding without our leave. Hence! away! We are visited everyday by such fellows as you!"

"Ah, you know me not, good ladies, and I pardon your fierce remarks. Did ever a tramp attired as I am attired, beg of you for hunger's sake? In buckskins and painted, with a tomahawk as this which I hold? Ah, no. You mistake me, gentle ladies, I rule a greater nation than your chieftain rules: being lost from my warriors in a chase, hunger drives me hither. Serve me, I am worthy of all I ask!"

Chinnubbie thus, with a dignity and an earnestness not to be reproached, even when fabricated, answered, and like Brutus, paused for a reply.[3]

"Ridiculous, we believe not a word of what you tell us," the squaws rejoined. "You are very cunning indeed, and being so, are trying to deceive us with your lies. Away! we would sooner feed a wolf than such a straggling wretch as you. Hence! We are prone to hear no more."

"My words are not to be confused, nor was I driven hither to be thus beguiled, insulted and rebuked. My hunger shall not suffer the refusal of food!"

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[3] Brutus was a Roman politician and conspirator who orchestrated and assisted in the assassination of Julius Caesar, yet Posey's quote "like Brutus, paused for a reply" bears a striking resemblance to a passage from Edgar Allen Poe's short story "Loss of Breath: A Tale a la Blackwood" in which Poe's narrator at one point says "Like Brutus I paused for a reply." Through the allusion to Poe's story, Posey also alludes to Act III Scene II of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

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With this response, Chinnubbie grasped his rude-made falchion in one hand and his tomahawk in the other[4] and in a twinkling transformed the royal habitation into a most tragic and horrible scene of human butchery. His sanguine, heartless indignation triumphed ere he thought his stygian task complete. Standing amid his victims, he whooped and rioted in their gore.

"You deserved a cruel death when living and a scalping when dead. Yes, meriting all this, by the bears and more."

Clamoring thus in vehement words, he proceeded to give his mangled victims their final dues,—extricating their scalps to treasure as a memorial of his greatest and most atrocious deed.

Re-entering the tepee, he ransacked its every nook in quest of food. In his search he found an earthen jar which contained an ample supply of Indian hominy, the ham of a buffalo, some roasted bear meat, and a maple dish full of wild persimmons. Chinnubbie was now in the noonday of his glory; reveling in luxury of which he was exceedingly fond but to which he was unaccustomed. After satisfying himself to his heart's content, he began to search for other things than nourishment, and made himself opulent in a much shorter time than wealth is generally acquired. He exhumed some very excellent eagle plumes from the contents of a much worn buckskin bag, which the chief had been accustomed never to open except on great and special occasions. With the contents of this bag alone, Chinnubbie was sufficiently rich and ought to have been satisfied but was not. It was merely a foretaste of greater games, and he was prone to have them, regardless of his inability to carry them away. Among the most valuable things he

[4] A falchion is a slightly curved medieval sword.

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discovered was a beaded breechclout,[5] the dearest property of the absent chief, who had been offered princely and even fabulous sums for the article, but which he had always refused. Many a warrior afterwards declared that our hero availed himself of the only expedient to come in possession of the coveted item. Being informed of this Chinnubbie vaunted exceedingly on his return; so much that his boasting caused many a youth to become his disciple, and even older heads to believe that his action was justifiable and that he was, beyond all doubts, in the right. Yet, there is a great deal of wisdom in what he himself declared on an occasion afterwards: "It is rather doubtful, however."

When Chinnubbie had completed his work of depredation, the contents of the once beautiful wigwam were topsy-turvy; everything, to the most trifling trinket, in wild disorder, as if done by a madman.

Now, having heaped together more of the costly goods than a score of muscular warriors could transport, he recognized his inability and puny insignificance. Becoming aware of this, his hilarity seemed somewhat abated, a look of melancholy stole over his features, as if in the presence of another owl.[6] That he could not bear away the spoils was evident; yet, he would have remained with them until driven away by hunger. But hark! just then the muffled tread of distant warriors reverberated through the air. Chinnubbie shuddered, a chilliness ran through his veins, and rising on his tip-toes, he surveyed the purlieus of his situation. Through the hazy atmosphere of the Indian summer, on the far stretching prairies, he scanned the chief and his troop approaching at a spirited gait. They were at quite a distance, however, and did not spy the ruthless intruder of the royal abode.

[5] A "breechclout" is a loincloth.

[6] Probably a reference to Posey's story "Chinnubbie and the Owl."

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Chinnubbie now in a semi-breathless tone exclaimed: "What I cannot carry away, that I can leave."

Quickly gathering up a quiver of arrows, a bow, the shiny plumes, and the beaded breechclout, he fled as if borne upon the wings of the wind into the mazy depths of the neighboring wilderness.

During this massacre and robbery, Chinnubbie did not forget to garb himself in several finely decorated suits of buckskin, which, through careful wear, supplied his wants in this line for many years. He possessed the prudence, however, to have them remodeled into the fashion of his own tribe.

About this time, as traditions claim, he became somewhat addicted to love affairs and courtships. It is very likely that he now thought he was sufficiently endowed to bear the responsibilities and the harassments of a wedded life. His amorous experiences do not, however, come under the present head, hence I shall talk of that anon.[7]

[7] Probably a reference to Posey's story "Chinnubbie's Courtship" published in *B. I. U. Instructor*. No copies of this story have been found.

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Uncle Dick and Uncle Will

Uncle Will was Uncle Dick's cousin. For years and years they lived in that part of the Creek country known as the Coon Creek Settlement, which is composed chiefly of Negro families who were formerly slaves of the Creek Indians. For some peculiar reason or other, the inhabitants of the locality, who are prone to imbibe but little of the wide-awake spirit that is abroad in the world, lead a kind of sequestered existence, live to be grandfathers and grandmothers, and rarely meet with occasions to shed tears over the remains of the departed. This perhaps is due to the fact that this region abounds in fine springs and wells of pure water, open woods and pasture fields, which impart healthy and balsamic odors to the breeze, and because the seeds of luxurious customs have not yet germinated in the minds of the simple people. The other very important attribute—indolence—of this dark community is probably due to the fecundity of the soil, which yields abundance at the cost of little exercise of the muscles. The uncles in question were two of the oldest citizens of this neighborhood, but still possessed much of the vim and vigor of early manhood, Uncle Dick in particular. Nature had blessed him with a tall, lank, somewhat inharmonious and arching stature, together with an inexhaustible supply of humor and a strong propensity for idle talk. As one of the results of his loquacity, he bore something more than a local repute as a man whose words one would skim in vain for the cream of truth. Indeed he was the incarnation of the ingenuity that fashions specious tales. Wishing to make some soap one day, his wife requested him to go and borrow a kettle from a neighbor. This he did, promising to return it by the next sunset. The next sunset, the next week and the next month came but the kettle was not taken

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home. At last the kind neighbor, patient-worn, came to elicit a reason for the broken promise. He asked, "Oncle Dick, whar's dat pot, yo' aint fotch it back yit?"

Uncle Dick removed his wool hat, raked his bony fingers through his hoary kinks a while and answered, "Wa, man, de ol' woman am been makin' soap eber since den. I t'ought his am a good plan ter lay in big supply ob soap while I had de pot 'ca'se I might not hab it ag'in."

Uncle Will on the other hand was as unlike his famous kin as an acorn is unlike a banana. To see him was to be at once reminded of a stub pen. He was short, rather corpulent, of a retiring nature and not given to excessive tattling. He was an admirer of solitude and his own society. When he spoke he had something to say, and seasoned his remarks with queer wit and quaint bits of commonplace philosophy. He was acute at hearing and a profound listener. Nothing bright floated to the surface in the course of an ordinary conversation that did not become his immediate property. I met him one day on the highway. He was mounted on a spirited and magnificent grey mare, to which I took a fancy. I said, "Uncle Will, you are riding a fine nag."

"Yes, sah," "'bout de bess hoss I eber had. De white folks know it an' bodder me ter de'th wantin' ter trade wid me. Dey says, 'Oncle Will, I's got de fines' hoss yo' eber laid eyes on, but I wants ter trade wid yo' jus' ter be a-tradin.' But looks like if deys got a good hoss dey'd wants ter keep um."

Going into a store one day, he asked the clerk "I wants ter git some stirup, sah."

"Alright, Uncle Will," replied the clerk, taking down a pair of stirrups, "here are an excellent pair."

"Doan yo' understan' English," rejoined he, "I wants ter git some stirup—some ob dat stuff yo' sop!"

Learning that a certain one had reported that he was in habit of frequenting his neighbors' chicken roosts at night, he said, "De folks jus' now unkiver dat fac'? I's been a libin heah 'mos' for'teen yeahs."

Being lost on the prairie once at a late hour in the night while returning home from a dance given by the young people of Possum Flat, he was met by a friend who asked him, "Are n't you lost, Uncle Will?"

"No, sah," replied he candidly, "I jus' doan know whar I's at."

So much for the preface of the story we are about to relate, of which Uncle Will and Uncle Dick are the heroes, and which will doubtless be handed down to posterity in a richer garb than it now wears.

Uncle Dick had a sow, in the ownership of which he seemed to particularly pride himself. She was as notorious an animal as ever displayed bristles, and a constant annoyance to the whole Coon Creek Settlement. She was not a Berkshire nor a Poland-China but a mongrel, and of the most inferior sort. A long sharp nose, with which she could have easily quaffed the contents of an ordinary urn, a back that looked much like the keystone of an arch, hazel-colored eyes that rolled in devilish frenzy, and a wiry tail which hung in a lengthy ringlet, were her most prominent features. The remark Uncle Will once made describes her in a nut-shell: "Man, she's cunnin' as cousin Dick is an' bo'-backhd jus' like um. No fence kin hol' dat sow out. She am done been boan ter git ober all kin' ob fences."

One misty autumnal morning, Uncle Will, on arising, looked out toward his potato "patch," to see whether or not his dream during the night of seeing Uncle Dick's sow on his premise was veritable. To his great dismay and consternation it was. Through the dense fog, so characteristic of the low grounds along the Coon Creek at daybreak in wet weather, he descried the vague outlines of Uncle Dick's sow, uprooting his fine sweet potatoes. "Dat dah ol'nigger's agawine ter hab trouble wid me dis bery moanin'," he murmured. Dar's dat blame infunal sow ob his in my tat patch. Ya! ya! Majah! ya!

"Majah" sprang with a yelp form under the porch and was in swift pursuit in a twinkling. The sow snapped her jaws, grunted and made a bold dash toward the woods for safety in the coverts. But the trust she reposed in her fleetness betrayed her and made her a captive. Uncle Will savagely avenged himself by chopping off her nose with his hoe. "Now den," said he, "I spect yo'll stay at home an'let dese heah tatas 'lone."

In the meantime, Uncle Dick, who lived but a short distance away, was suddenly attracted by the squealing of his very unfortunate sow, whilst he stood shelling corn to his pigs in the sty "Heah dat! mus' be de wolves are a'ter dat ol'sow," he exclaimed.

Very soon he was astounded at the sight of the noseless sow trotting up to the gate, followed by "Majah." "De angels bless dis heah nigger," said he. "I's wunder if dat black rascul, Will, done dis?"

Ten minutes later he confronted Uncle Will, who was replanting his potatoes, "Yo' time done come now," he ejaculated, "i done lop off yo' nose er yo' done lop off mine."

Uncle Will dropped his hoe and flew toward the house for his musket. Uncle Dick grapped up the hoe and ran in pursuit. But he could no more overtake Uncle Will, who was already nearing the door of his cabin, than he could overtake a bombshell on the battlefield. Now what then was there to be done? To let Uncle Will gain the entrance into the house meant to be riddled by shot, or, what is worse, to be scared to death. Just then the thought struck him which made him equal to the emergency. He threw the hoe, striking the side of Uncle Dick's cranium and thus turning him in a quite another direction fleeing for dear life. Uncle Dick secured the musket himself and emptied its contents at its owner as he disappeared in the distance, Uncle Will was untouched but he bounded on exclaiming, "I's s'ot, I's s'ot!" and did not stop running until he reached a neighbor's house. On his approach, the children who knew him to be fond of fish, came skipping out and crying, "Oncle Will, Oncle Will, fis' fo' yo' fis' fo' yo'."

"Go 'way childuns, wid yo' fis'," he quickly answered, "I wants non ob dem t'ings dis moanin', sah. Cousin Dick been s'ot at me like we be no kin. An' I's run fo' I knows what am been in dat gun—a fis'full ob dem sixs'ooter balls mixed up wid udder s'ot an' a blue whis-ler near 'bout fit um—an'hit am been loaded 'way afo' de Wah!"[1]

[1] A whistler is a bullet. The Muscogees allowed their slaves to keep firearms.

Uncle Dick's Sow

Uncle Dick's sow was a mean hog. She gave the neighborhood something to talk about, and her vagaries have not been forgotten by the people of Possum Flat. She raised enough trouble for both herself and master, and had trouble to spare.

In fine, she raised more trouble than pigs.

"'Dat ol' sow," Uncle Will once observed, "was bo'n out'n de bresh. She wernt bo'n in no pen, kaze she lub liberty better'n de white folks. Cunnie'? She's cunnin' 's cousin Dick hiself, an' dat's sho gibin' huh lots o' cunnin'!"

She was a razorback, but a fine one.[1] The cast of her countenance would have led one to infer at a passing glance that she was disposed to delve deeply—cause a drouth in the bottom of a jug, or explore the mysterious depth of a potato hill. Her eyes were a vicious brown and her color was sanguine or autumnal. Her tail would have set a saddler up in business selling buggy washers. She was swift and with it wise. If pursued, she would run until she thought herself entirely out of danger and, then, canter a little peace further, to be sure. She was no common sow. She had tastes approaching refinement.

Her pompadore would have aroused the jealousy of Aguinaldo.[2] Her attitude towards "sofkies"[3] in general was not calculated to breed familiarity. She despised them individually, collectively, and as a race.

Nothing gave her greater pleasure than to make a vain young cur run over himself.

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[1] A "razorback" is a feral pig.

[2] Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy (1869-1964), rebel leader of the Philippine forces during the Spanish-American War.

[3] See the author's note at the end of the story.

She was wild. I remember how Tom and I for once, slipped up nigh unto her and gave a scare. Besides doing other things equally as well, she plunged off a high embankment, forded a swimming creek, and broke up enough dry limbs to tickle a Eufaula wood peddler.

She was partial to such delicacies as yams and "roast n' ears," and her fondness for these things finally brought about her undoing.

Uncle Will awoke one morning from a dream trouble. He dreamed of yams—and Uncle Dick's sow—and the dream came to pass. Through the dense fog, so characteristic of the lowlands along Coon Creek at daybreak in wet weather, he clapped his eyes on the vague outlines of Uncle Dick's sow. He clapped his hands over his ear and listened, for fear his eyes were deceiving him. Once, twice, nay three times did the sow grunt. The superstition aroused in Uncle Will by the fulfillment of his dream suddenly gave away to certain remarks that would have caused Uncle Dick to act rashly.

"Yah! yah! yah!, Majah!"

At this, the sow snapped her jaws together in a furor and hastened to put distance considerable behind her, while Majah stretched himself on the air in pursuit. Unluckily, however, the sow tore down the fence on herself and was captured. Uncle Will in the vehemence of his wrath, did there and then, bruise her nose until such time as it pleased him to remark, "Now, den; I 'spects maybe yo'll let dese heah taters 'lone!"

The sow, bleeding at the nose and grunting deep dejection, struck a bee line for home. She had never realized until then that she had a home. Moralists might brood upon her misfortune with profit.

Uncle Dick made no delay in calling Uncle Will to account. "Yo' ol' black rascul yo', I's gwinter mash up yo' nose twell hit spread ober yo' face sos yo' cant smell de cabbage on yo' bref!"

"Look hear, Uncle Dick, don't yo'—

"Heish up yo' mouf! Yo' caint lie out'n hit. Yuse de scamp whut bruise my sow's nose up kaze yo' dog annoy huh twell she git home an I chunk 'im off. I's gwinter hu't yo' an' hu't yo' bad!"

Uncle Dick made a demonstration and Uncle Will scattered. He shook the dust of the potatoe hills from his brogans and pulverized the air. Uncle Dick, seeing himself outstripped and having knowledge of the fact that Uncle Will had a musket over the door, picked up a beanstick and let fly, striking Uncle Will on the head.[4] The blow caused Uncle Will to veer down a lane. Uncle Dick secured the musket himself and emptied the contents thereof into the blue heavens above the owner.

"Man," says Uncle Dick, "I jis tell yo', when dat muskit eksplode, Uncle Will fly out'n his shoes."

When Uncle Will checked himself up at Aunt Judy's the children ran out to meet him.

"G'way chillun!" exclaimed he. "G'way, I tell yo'. Somethin' too cu'ons been happen."

"What been happen, Uncle Will?" asked Aunt Judy, in great surprise. "An whar yo' cum from? Yo' got yo' ol' breeches so tore up yo' looks like a striped zebra. An' whar yo' been lef' yo' hat an whar yo'—"

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[4] A pole used to support plants in a garden.

"Heish yo' mouf, Aunt Judy! yo' aint been whar I's been er yo' wouldn't be axin sich foolis' questions."

"But, Uncle Will, whut been git at chew?"

"W'y dat ol' feller! Now is yo' satisfied?"

"Whut ol' feller, Uncle Will?"

"Dat whut I been had ober de do'!! Dat whut I' been load fo' de Wah wid two whistler an' one blue one whut 'mos fit um!"[5]

The sow's career thereafter was smooth and uneventful. Realizing that she was leading a bad life and being a wise sow, she resolved to cut loose from her wickedness, and she did. She became a devoted mother and replenished Uncle Dick's larder with numerous fat shoats—some of them weighing not less than fifty pounds.

Note. Sofky is a Creek word and stands for a very delectable dish; but it has been corrupted by the white man and is made to denote a contemptible dog. Therefore, the sofkies mentioned in the above story are pupy, whelp and hound and curs of a low degree.

[5] A whistler is a bullet. The Muscogees allowed their slaves to keep firearms.

"Jes 'Bout a Mid'lin', Sah"

It was an unusually hot day. The heat rolled over Bald Hill, in the distance wave after wave and the roadside was white with dust. The hounds about the farm house, failing to scratch up any moist dirt in the shade of the catalpa trees, lay panting in the duck trough near the well. "Ol' Music," the leader of the pack, tried hard to endure the heat philosophically, but about the time he would stretch out his legs contentedly and begin to doze, a big brown horse fly would come along and play a joke on him. Growing fretful, he finally sat up on his haunches and—went to sleep. The horse fly swept down and, this time, run its pin through Ol' Music's ear, causing him to throw up both forepaws at once and turned a complete somerset.[1]

The only thing that seemed to enjoy being abroad was the lizard—scampering down the path as if for its life or doing scout duty among the iron and mullen weeds. An old drake sallied out once from the shade of the castor bean at a passing bug, but running into a live bed of sand immediately gave up the chase. Every now and then, a sedate old cow or a sportive heifer out in the pasture would curl her tail over her back and try to knock the pond dry. The workhand, lulled by the rasping locust, lay stretched at full length upon the porch of the outhouse nooning and perspiring at the thought of having to go to the field to do some "laying by" with a double shovel and an unmindful mule.[2] Tom and I were sent to wash and put away the dinner dishes; but Tom, having appeased his appetite on boiled cabbage, beans and onions and being overcome by drowsiness, dropped his head into the plate from which he had been eating and went into a deep

[1] "Somerset" means somersault.

[2] "Nooning" means resting or eating at noon. "Laying by" is a term for the last cultivation of a crop, typically corn, before it matures. A "double shovel" is a type of plow.

slumber. But for the whack my mother gave him across the back, I would not have been aroused myself in time to escape.

"I wonder who that is yonder?" my father asked as he sat on the veranda enjoying his afternoon smoke.

"I don't know; but he's shore raisin' lots o' dust, replied the workhand, looking down the road and at the same time retreating from the sunlight encroaching on his shade. "Looks like Jim Quobner. I know it's him, 'cause he's got a sack tied to his saddle an' is ridin' that sway-back filly he got at the round up last spring: That's him," he added as the hounds leaped over the fence and ran barking down the big road.

But for the timely intervention of the workhand the hounds might have pulled Jim Quobner off his pony.

"Hello. Is that you, Jim?" my father asked. "Get down."

"No t'ank yo', sah," Jim replied. "Dem houn' look too vishus an' I done been larn to put no trus' in houn's. Dey too likes to slip roun' an' nab yo' fo yo' git yo' eye on um."

"Pretty hot isn't, Jim?"

"Now man yo' talkin' de tuf. Hit wuz sho hot. Ma fiel' as scorch up twell hit look lak I aint gwine raise nuthin'. I been ax de Lawd fer rain but peer lak He aint heah me."

"Better git down and come in, Jim," my father insisted.

"No t'ank yo', sah," Jim prated, twunt wuff while, kaze I been lef' de chillun hoein' by day se'f an' I bleege to git back. Ef I git down, I might stay twell I wear out de

welcome. I t'ought I jes ride by to see how yo' been git long since de time I he'p yo' ober de ribber wid dem cow whut yo' been buy f'om cousin Shapah."[3]

"Any news, Jim?" my father inquired after a silence.

"No, sah," Jim replied, "'ceptin' dem Injins had a ball play las' sunday an' un o' dem git hit ober de head with a ball stick.[4] Dat un dey call Hagie. He rear up an' 'hoop in Wootka Harjo's face an' git de scalp peeled off'n him."

"So some one told me Monday," said my father. "Was he hurt much?"

"Man, pooty bad, sah," Jim replied seriously. "He git knock limber. Dat ol' medicine man, Ledifka, been blowin' physic for 'im eber since.[5] But I t'ink he git well dough. Dem little knot head Injin kin go tru mos' eny kiner scrape an' hoop agin. Hit seem lak—

But here he was interrupted by my father who called to the workhand, "O Bill, wait a minute! Tell Ike if he has finished plowing the potato patch to begin on that late piece of corn at the back side of the field."

The workhand nodded and rode on to the field, whistling and singing now and then about a girl over the garden wall.[6]

"Tom!" called my father as he looked around, "go out in the pasture and catch old Dick and saddle him for me." Tom threw the bridle over his shoulder and started to the pasture, avoiding the sand heaps along the path and looking to right and left for

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[3] According to Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., "Sharper" is a Muscogee family name.

[4] This passage refers to the ceremonial and often violent ball games played between rival Muscogee towns. The ball game consists of players attempting to move a ball to their goal on the opposite side of the playing field with a long racket-like stick.

[5] Muscogee medicine men blow through a hollow reed into a pot of medicine in order to heal the sick or wounded.

[6] An allusion to a popular song of the 1890s "Over the Garden Wall."

something to throw at. Jim said at length, "Look heah, I come ober for to see yo.' I jacks, time been git pooty bad wid yo' ol' frien.'

"Is that so, Jim?"

"Yasser. Hit's de truf."

"Well, what can I do for you?"

"Man, I wanter git a piece o' meat from yo,' sah."

"All right. How much do you want, Jim?"

"Jes 'bout a mid'lin sah; jes 'nough to kiner seas'n t'ings wid."[7]

Here my father thought he saw a chance to win a vote for John Moore, who was running for Chief.

"By the way, Jim," said he, "how do you stand in politics?"

"I jacks!" came the ready answer, "right wid yo' sah! Dat man John Moore ought been chief long fo' now."

"Can you control any votes?"

"Yasser," Jim replied, and pressing his thumb on the horn of his saddle added, "got dem Coon Creek niggers right hear!"

Well, my father laid his larder under contribution to the amount of a magnificent middling, which had been smoked brown over slow hickory fire and packed away so as to retain its rich flavor. Streaks of lean and fat in almost equal proportion ran through the whole of it. The sight of it sprung a leak in Jim's mouth and caused him to make rash promises to my father relative to the coming election. He fastened the meat with numerous half-hitches to the horn of his weather-beaten hull of a saddle and rode away—

[7] A "middling" is the center portion of a hog carcass.

the undivided weight of the meat causing his pony ever now and then to wobble out of the road.

My father did not allow himself to hope for a majority of the negro voters but he felt he had reason to be sure of one.

The returns following the election caused my father disappointment. John Moore was defeated by an overwhelming majority. My father consoled himself, however, with the reflection that there were other election days in the future and the friends of John Moore had but to abide their time.

A year or more afterwards, when my father had forgotten all about the stirring days of the campaign who should he meet but Jim Quobner, and what should Jim say but, "I jacks, I jes tell yo', sah, dem Coon Creek niggers went an' turn right roun' on me!"

Mose And Richard

"Now, chillun," said Uncle Dick, on starting Mose and Richard to school, "I didn't had dese chances w'en I wuz er boy, kaze dem whar slabe time; an' now 'fo' I sen' you to school dis mawnin', I wanter gin you dis little talk: I wants you to larn somet'ing, kaze de time done git heah w'en if you grows up ignunt, de white man' an' Mistah Injin gwine to git de best ob you; an dey may git de best ob you anyhow, but hit aint gwine hu't you to go to school. You mus' min' yo' teachah, an' doan pestah wid de yuther childun, but 'ten' to yo' own doin's. Now, Richud, I wants you to membah dis, kaze you all time up to some trick er debilment."

That very day, Richard was repulsed in three engagements with the enemy. He was double-teamed once by Sol Jackson and Eben Ross and lost the normal size of his upper lip and one sleeve of his long shirt. He might have held his own with them had he not fastened his teeth in Sol's wrist, thus foolishly giving Eben time to take advantage of him. At another time, he doubted the truth of Wash Peter's statements by shouting, "'yuse er liar!" and experienced a head-collision with a laden dinner bucket. And again, he got into it by calling Jake Manuel "er black 'simmon eatin' slick shin," which Jake resented so successfully that Richard thereafter went to and from the school house through the woods.

"Chile," asked Aunt Cook, when Richard came home from school, "whut swell up yo' lip dat way? Yuse been in er row, Richard. Whut yo' daddy tell you dis mawnin' 'bout fightin'? Yuse awful onminful."

"I ain't git in no row, mammy," said Richard, an' I ain't pestah nut'n yit, 'cep' dem ho'nets down back er de fiel'."

"Whut tear de sleebe out'n yo' shut den?" asked Aunt Cook, crowding Richard.

"De bresh, mammy," answered Richard, making room for himself, "de bresh whut try to hol' me w'en de ho'nets been git at me."

"Look heah, chile," said Aunt Cook angrily, "pestahin' de ho'nets ain't comin' home to he'p yo' mammy tote de watah an' fetch in de wood. Grab dat bucket an' skin out to de spring, er I'll make you t'ink de ho'nets been git at you sho 'nough!"

It was a narrow escape for Richard, and he said to himself, as he dipped his bucket in the spring, "Seem lak mammy kin' o' know whut tear de sleebe out'n dat shut!"

Mose was unlike Richard in nearly every particular. He was not apt at cunning, nor quick to engage in conflict or dispute. He was lazy and easy-going. He liked, above all things, peace, shade and watermelons. Richard could offer no inducement to cause Mose to become his partner in what Uncle Dick called "tricks an' debilment." Even when Richard was the under dog in the fight, Mose would go about his business, as if he was not his brother and allow him to be beaten. But if to play at marbles was what Richard wanted, Mose could content him and beat him at his own game.

Uncle Dick, having taken no small part in the establishment of the first school in the neighborhood, desired very much to have Mose and Richard stand at the head of their classes. "You ain't gwine to be boys allus," Uncle Dick would frequently tell them. "Now's de excepted time. De fus' t'ing you know you gwine grow up, an' if you caint hol' up yo' end wid de white man an' Mistah Injin, hit gwine be yo' own fault, kaze I sen' you bof to school an' gin you good advice."

Mose and Richard attended school regularly. Toward the end of the week, Uncle Dick remarked to Aunt Cook, "Cook, I t'ink dem boys gwine right 'long"

"Bettah say dey gwine right 'long to roonation!" retorted Aunt Cook. "Sence you sen' dem boys to school dey git plum wuffless. Den de teachah been tell me Richard look too much off'n 'is book. Cain't 'gree wid you, "Aunt Cook added, shaking her head.

"How you know," asked Uncle Dick hotly, "but dat Richard been look off'n 'is book to 'membah dat whut he been read?"

The soap Aunt Cook was making boiled over just then and she had only time to give Uncle Dick a very sour look as he walked back to his work in the cotton patch.

Sunday morning, after putting on his "meetin' clothes" and getting ready for church, Uncle Dick looked out and called, "You Richud!"

"Yes, sah."

"You Mose!"

"Yes, sah."

"Put dem ma'ble in yo' pocket an' come heah."

When the youngsters were seated, "Now, Richud," said Uncle Dick, "read me whut de teachah been teachin' you."

Richard opened his blue-backed speller, wound one leg around the other and made out to spell "g-o go" and "h-o-g hog," allowing each letter plenty of territory. Mose, likewise, spelled "c-l-i-n-g cling."

"Boys, dat's sho good, sho," said Uncle Dick greatly pleased. "Now, you mus' read fer me ag'in nex' Sunday."

On the way to church that day, Uncle Dick said to Aunt Cook, "Tell you, Cook, I doan know which er dem boys to brag on mos'. Dey bof doin' fine, but I t'ink Mose kin read de biggis words, dough."

But it was Sunday and Aunt Cook made no reply.

On the next Sunday morning, when Uncle Dick called Mose and Richard in and examined them, he said, "Now, look heah boys, doan you come back to me wid dat g-o-d hog an' sich as dat. You mus' l'arn somet'ing else 'sides whut you done know in dat book."

Uncle Dick said nothing on the way to church that day touching the progress Mose and Richard were making at school.

On the third Sunday morning, Uncle Dick appeared in the doorway in his long white duster and shouted, "You Richud!"

"Yas, sah."

"You Mose!"

"Yas, sah," the youngsters answered from the hollow below the horse lot.

"Git yo' se'fs in heah!"

There was a long silence. The sunny morning breeze, redolent, freshening, lapped at intervals on the elm boughs and the mocking bird poured delicious music from the top of the dead tree in the cotton patch.

At length, Uncle Dick appeared in the doorway again, this time with a gun rod in his hand, and shouted, "If I come at you youngsters wid—"

But Mose and Richard were in the house before he could finish.

"Now, Richud, git yo' book an' read fer me," said Uncle Dick, waving his gun rod and leaning back against the jam.

"Richud!" Uncle Dick thundered as Richard began. "Now you jes stop dat. G-o whut? Whack! You good fer nut'n on'ry debil, Ise er tired er foolin' wid you! Whack! Whack! Ain't dey nut'n else in dat book 'sides dat d—d g-o go?—Whack! whack! whack!—You grab er hoe Monday mawnin'—whack!—an go up an' down dem cott'n rows—whack! whack—Dat's er good go fer you!"

"Mose, what you know?" asked Uncle Dick, letting Richard go.

"Doan know nut'n," replied Mose, "cep' dat word c-l-i—"

"Mose!" interrupted Uncle Dick, "I has er notion to break yo' an' be done wid you. Whack! whack! I talk to you an' talk to you—whack!—but hit ain't do no good—whack! whack! Hit's jes wastin' pearls 'fo de swine—whack! I wants you to take dem books to de teachah—whack!—whack!—whack! an 'cling to er plow Monday mawnin'—whack—er I'll cling to yo' back wid er stick!!"

Two Famous Prophets

The Creek Prophet

Just at the edge of the wood and near a spring branch making out into the blackjack ridges along Cap's creek, there stands in picturesque decay a low log cabin. The wild ivey has trellised the sunken roof and run down and around the tottering walls. The sumac and the sassafras flourish once more in the abandoned sofky patch whose furrows have grown dimmer every year till scarcely a trace of them remains.[1] The deeply worn path that wound from the door to the spring is now vague and uncertain. No Indian or renter going home from a squirrel hunt will come out of the bottom at this place after sun-down.

Here is where, many years ago, Chalogee, the Creek medicine man and prophet lived. I remember him well for he passed our place almost daily on his way to the next settlement to blow medicine for the sick or locate by divers strange signs and mutterings a lost hog or cow or horse.[2] He passed and re-passed so much that Tom and I knew almost to the minute when to expect him and hid out lest we come under his evil influence. But one day we made bold to lay a rattlesnake one of the farm hands had killed across his path. Pretty soon Chalogee came along and actually stepped on the snake! And, mind you, he was barefooted! Eighty or ninety years was no burden to him then. He jumped backward further than Tom could jump forward hop, step and a leap, made a wide detour and plodded on in the same fashion as though nothing had happened, while Tom and I held our hands over our mouths and rolled over each other. To his dying day, I think, Chalogee believed he stepped on a live snake. Tom and I had the idea

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[1] Sofky, a traditional Muscogee food, is made from corn cooked in lye water.

[2] Muscogee medicine men blow through a hollow reed into a pot of medicine in order to heal the sick or wounded.

that a man who could prophesy and make it rain would not be afraid of a little thing like a harmless six-foot rattler, but we found we had an erroneous idea.

In personal appearance, Chalogee was tall and bony, a little stooped, and dark skinned like an Arab. He wore a red shirt and a shawl turban of the same color. He was a close student of nature and all his life lived alone, mingling very little with other men except in a professional way. The full-bloods, among whom he was most popular, mistook his intimate acquaintance with natural facts and laws for divine knowledge, and he, like other prophets, was shrewd enough not to let them know any better. He was famous as a doctor, but more famous as a rain maker. He claimed to have thunder bolts, or thunder bullets as a local wag called them, which he had taken from a tree recently struck by lightening. He kept these thunder bolts or bullets in a deep hole of water near his cabin and when the people wanted rain he had some on tap for a small remuneration.

One summer day when the crops were burning up, my father offered Chalogee five salt barrels of corn for some rain. Chalogee accepted the offer promising my father a shower on the following day to be followed by other showers until the ground would be thoroughly soaked. My father was to deliver the corn when he got the rain. Chalogee insisted on this because, he said, he did not want something for nothing. No rain, no pay. When the bargain was concluded Chalogee repaired to the deep hole of water where he kept his thunder bolts or bullets, stripped and waded in with great ceremony. He stirred the water until it was muddy and then set his thunder bolts or bullets to work. The water seethed and boiled like to a mighty cauldron. Chalogee went ashore and waited for results. Presently he heard a low rumble as of thunder and then a great cloud came up out of the west and before he had time to get his thunder bolts or bullets under control the

lightening flashed, the wind blew and the rain poured down in sheets and torrents. While he was yet trying to conciliate his thunder bolts or bullets a great flood rushed down the creek and swept them away. He came near being drowned and finally walked back to his cabin in dejection.

Night came and morning came, and still it rained as it had never rained before. A horrible thought flashed through his mind. The world would be inundated and mankind destroyed! He rushed out and ran down the creek like a madman. All day he searched the drifts for his thunder bolts or bullets. The stream rose higher and higher and the rain ceased not. At last, however, when he had about given up the search, he found them lodged in a cottonwood drift near the mouth of Limbo; whereupon the clouds scattered and the waters subsided and the second deluge was nipped in the bud.

The Alabama Prophet

It is not known whether or not the subject of this sketch, like Mohamet,[3] had a mole between his shoulders, or any other mark, indicating that he was all that he claimed to be, but it is known, and well known, that, when he said so, things came to pass, and in a hurry. He could make it rain—in sheets or torrents—without much monkeying with his thunder bolts or bullets. Had he not kept fast in the wilderness until he could see things? Had he not been led of elf and fairy? Had he not paid his respects to Este Chupko, the wood spirit?

He could blow his breath in water through a hollow cane, roast or boil an herb and set disease at defiance. Had he not gone under the cover of darkness to the shadowy shores of the mystic River Strange, and yanked the horns off the terrible Tying Snake?

[3] Muhammad, Arab prophet and founder of Islam.

Did not his medicine bag hold, in profound secrecy, the dust of ages, the tooth and hoof of things without name or record?

He could prophesy—see months and years into the future. Had he not come from a race of prophets? Had he not taken counsel of the Great Spirit in the seclusion of Tulledega?

He was no amateur like his less famous contemporary Chalogee, who lost his thunder bolts or bullets, but a prophet of the first magnitude, who wore whiskers and was not without honor—except once—in his own country.

The Alabama Prophet was born in Alabama ninety or more years ago and was one of the first Creek emigrants to set foot west of the Mississippi. He did not stop with the other Creeks who settled along the river near the present eastern border of the Creek country, but pushed on to an ideal spot at the west most limits of Tulledega. Here he pitched his tent, built his hut, cleared his sofky patch and entered upon his long career as prophet. His success, from the start, was remarkable. The volume of business at his command, together with the faith of his adherents continued to broaden and deepen as a river unto his last prophecy. He lived in utter seclusion; in close and solemn communion with nature, and had nothing to do with men except at long range. But he had several huts of wives.

He was of average height, of fine physique, of great personal magnetism and dignity, with large full eyes and a head as perfect in outline as the roof of the world. Just a little more and he would have been bald. His whiskers were not thick, but they made up in length what they lacked in number. His method of treating the sick differed widely from the method employed by Chalogee. He had only to look at and examine a garment

worn by the patient to determine the nature of the disease and what medicines were necessary. This Chalogee could not do. He had to treat the patient in person. And herein, it was claimed, lay the prophet's superiority over Chalogee. He had delved much deeper in the mysteries. But Chalogee, knowing that he had caused more rain to fall than any other prophet since the flood, was quite sure that the claim would not hold water.

The Alabama Prophet, to his credit be it said, was not penurious and exorbitant, like some doctors who charge without distinction between a call and a cure. He was considerate and liberal, and charged no more than he was willing and able to pay. It did not matter whether he was paid in cash or not. But he always insisted on some sort of settlement. He would take a shoat, a colt, a yearling, a due bill—anything—except a stand off. In matters, however, outside of his profession as a doctor, he set a price and charged according to the size of the deed. Thus for local rain, he charged about ten dollars, in cash or chattel. For a general rain, a ground soaker and a gully washer, he charged the value of a cow and calf—in advance.

But when he predicted the Isparhecher War—the crowning glory of his life—for which, if he had asked, he might have received a high command from the Creek government in General Porter's army—he freely donated his prophecy to the Muskogee people.

The Alabama Prophet gave splendid and frequent proofs of his genuineness, but it was not until he suffered persecution that he gave the best he had in his shop.

A certain very self-important young man of the name Lumky Billy was made prosecuting attorney of the district in which the Alabama Prophet resided. Lumky Billy was just out of one of the mission schools, where he had developed a most sincere dislike

The doors and windows were darkened by frightened human beings, all swarming out and escaping at once. Scores of men jumped on their horses still hitched and staked; scores of others never jumped on their horses at all. The throne of justice lay on the floor irreparably damaged and wholly overcome. Before anything had time to happen, the sole occupant of the court room was the Alabama Prophet, a free man.

When Lumky Billy found himself, he threw the case out of court, writing diagonally across the indictment that he was not willing to press it.

A Foxy Old Buck

Once upon a time Uncle Dick Grayson picked up his musket and went hunting. He did not wander about on the landscape long before he scared up a buck with a fine spread of horns. He recovered from his shock in time to bang away at the escaping venison and accidentally brought it to the ground. He ran up to the stricken deer and observing that he was not equal to the task of toting it home, he jerked off his old blue overcoat of the brass ornaments and threw it carefully over the carcass, tucking in to the loose edges and even buttoning it up around the neck of the deceased animal. "Now, sah," said he, "no buzz'ad's gwine bothah wif you twell I gets back wif ma hoss."

So saying, Uncle Dick started off at a lively pace towards home. When he had gotten about fifty yards off, he looked around to see if all was well, and lo and behold! the buck had jumped up and was careering over the horizon with the blue coat trailing in its wake trying to keep up. Before Uncle Dick could say, "Bless ma conscience!" the buck was lost to sight.

"Dat sho wuz a foxy old buck," says Uncle Dick, "wif lots er possum sense 'long wif his cunnin."

III. THE ORATIONS

the Indian is yet progressive and his prospects are brilliant. The stars that deck his sky are the constellations of a grand future, that cannot be dimmed by falsehood

--Alexander Posey, "The Indian: What of Him?"

Before readers recognized Posey's written work as the product of a talented writer, he became locally famous as an orator of merit. Posey delivered his freshman oration, "The Indian: What of Him?," for the Bacone Indian University commencement exercises in June 1892. In this address he argued against prevalent white stereotypes of Indians as "unprogressive" and unable to benefit from education. Posey proclaimed:

> If it is possible for the White man to learn, it is also possible for the Red man; and if the opportunities that have offered themselves to the former shall offer themselves to the latter, the day will dawn when he will scan the heavens through the same telescope, read, write and speak the same language, and go hand in hand through the fields of science and human progress.[1]

With this speech Posey firmly placed himself in the "progressive" camp of Muscogees who saw the best chance of survival in adopting many of the policies of the whites, including the allotment of land. This progressive stance remained with Posey until his death, but while easily viewed as a dichotomy, the differences between the progressives and the traditionalists cannot be conveniently compartmentalized in this way. Posey, a man who actively promoted progressive ideas, also greatly admired the traditionalist

[1] Posey, Alexander. "The Indian: What of Him?" Alexander L. Posey Collection. Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, OK. *Indian Journal* June 1892, undated clipping, Folder 76, Cabinet B, Drawer 6, Reg. No. 4626.31.

members of the tribe such as Chitto Harjo (Crazy Snake) and the other "Snakes." In his poem "On the Capture and Imprisonment of Crazy Snake January 1900" Posey calls Chitto Harjo "The one true Creek, perhaps the last/ To dare declare, 'You have wronged me!' and goes on to conclude "I bow to him, exalt his name!" (*Poems* 207). This lack of a clear division between Posey's progressive ideas and his traditionalist loyalties is also evident in "The Indian: What of Him?" In fact, it may have the been the dual nature of the speech which help ensure its popularity; the *Indian Journal* published the speech in June 1892 and later Bacone Indian University released it in pamphlet form.[2] Posey's positive reference to D. N. McIntosh, an aging yet powerful Muscogee statesman and Confederate War hero, led McIntosh to praise the young Posey and to even appropriate the subject of Posey's oration into one of his own speeches.

Another of Posey's heroes, the inventor of the Cherokee syllabary, Sequoyah, became the subject of Posey's second commencement oration. Posey saw Sequoyah as the consummate Indian genius, a man who benefited from "self-reliance and self instruction," and whose "text books were the mountains, the rivers, the forests, and the heaven" and boasted "the soul of a philosopher, that thirsts for mental gain and ceases never to investigate."[3] Posey also spoke of Sequoyah's ability to overcome his addiction to alcohol and to succeed despite opposition to his ideas. Like his first commencement oration, Posey's "Sequoyah" enjoyed great popularity and a number of local territorial newspapers published this speech.[4]

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[2] This pamphlet has the characteristic typeface of Bacone Indian University publications and may have been set in type by Posey himself.
[3] Posey, Alexander. "Sequoyah." *Cherokee Advocate* 22 July 1893.
[4] *Muscogee Phoenix*, June 22, 1893; *Cherokee Advocate*, July 22, 1893; *Red Man* 12 (July-August, 1893): 8; *Daily Oklahoma State Captial*, July 11, 1893 (this information from Littlefield, *Alex Posey* 282).

By the time Posey gave his third commencement oration, public expectations were high, and Posey did not disappoint; his address, called "Room at the Top," was also a success. This oration championed hard work and a spartan lifestyle as the path to success. Ever fascinated by the concept of genius, Posey related the success of Daniel Webster and argued there is "no other genius than the genius of toil. Genius is only a synonym of persistent consistent labor and will herald the name of no individual to success and renown if not nurtured in the soil of muscle and brain."[5] Unlike the first two orations, "Room at the Top" only mentions Indians in the final paragraph. Posey calls upon the Five Tribes to produce "persevering, top-destined, upright men, with minds as broad as the sky above them, who can by dint of reason and justice thwart even the measures of the United States."[6] Once again, Posey's words were published in newspapers and even printed—in a truncated and slightly altered version—as a broadside.[7] This was Posey's final commencement oration, and he did not return to Bacone the next year.

In 1895 Posey gave two more speeches, both of which were greatly influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine. In the spring, Posey gave a eulogy, at the grave of his hero D. N. McIntosh, that owes much of its rhetoric to Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*. It is not surprising that Posey's orations echo the works of Paine. Posey shared Paine's distaste for organized religion and political oppression after seeing firsthand how these concepts, in the form of Christian missionaries and broken treaties, irreparably damaged Muscogee culture. Posey portrayed McIntosh as a follower of Paine's ideals, as a "devotee of mental freedom—of the eternal march of cause and effect—of truth, liberty,

[5] Posey, Alexander. "Room at the Top." *Indian Journal* 6 July 1894.
[6] Posey. "Room at the Top." *Indian Journal* 6 July 1894.
[7] Oklahoma Historical Society, Alexander Posey vertical file.

brotherhood, sympathy and love. He knew that intelligence is ruled by reason, ignorance by fear."[8] Posey said of McIntosh:

> He built his religion on facts. His mind was too great and of too broad a sweep to accept as true what Nature contradicted. To him hearsay was not a revelation. He was above superstition—above bending his knee to a Deity he knew nothing about. He could not believe the man-written book, to which the world hangs in its ignorance, as inspired and sacred.[9]

Approximately two months later Posey delivered another oration, a political speech supporting Isparhecher (pronounced Spi-e-che) as a candidate for the 1895 principal chief's race. Most of the seven who addressed the gathering spoke in Muscogee, but Posey's speech had to be translated for the audience, and as Littlefield argues, "the significance of the words he borrowed from Thomas Paine would certainly have lost some meaning in translation" (*Alex* 77). As this excerpt demonstrates, Paine's *Crisis Papers* strongly influenced Posey's speech:

> The history of the white man's dealing with the Indian is a history of broken treaties and of unfulfilled promises. We have not so much as a vestige of assurance that any treaty made now with the Dawes Commission would be held sacred by the government of the United States. Can we be blamed for not wanting to treat with this commission? Can you continue to trust the man who has never kept his promises with you? The crisis, nay, the time that tries men's souls is upon us.[10]

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[8] Posey, Alexander. "Col. McIntosh: A Few Words to His Memory." American Native Press Archives, UALR, Little Rock, AR. Manuscipt. April 1895, Box I-22, Folder 9.
[9] Posey. "Col. McIntosh: A Few Words to His Memory."
[10] Posey, Alexander. "The Creek Opening Guns." *Muskogee Phoenix*, 29 June 1895.

Posey goes on to explain the greedy motives of the whites in desiring to open Indian Territory for non-Indian settlement and recalls the ill treatment of the Indians by the United States. Posey mastered the noncommittal rhetoric of a politician and ends the speech by asking the audience to "Trust to the honesty of the United States and stand by the man who will protect and guard the interests of the people—Such a man as Isparhecher, the patriot, statesman and warrior."[11] This speech illustrates an ambiguity especially necessary in the political arena of Indian Territory where conflicting loyalties were numerous. Not wishing to completely agree with Isparhecher's political views, Posey avoids committing himself by devoting only the last sentence of the speech to Isparhecher's candidacy, a move that distanced his advocacy of the man in a relatively respectful manner.

Posey's skill at oration and the fame it brought him surely helped him enter the world of Muscogee politics. He was elected to the Creek House of Warriors in September 1895 as a representative of Tuskegee. After his term as a public servant, which effectively ended in 1898, Posey shunned political office in favor of disseminating his ideas via the medium of newspaper, but his speeches each illustrate the mindset and "progressive" public image that Posey wanted to convey.

[11] Posey. "The Creek Opening Guns." *Muskogee Phoenix*, 29 June 1895"

The Indian: What of Him?

It has been asserted and proclaimed to the world by eminent men of this republic that the Indian is an unprogressive being; that his tendency is to retrograde rather than to advance; that when he has attended school five or eight years it is of no value to him, because he will eventually wander back into ignorance and resume his former habits on returning to his home or tribe; that it is time, energy and money wasted in striving to educate him to a degree that will enable him to occupy equal grounds with his Anglo Saxon brother; and that the noblest picture that can be presented to the eye of humanity is to describe him as a wandering, shiftless wretch, roaming amid the wilds of an uncivilized country without an aim, and without a motive in life. These are the utterances that have echoed in the halls of the American congress, and been believed by multitudes of the human race. These are the assertions that have fallen from the lips of men who have had no sympathy or association with the Indian people. These are sentiments expressed by unscrupulous tongues, founded on hearsay and without the slightest evidence of truth. They are false, because they are not in accordance with science, nor of anything that constitutes the true estimation of man. The tongue of science is more truthful that the tongue of man, and it cannot approve of such absurdities, because science has rarely found in all its research a link in the chain of the human family so low in the scale of being that it could not be taught to hate its ignorance and appreciate the beauty of knowledge and the enlightening good of civilization. Such allusions to the Red man would have been one or two hundred years ago more suitable, but they cannot be applied to the Indians of this Territory, nor of any other Territory which has had the associations of the Saxon race and the advantages of higher enlightenment. I believe in the sublime

declaration that "all men are created equal." Although it is possible for one tribe to become a superior race, it is also possible for another, notwithstanding the degradation it may have undergone, in the process of time, to rival its superior. France and Germany well illustrate this tendency; so do the British Isles and Spain—the rise of one nation enables, in process of time, the other to rise. Therefore, what has been said of the Red man's incapacity cannot be true, for it is against the conclusions of science and the testimony of history. No intelligent being can for a moment entertain the idea that the Indian had had ample time and opportunity to become a conspicuous character on the battle plains of human progression. Yet, with the lack of encouragement and incentive that others have had, he has accomplished far more than could ever have been expected of him. In spite of broken treaties, obstacles, removals, privations and fatiguing marches to unknown wilds, tribes have become nations. Within the bounds of the Indian Territory they have founded governments, courts of justice, schools and seminaries, asylums and prisons, with such facilities as belong to a prosperous people, whose motto is to give justice and receive justice in return. Could such opportunities have been given the Indians two hundred years ago, what might have been the consequence? Man cannot predict what he might have achieved. If it is possible for the White man to learn, it is also possible for the Red man; and if the opportunities that have offered themselves to the former shall offer themselves to the latter, the day will dawn when he will scan the heavens through the same telescope, read, write and speak the same language, and go hand in hand through the fields of science and human progress. To attain this end, the Indians of this Territory have granted charters for the erection of institutions, and set apart a certain percent of their revenues for the encouragement of learning. Every

neighborhood is to be favored with a school house for the instruction of its youths. All this is indicative that the Red man is progressing. Christianity is turning his thoughts heavenward. Church steeples are pointing for him to the star of human hope. The railroad and the telegraph that web his country inspires his mind with desire of having them likewise. The achievements of his mighty brother swell his ambition which has slept for centuries. What glorious aspects loom in the horizon of his future! I pity the senator who said: "The Indian is an unprogressive man," because he is ignorant of his real character. I pity the poet who said: "The Indian is a bundle of sensations on two legs with a tomahawk, without a romance, without a history, and with no other motive in life than mere existence." Surely the muse could not have inspired his mind with such a ridiculous thought. Can the people who have produced such a man as McIntosh and Boudinot,[1] who have entertained presidents and been the admiration of statesmen, be an unprogressive people? Can the people who have books and periodicals published in their native tongue be an unprogressive men? Do these give indications of degeneracy? I answer in the negative; and the man who strives to disparage them is rather the degenerate being.

Notwithstanding all that has been said of him, the Indian is yet progressive and his prospects are brilliant. The stars that deck his sky are the constellations of a grand future, that cannot be dimmed by falsehood nor by the unloyalty of the poetic pen. The advancements made in spite of untold obstacles in the way of enlightenment are the manifestations of the beginning of what he shall be!

[1] D. N. McIntosh (1822-1895), Muscogee statesman and Confederate colonel. Elias C. Boudinot (1800-1839), Cherokee statesman and editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*.

Sequoyah

Among the great names in the history of invention, of men who have added momentum to the progress of their race, the name of Sequoyah, the illustrious Indian, deserves to be remembered. The triumph of his genius, in the invention of the Cherokee alphabet, is a victory that must associate his name with the apostles of science and civilization, and with the benefactors of mankind. No other in the history of his race has won a higher regard from posterity. The deeds of Pocahontas are noble, the heroism of King Phillip, Tecumseh, and other Indians are commendable; and these will live in the memory of the people; but the most enduring remembrance is due to this inventor.

It matters not in what region of the earth the seed of genius is cast—remote or conspicuous—it will germinate and bear its fruit. This truth is verified in the nativity of Sequoyah, as of Shakespeare, of Washington, and of the majority of the most eminent characters of history. The birth-place of men whose lives are destined to be given to the amelioration of humanity, is not confined to some one favorite spot alone. The flower of the desert may shed a sweeter fragrance than the one that has grown in the garden of luxury. Somewhere—no one knows precisely—in that beautiful country once owned by the Cherokees, Sequoyah was born. Though denied the advantages of education, he had access to the teachings of nature—an ear ever opened to the voice of reason. His text books were the mountains, the rivers, the forests, and the heaven. His soul was the soul of a philosopher, that thirsts for mental gain and ceases never to investigate. He walked amid the wilds contemplating natural laws and the secrets of cause and effect, while his countrymen gloried over the trophies of the chase and war. This high aspiration, by the

proper use of the knowledge gained, resulted in the invention of the alphabet in which the rich language of the Cherokees is written.

A mind thus tutored in the university of nature, and achieving such a beneficent deed for humanity, is worth a myriad of others, however learned, that being nothing to pass. Self-reliance and self instruction are necessary in moulding grand characters. These were the characteristics of Sequoyah. When he conceived the possibility of his invention, it was his misfortune to share the fate of most discoverers. His project was scoffed at and ridiculed by unappreciating ignorance, which conferred upon him the title of lunatic. No friend had the nobleness and the generosity of heart to encourage him in his toil. But all this served only to animate his faith in the plan which reason had submitted to his hands for execution. When his task was finished—when the subject of his dreams was realized, his fellows looked upon him as one inspired and worthy of his country's approbation.

Sequoyah was not, however, without his faults. The one blemish of his life was intemperance; an evil that has displayed itself in the lives of some of our greatest men. He would, no doubt, have sunk into oblivion, in consequence of this infamous habit, had he not possessed the will, the courage, and the strength of character to break and thrust aside its bonds. Thus, Sequoyah rescued his name from infamy, his genius from ruin. A man addicted to strong drink seldom reforms. But he knew that he could not fulfill the sublime mission of his life and be a slave to inebriety. He knew that he could not devote his time to the execution of his plans and be a drunkard. He knew that such a course of life would do injustice to his fellowmen by tempting the young to follow in his footsteps. Had he been other than a lover of humanity, of science, of civilization; had he been other

than an industrious man, a lover of toil, one who finds something always to employ his time, he would have perished in his deliriums, for such is the fate of multitudes who come to ruin in consequence of having nothing to do. This was the noblest victory of his life.

The world has been slow in recognizing the genius of this inventor. His own people are just beginning to realize his worth, and it is anticipated that at no distant day the expression of their veneration will be shown in a monument erected to his memory.

But monuments and words of praise can never express the worth of Sequoyah to his people. Though he fell by the wayside of neglect; though distant stars and the flowers of a foreign clime smile above his grave, the work of his hands helped to make his people happy and prosperous!

Room at the Top

Daniel Webster when a young lawyer, in answer to the statement that it was absurd for him to anticipate success when there were as many in his profession said, "There is room at the top."

Upon these words he built the superstructure of what he became. He did not pause to observe the great truth of his reply substantiated in the lives of other men but he verified it in his own career. The crowded condition of the sphere in which he was to move served only to increase his determination, the more crowded it became, only to assure him of greater trophies and a greater triumph. He knew his adaptability and did not mistake his calling. Unlike the multitudinous throng of the would-be great men, he was to pay the cost of preeminence in time, toil and thorough preparation. A thorough knowledge of individual adaptability, incessant use of muscle and brain are the sureties of success—the escorts to the room at the top. Had Webster, after uttering this significant reply, halted without further exertions for the achievement of the end sought, his name would have perished with him, and his words would have been forgotten. It was not circumstances nor inborn acuteness for acquiring distinction in the study of jurisprudence that crowned him with garlands at the top. His reward was the boon of unyielding persistence. He knew no other genius than the genius of toil. Genius is only a synonym of persistent consistent labor and will herald the name of no individual to success and renown if not nurtured in the soil of muscle and brain.

Before Edmund Kean, that consummate delineator of human nature, would consent to appear on the stage in the character of the villain, he spent a year and a half

before the mirror studying expressions.[1] When he did appear, and began to delineate the terrible and terrifying consequences of sin, the people swooned away in horror and left him without an audience. A princely price, indeed, he paid for this success, but he purchased the full measure of it.

Man's greatest success and worth is the result of the highest possible development of that trait in his character which appeals strongest to his inclinations. Unable to discriminate their strongest desire, men mistake their calling, blight their hopes, wreck their fortunes and waste their energies in vain. Then "bad luck" bears the blame in place of indiscretion. Discouraged, despairing, they cease in their efforts to climb and vanish in their sepulchers as failures.

But wherefore should one weep over the misfortunes of his career when man's adversities are his own creation? They should serve only to strengthen and animate his determination and broaden his views regarding the victory which he is struggling to achieve. If a calm sea never made a skillful mariner, a calm life never made a great man. Time, toil and vicissitudes; these are the cost of success. The world can use the man who is willing to pay this price. Its progress is dependent upon just such men; verily, upon men who are the devotees of mental embellishment and excellency of character; upon men who scorn from their soul's inmost recesses the vanity of fashion and the folly of luxury. Fashion and luxury foster the germ that makes physical and mental dwarfs of men and women, that banish every attribute of magnanimity from a nation. The man who would reach the top and leave the world better than he found it, must rise above them, and to as sublime a height as Socrates occupied above the vainglory and the

[1] Edmund Kean (1787?-1833), English actor known for his portrayal of Shakespearean villains. Posey may be referring to Kean's celebrated ability to portray Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

dissipation of the Athenians. The safety of a nation in having such men is infinitely more secure than being circumscribed by an unbroken array of battlements. When England raised her boasted arms against the patriots of the New World, her struggle for supremacy was foiled by mightier arms, which the need of the hour beckoned into action, as though by magic, from the solitudes where nature fashioned Washington. The castles of the mother country could not bring forth men competent to combat with the forest-born sons of America, behind whose spartan manhood were virtues, excellence, persistence and determination. The conquest of England and the Declaration of Independence were the feats of labor.

On the spacious stage of endeavor there is room for the man who is willing to act. Although it is crowded, there is yet a vacancy for the one who can act the best. With the footprints of the foremost men of the world before you, there is no occasion to despair—no occasion to exclaim, "The top is inaccessible." Although you may not vie in brilliancy with Gladstone or Lincoln,[2] you are sure of becoming an exponent of good—sure of broadening the views of the world around you and making it better. Yet everywhere the immemorial cry is audible, "Had I such opportunities as that man I would be rich and famous." This is the pretext of the man who seeks fortune and fame without sweating for them. Vain desire! Delusive dream! There are no opportunities for the man who will not make them; no room at the top for the man who will not expend the vigor of his manhood to reach it.

The world is filled with men who hold it an act of condescension to work in the lower spheres of endeavor. They prefer to begin at the top, rather than to reach it by

[2] William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), British statesman aligned with the Liberal Party and an accomplished orator.

gradual ascent. This only evinces narrow-mindedness; and the lives of such men will not pass into history. To the high minded, the philosopher and truly great man no sphere whatever in the field of industry presents itself as objectionable. He knows that all grades of labor between the low and high serve as the stepping-stones of his ascendancy. Like the tree, he strikes root, grows, puts forth his leaves and becomes the giant of his surrounding before the world is aware.

No righteous calling, no labor essential to success is held in contempt by the man who is resolved to cast his destiny at the top. He sings and whistles at the plow; he is cheerful and content at rail-splitting. No matter what certificates of his learning, whether from Oxford, Yale or Harvard, he may clasp rolled in his hand. He is the man who is worthy of promotion and praise. He is the man who will eventually ascend to the final altitude of honor and success. He is the man for whom the gates of the world's highest places will stand ajar.

We need such men in these five nations. If the Hebrews became a mighty nation in Egypt, there is no reason why the Indians of this territory cannot become a great nation in America. It is not impossible, and the truth demands persevering, top-destined, upright men, with minds as broad as the sky above them, who can by dint of reason and justice thwart even the measures of the United States, and make the existence of an Indian commonwealth known to the world!

Col. McIntosh: A Few Words to His Memory[1]

No reflection can be more beautiful, pleasant and ennobling than a reflection on the life of the man we have met to bury.

McIntosh was a good and noble citizen. The world is better for his having lived. He was a friend to humanity, and sought to better the condition of mankind by reason. He was, above all, a true friend to his people; and his departure will be felt long after we are dead. He was in advance of his time—in advance of those by whom he was surrounded. To this the coming Indian will bear testimony, by the proper appreciation of his work and worth. He will go down in the history—in the tradition of this country—as a man deserving more than this generation has given him as a man who stood on the side of justice, and whose opinion could not be bought.

McIntosh was an investigator—a seeker after truth. He was not afraid to reason—not afraid to doubt. He built his religion on facts. His mind was too great and of too broad a sweep to accept as true what Nature contradicted. To him hearsay was not a revelation. He was above superstition—above bending his knee to a Deity he knew nothing about. He could not believe the man-written book, to which the world hangs in its ignorance, as inspired and sacred. He found nothing in Nature, and in what reason taught him, to substantiate its preposterous claims. He could not believe in the religion that slew with famine, sword and pestilence. He chose rather to be a devotee of mental freedom—of the eternal march of cause and effect—of truth, liberty, brotherhood, sympathy and love. He knew that intelligence is ruled by reason, ignorance by fear.

McIntosh lived for this world, if there be another, he will live for that. He did what he could for the destruction of fear—the destruction of the imaginary monster who

[1] D. N. McIntosh (1822-1895), Muscogee statesman and Confederate colonel.

rewards the few in heaven—who tortures the many in perdition. His mission was to civilize and prepare men for the struggle, and to make the most of this existence, and to add to the sum of human joy. Unto the last moments of his life, this was his need. He lived by it, died by it.

His long and useful life is ended. The ores of that bright mind are resting. The charm of that voice of melody is flown. An eternal night has curtained the flash of those brilliant eyes.

Let us not weep for him. Let us be glad, happy that he lived so long.

Now, let him slumber here. Let time his tribute pay, with flowering seasons above his clay—above the dust of him whose deeds were human love—who said, "a friend commits no wrong."

Brave and tender man, farewell.

Alexander L. Posey

April, 1895.

"The Creek Opening Guns"[1]

Friends and fellow citizens: We have one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Beautiful in fertility, beautiful in resources. We cannot dream of a land in Mexico, or in the shadow of the Andes so promising, so inviting and so worth the holding onto as this Indian Territory. It seems that nature, out of sympathy and to give an exhibition of her hatred for unbrotherly treatment, has lavished it a beauty peculiar to no other country. I do not wonder at the "boomer," the speculator, the newspaper man and the lawyer for being jealous,[2] and even unscrupulous, in their advocacy of statehood for this country. The "boomer" wants this land, not for the purpose of improving it, but for a mercenary purpose—to sell it, and, like the Arab, fold his tent and quietly steal away.[3] He wants something for nothing—a soft snap without the sweating for it. Finding no easy way to success in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas or Texas, he comes to this Territory and sets up a howl heard from the Atlantic to the Pacific for our lands.

The newspaper man wants this country opened up, not because it is to the best interest of those that own it, but because he wants wider circulation, more advertising, and to assume from a handful of type, a can of ink and an out-of-date hand-press, an astonishing magnitude in the social and political world.

The lawyer wants statehood because he wants litigation, a broader field for business, more patronage, more clients to fleece and to have a better chance of getting into office.

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[1] Originally delivered in Eufala, Indian Territory on June 5, 1895, this speech takes its title from the June 29, 1895 *Muskogee Phoenix* news article in which it appeared.
[2] "Boomers" advocated the opening of Indian land to settlement by non-Indians.
[3] "like the Arab, fold his tent and quietly steal away" is an allusion to "The Day is Done" a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882).

The "boomer," the speculator, the newspaper man, and, last of all—the lawyer; they are the enemies of our peace, who say we are semi-civilized, incompetent of self-government, and so picture us to the world. They are the ones who are knocking at the doors of congress, begging for a change in our government, and who have so hoodwinked his majesty—the president, as to persuade him to send a commission to this country to torment and harass us with propositions.

Not for congress, but it is for us to shape our national destinies. I wonder that such a grand and potent government as the United States, boasting of equity, of humanity and of the blessings of liberty, would listen to and entertain the wishes of those who want to lord it over this country, and with one tyrannic wrench, dispossess it of its dearest heritage, which is liberty.

The history of the white man's dealing with the Indian is a history of broken treaties and of unfulfilled promises. We have not so much as a vestige of assurance that any treaty made now with the Dawes Commission would be held sacred by the government of the United States. Can we be blamed for not wanting to treat with this commission? Can you continue to trust the man who has never kept his promises with you? The crisis, nay, the time that tries men's souls is upon us.[4]

Hold on to this country, is my watchword. Trust to the honesty of the United States and stand by the man who will protect and guard the interests of the people—Such a man is Isparhecher, the patriot, statesman and warrior.[5]

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[4] "These are the times that try men's souls," Thomas Paine (1737-1809), *The Crisis*.
[5] Isparhecher (pronounced Spi-e-che) (1828-1902) won the election for principal chief on September 3, 1895.

IV. MUSCOGEE FOLKLORE

> *in the remote periods of the Redman's existence vast libraries of immense value were stored away on invisible shelves of an uncultured brain, which has at the present time with the march of civilization dwindled almost to the verge of insignificance*
>
> --Alexander Posey, "The Origins of Music According to the Creek Medicine-Men"

While Muscogee oral tradition permeates virtually all of Posey's prose, next to the Fus Fixico letters, his legends and "fables" exhibit the greatest debt to the Muscogee culture. This is particularly true of the animal fables which present characters such as the Muscogee trickster figure Chufee the Rabbit, Osahwah the crow, Chola the fox, Co-wak-co-jee the Wildcat, and others. While these works of folklore draw heavily from Muscogee traditional stories, the presence of outside influences in many of these pieces is undeniable. Both "The Origins of Music According to the Creek Medicine-Men" and "The Devil's Parodies" feature the Christian figures of the Lord and the Devil. "A Creek Fable" features quotations from both Charles Kingsley and Ralph Waldo Emerson and the "morals" that conclude several of these works are reminiscent of European fables. Posey also introduces characters uncommon to traditional Muscogee tales. The best example of this is in "A Fable" [*Indian Journal* 14 Feb. 1902]. Though Posey writes that the story was "handed down," he populates it with a fice (a small dog), a monkey, and a wise "darkey."

Posey probably wrote and published the first of these works, "The Origins of Music According to the Creek Medicine-Men," while still a student at Bacone Indian University.[1] Littlefield suggests that "The overblown style, describing "melodious cataracts and scenes sublime" and "sable pinions" of darkness, marks it as the work of an immature writer" (*Alex* 46). Posey draws much from Muscogee stories in what is probably another youthful effort, "The 'Possum and the Skunk: Or How the 'Possum Lost the Hair Off His Tail." Similar to other Muscogee "'Possum" stories that typically end with 'Possum's vanity contributing to his downfall,[2] this story, like those which Posey called "fables," contains an implicit moral intended to simultaneously amuse and educate the listener. Kosmider argues that "The story warns about the dangers of being too pompous, a trait that transgresses group solidarity" (96). Traditional Muscogee stories tend to encourage tribal unity and even the manner in which they are told is a communal experience. Kosmider goes on to contend that "Posey obviously understood and valued the profound meaning of these tales. His stories focus on how animals and people relate and create meaning out of their world, and in his listening to these stories, Posey recognized the transformational qualities that the audience must undergo when listening" (96). This transformation is sometimes implicitly stated such as at the end of "Fable of the Foolish Young Bear," in which Posey concludes "Have you not been a foolish young bear?" "A Creek Fable" appeared in the October 1900 issue of *Twin Territories* and represents an interesting mixture of Muscogee oral tradition and European influences. Though the tale does not end with an overt statement of the story's

[1] This story, though an undated clipping, exhibits the typescript style common to Bacone Indian University publications of the time and was possibly published in 1893.

[2] See "Opossum and Skunk," John R. Swanton *Myths and Tales of the Southeastern Indians* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1929). 200.

"moral," it is a rather complicated morality tale that explores the problematic interaction of wealth and friendship. Posey's story bemoans the loss of Muscogee economic prosperity by stating "some Creeks were well-to-do in the olden days."[3] The agricultural success described in this story is probably, in part, the product of the pre-allotment Muscogee farming law which allowed Muscogees to fence and farm as much land as they could use as long as their claim did not intrude upon another person's claim. Littlefield writes, "many Creeks did little of the physical labor themselves; controlling the land, they simply hired laborers or rented out small tracts to farmers, mainly whites and blacks who had come into the Creek country from the United States" (*Alex* 108). For some time, Posey himself took advantage of this lucrative agricultural practice and this story alludes to his lost days as "a prosperous Creek Indian."[4]

Probably meant to be entertaining filler material, the remaining tales— "Fable of the Foolish Young Bear," "The Devil's Parodies," and three other stories simply titled "A Fable"—were each published in the *Indian Journal* between March 22, 1901 and February 7, 1902. With the exception of "The Devil's Parodies," each story boasts an implicit moral drawn from the stories. "The Devil's Parodies" seems more like a joke than the other stories and even ends with a punch-line of sorts by stating "that when the Lord made man, the devil made woman."[5] These traditionally influenced fables reflect Posey's wish to preserve what many perceived to be a vanishing Muscogee culture. In 1907 Posey commented that he hoped to create an anthology of Muscogee stories for publication and to also write a history of the Muscogee people. He felt that time was

[3] Harjo, Chinnubbie (Alexander Posey). "A Creek Fable." *Twin Territories* 2 (October 1900): 34.
[4] Posey. "A Creek Fable." 34.
[5] Harjo, Chinnubbie. (Alexander Posey). "The Devil's Parodies." *Indian Journal* 10 January 1902.

running out to properly record the history of his tribe. Posey's untimely death in 1908 forever ended his opportunity to further act as a Muscogee historian.

The Origins of Music According to the Creek Medicine-Men

To his own and the world's misfortune, the Redman has never attained a degree of civilization until recent years in which he could make use of a written language born of his original tongue. Therefore we have no records concerning his history only as they have been transmitted or handed down to him by former generations in forms of legends or epic narratives, which must in all probability be very inaccurate, as their truths and safety must depend on the accuracy of the mind whose exactness is diminished as age advances upon the individual to whom they are intrusted. Though no doubt, in the remote periods of the Redman's existence vast libraries of immense value were stored away on invisible shelves of an uncultured brain, which has at the present time with the march of civilization dwindled almost to the verge of insignificance. To a great extent, he has assumed the manners and customs of his white brother, and his habit of transmittance has been neglected save with the less progressive ones, who still embrace it as a sacred duty, handed down by the gods at their yearly festivals called "Green Corn Busk." The one to whom these legends and narratives are intrusted is styled the "Medicine Man," whose duty through life, is to meet his town or tribe at these annual gatherings and prepare a remedy of roots and herbs to cleanse their impurities of the past year—name their infants and relate these legends to youths between the age of eighteen and twenty; and strive to stamp them imperishably, so that no other power than death or insanity can remove or obliterate them. To deem music the invention of the Devil, has been the Redman's pride, and is so manifested in the following legend, which has been long preserved and still has its existence among the antique relics of the Creek Indians in the manner foretold.

I left my home, my wife and children, my friends, relations and foes—abandoned the sacred hunting grounds, whose charms and romantic wilds I had learned to live in the infant years and worship as idols when a man. I traveled west, through unpeopled wastes and lands unknown, where the foot of man had never stamped its image or pressed the green luxuriance of the soil—no trace of human life was here, and nature, undisturbed, reigned a sovereign mistress over all the eye could survey. No beasts nor reptiles of the savage kind, save the gentlest meekest; no birds of prey, save the fairest, whose plumage bathes in scented seas. Yet all these beauteous scenes contained no charms I loved, no pleasures to which my heart aspired, no beauty to cause my inspection to loiter in their midst; but to press onward was my inclination and to achieve my end. Thus onward these many days I journeyed and each day the blazing chariot of the skies illumined my path to hell with brighter rays of brilliancy. At night-fall when darkness spreads her sable pinions to enfold a slumbering world, releasing melancholy from the tombs, when stars and shooting meteors wage war on heaven's liquid plains. I sought no other refuge of rest than beneath some spreading oak, whose boughs lulled me in my dreams of home. The twentieth morn arose victorious over night's blackened reign, and revealed to me a world of smiles in every direction, my eyes beheld some bewitching scene surpassing all grandeur and the description of mortal tongue. Odorous blooms and blossoms—melodious cataracts and scenes sublime truly prophesied the abode of Immortal Youth. Whilst musing here enrapt in admiration vast a voice of thunder addressed me thus, transforming my soul into a bulky thistle, whose projecting thorns seemed to pierce as lightning's fang: "Intruding wretch, why comest though? what charm hath brought thee hither?" All heavens blackened and a midnight surpassing earth's innermost caves hid

this supernatural world, a foulness, as if belched from the lungs of very hell ushered forth in hurricanes—sweeping away the universe methought, and leaving scarce an atom to mark its disastrous path. Not a man, but a stone—I stood speechless and mute as the tomb, whilst clouds boiled confusedly and lightnings coiled as fiery serpents shooting forth their venomed tongues and scarring earth with uncounted wounds. Lions, wolves, boars, snakes, and all of earth's ferocious tribes seem to gnash their jaws in anger—rocks, rivers, seas and oceans came crashing down in avalanches from unmeasured heights, and the clanking of chains intensified my horror. Again that hell-born voice addressed me thus: "My son, what seekest thou, in this region of horrors where only myself alone can dwell!"

Turning myself around I beheld the face of Satan, half smiling in my presence, and in a faltering voice I thus replied: "Music, Satan, music, that which my forefathers praised as a gift of thine to warriors bold."

"Ha ha," shouted he, unpacking the fiddle of my forefathers from off my back and began: "My son, thou art an obedient child and a faithful servant, fulfilling a father's cruel will. Open thy ears! give heed! listen!!" He drew the bow across the fiddle strings but no music followed save a dull chimeless sound, when his fearful tongue rebuked me saying: "Son, thou hast kindled thy father's wrath, thy violin is not in tune—an insult for which thou canst not be forgiven save by this avenging blow"—the violin was shattered into atoms o'er my unprotected head and scattered with the winds whilst I lay unconscious 'neath the frowning face of grim omnipotence, or circumfused in the shades of hell. "Arise, thou defenceless wretch! arise, that ye may lend a listening ear."

With the aptness of a leopard I sprang to my feet in quick obedience; and lo! no pools of blood I spied, no scars nor wounds, save the tranquil beauties of every scene, when hark! the melodious outburst of Satanic ballads seem to reecho among the stars, as if beckoning all the heavenly worlds to hearken or to pause in their revolutions.

Methought it was the sweetest of melodies, whose powerful Satanic charms could stay the wildest billows of the glassy deep and bring tears to the most tyrannical eyes.

Handing back my violin he thus began: "My son, what I have played thou must never reveal to other mortal ears, their charms cannot be endured by man, save only by the gods and the inspired." Thus I learned to play the fiddle and any tune my aspiration chose—and though deemed a wicked art by the pious, through fatigue, want and blood-freezing experience it was dearly bought.

The 'Possum and the Skunk: Or How the 'Possum Lost the Hair Off His Tail

When there were no monkeys with their tails stamped off calling themselves people, all the animals talked together. The 'possum had a very fine bushy tail and was very proud of it. He would boast of it. He and the skunk lived close neighbors to each other in their respective dens. The skunk was at that time a recluse, because his caudal appendage was like unto a carpenter's pencil of modern make. The 'possum would, on all occasions, tantalize the skunk about his pencil-like appendage, displaying his own bushy tail before the skunk.

One fine morning the 'possum and the skunk emerged from their respective dens at the same time. The 'possum had composed a little song which ran something like this. The 'possum had a bushy tail. The old skunk's tail is stick and pail, etc.

The skunk was hard to hear the song and slunk back into his den and began to cry about his troubles. A large black cricket crawled out of a crevice and asked the skunk, "Why are all these tears?" The skunk told the cricket all. "Cheer up," said, the cricket. "I will put the fixings on the 'possum." So, in the morning when the 'possum came home full of prunes, or persimmons, and went to sleep, the cricket went into his den and proceeded to clip the fine bushy tail the 'possum wont to parade. The cricket worked all day and at dark had the hair on the tail all cut loose. Just about this time the 'possum awoke from his slumber, but the skunk had already received one notice of the depredation of the cricket and was on the look out for the 'possum. Before long out came the shorn 'possum and greeted the skunk with his little song, giving, as was his custom, his tail an upward whirl. But, lo ; the fine bushy tail was not there. Only the bare bone was exposed to ridicule. This gave the 'possum such a sudden shock that he fell over in a

swoon with a weak smile on his face. Meantime the skunk picked up the fallen hair and took it to the great medicine man, the wolf, who secured it on the tail of the skunk. Ever since then the skunk has carried a bushy tail and the 'pos-um has worn a habitual grin.

A Creek Fable

Once upon a time, there lived a prosperous Creek Indian. Some Creeks were well-to-do in the olden days. He had all kinds of live stock. The river bottoms teemed with hogs in his mark of all ages, sizes, and colors.[1] They that ran could read the initials of his name on the hips of an hundred cattle. The hills abounded with his sheep, and his wild ponies whimpered in every valley. His farm, though it would not merit that title in these days of expansion, was not a sofky patch by a good deal.[2] Three times a day until the four seasons were complete, did his table murmur under the weight of the pick and choice of the good things to eat—sofky, in generous home-fashioned crocks; sour bread, in half moons, with a delicious brown crust; blue dumplings, temptingly embedded with pecan and hickory kernels; dried beef, pounded in the mortar to a silken fineness! He lived in a mansion of great hewn oak logs, with broad verandas lined with cedar columns. He had many visitors and black slaves to wait upon them. He had money buried and unburied. To talk and smoke in the shade of his catalpa trees and be conspicuous at ball games and "stomp" dances,[3] was all that he cared for to

"Make Life, Death and that vast Forever

"One grand sweet song."[4]

This rich man's life, however, was not a bed of flowers. Not often, but now and then, while he breathed the fragrance and looked upon the beauty of the rose, he did not

[1] Farmers would cut a notch in the ears of their hogs and brand their cattle to indicate ownership.
[2] Sofky, a traditional Muscogee food, is made from corn cooked in lye water.
[3] Stomp dances are ceremonial dances performed during the Muscogee Green Corn Ceremony. The ball games mentioned are ceremonial and often violent contests between rival Muscogee towns. The ball game consists of players attempting to move a ball to their goal on the opposite side of the playing field with a long racket-like stick.
[4] This quotation is from Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), "A Farewell." The word "vast" does not appear in the final edition of Kinsgley's poems (1889) (explanation provided by Daniel F. Littlefield Jr.)

escape the sting of its thorns. Though nearly every moment was "jeweled with joy,"[5] some moments were barbed with care and annoyance. For instance, a certain neighbor, who had frequently enjoyed his hospitality, stole from him. He came at night to the rich man's larder and took away great sides of bacon, refusing the grinning jowls and tempting shoulders within his reach. The rich man was much bothered. But being resourceful and inventive, he contrived an ingenious trap and placed it over a deep hole near the larder. Then after selecting a fine middling and putting it on the trap,[6] he took his family and went visiting.

But a friend, not the thief, came along in his absence and seeing the middling, wondered why it had been left there. It could not have been thrown away, he thought, because it looked too sound and good. Then it struck him that some thief had dropped it upon his approach. He had just come in time, thank the Lord. He went to pick up the precious middling, when down he fell into the pit! He fell a long time. When he struck bottom, he looked up, but he could see no light. He looked up again; still no light. Had the earth swallowed him up? Then, remembering that it was said that the third time works like a charm, he looked up once more, and saw light. But the light was so small he dare not take his eyes off it lest he lose it. There he was; uninjured, but where physical soundness could do him no good.

Presently, he heard a noise, faint and nowhere close. Then, all at once, down came a huge boar. He, too, had been falling a long time and came near jarring the bottom of the pit. He was confused and frothed at the mouth. He coiled up in an opposite corner

[5] "jeweled with joy," Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899), "A Tribute to Ebon C. Ingersoll" (1879).

[6] A "middling" is the center portion of a hog carcass.

and looked over his shoulder at his companion as if to say, "Something has to be done; this place can't hold us both."

Then the man heard another rumble, and down came a great wolf, falling between him and the boar. The wolf had fallen quite awhile also, and he looked mean. He and the boar were on the point of making it bad for each other when the man heard another noise. He looked up three times and saw a face peering into the hole. A voice said, "Ah ha! What I'll do for you will be enough!" A rope was let down and he was drawn out. The rich man seeing who it was, laughed heartily and said it was a great joke. But the wolf and the boar never saw daylight anymore.

Fable of the Foolish Young Bear

Once upon a warm spring day a foolish young bear went abroad in search of food. The long severe winter had reduced his supply of fat to such an extent that he vowed he could eat anything and it would taste good. Moreover he was not so concerned about what he was going to find as he was about finding it. He prowled about in the woods a long time thrusting his arms into this dark hole and that and peeping into everything that looked hollow. He scratched vigorously, too, here and there, yanking out obstructing roots until he felt itchy with the heat and craved water. But he found not a morsel. There was nothing in the hollow log or a tree but trash; nothing in the dark holes but darkness; nothing in the earth but obstinate roots. While the foolish young bear was holding counsel with himself about what next to do, he saw a commotion in the dead grass ahead of him. His eyes beamed with satisfaction and the inner bear was pleased. Hugging the ground closely, he followed the motion of the grass until all at once he sprang into the air, turned a somerset[1] backward and retreated as if suddenly afflicted with the blind staggers. While he was plowing up the earth with his nose and rubbing his eyes nearly out, the skunk escaped. An old crow, who was foraging in a pecan grove near by, was astonished at Brer Bear's rashness and said so plainly.

The foolish young bear then left the woods and went up into the mountains, suspiciously giving every movement he saw in the grass plenty of room. He looked under the ledges, examining every seam and crevice, but found nothing except a mountain boomer with fast colored rings around his neck,[2] who all but jumped him out of his skin as he scampered by within a foot of his nose. He did not like the way the boomer

[1] "Somerset" means somersault.

[2] A "mountain boomer" is a lizard; this term usually refers to the Eastern Collard Lizard, *Crotaphytus collaris*.

had of turning around and looking at him as if he would as soon fight as not. Finally, he came to a large pine log lying on the steep hillside. As it looked wormy he began to dig under the log. He scratched first on one side and then on another. It was not long before he had scratched away all the dirt under the log and it rolled down over him, bruising him badly. He got up enraged. He pounced on the senseless log and beat it and beat it and beat it. He tried to beat the tar out of it. Then he put his ear to the log to see if it was dead.

Moral: Have you not been a foolish young bear?

The Devil's Parodies

When the Lord made the stallion the devil made the jackass, and it lived because of the presence of the breath of life. When the Lord made the ram the devil made the billygoat, and it also lived because of the presence of the breath of life. In like manner, when the Lord grew corn, the devil grew tobacco. When the Lord retired from this work, provoked at these parodies, the devil concluded that he would just go ahead and finish making things to suit himself. So, he set to work and made the gopher, but he could not make it live, because the breath of life had vanished with the Lord. He cuddled and coaxed but the gopher was not quickened with life. Finally the devil sat down sick of his undertaking and considerably less conceited. The Lord, upon his return, found him in a brown study, with the gopher hidden under some trash at his back. "Pray, Satan," asked the Lord, "what blind creature is that I see behind you?" whereupon Satan looked around for the gopher and, beheld, it had disappeared in the ground!

So runs a Creek legend, which, if pursued, may, for all I know, take refuge in the statement that when the Lord made man, the devil made woman.

A Fable [*Indian Journal* 31 January 1902][1]

Once upon a time Co-wak-co-jee, the wildcat, found an empty whisky flask by the roadside. He picked it up, smelled of it, then put it to his mouth as if drinking, after which he reeled and gave a keen meow. When he put the flask to his mouth again he boasted. "I'm not a good wildcat." Pretty soon he had the wood denizens hiding out from him. Etho, the squirrel, whisked his tail and disappeared in his hole. Chola, the fox, slunk to his lair, and Chufee, the rabbit, jumped into the horizon. Yaha, the wolf, stepped aside to avoid having trouble with him. By this time, Co-wak-co-jee, the wildcat, pretended to be unduly jagged and the big road was getting too small for him to stagger in. So he took across the country, singing "Yo-wa-le-ya-he." At length he staggered over the edge of a high precipice in the mountains and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

Moral: Beware of wildcat whisky.

[1] Three of Posey's "fables" were each entitled "A Fable." For purposes of differentiation, their place and date of original publication appear beside their titles.

A Fable [*Indian Journal* 7 February 1902][1]

Once upon a time Chufee Thlocco, the swamp rabbit, was taken down with fever, and seeing that he was growing weaker, he called in Osahwah, the crow, to make medicine for him.

"You are very ill," said Osahwah, after a critical examination; "but I believe I can pull you through all right."

"You are the doctor," said Chufee Thlocco, "and I am the patient."

Whereupon Osahwah began to yank out certain herbs from the earth and to blow in jars of water through a hollow reed. In a few days he had his patient about pulled through, just as he had thought he would. But Chufee Thlocco got the notion in his head that Osahwah was only running up a bill on him, so he dismissed him and called in Iyo, the hawk, who devoured him.

Moral: Beware of calling in more than one doctor.

[1] Three of Posey's fables were each entitled "A Fable." For purposes of differentiation, their place and date of original publication appear beside their titles.

A Fable [*Indian Journal* 14 February 1902][1]

When the world was young all the animals looked upon the darkey as the wisest. Now, in those days, the monkey and the fice[2] were the bullies of their respective communities. No one knew which of the two was champion. When each had overcome all his local foes, he went about to boast and they encountered each other. "I have been looking for you," said the one to the other. So they fought for the championship collar. They fought a long time and, at last, stopped to blow. Then they fought again, and yet again.

After many and dire encounters they broke loose one from the other and it is not handed down that either claimed the collar; but the fice went unto the abode of the darkey and after the usual compliments the darkey asked the little canine about the fight.

"Oh," said the fice, "we had an awful fight."

"But," said the darkey, "I suppose you came off best as usual?"

"It was a most awful battle," said the fice.

"Well," said the darkey slyly, "I know you must have torn that monkey nearly to pieces."

"The battle was very fierce," the fice answered, "and the monkey is shy much hair."

"Did you whip him completely?," persisted the darkey.

"The combat was dreadful," continued the little dog, "and I don't think that monkey will ever like me again. But, say; can't we devise a way whereby we can get entirely rid of that old monkey? He is a bad citizen and a disturbing element in our social system. Now, you know a great deal about medicine; can't you think how to rid society of this pest?"

[1] Three of Posey's "fables" were each entitled "A Fable." For purposes of differentiation, their place and date of original publication appear beside their titles.

[2] A "fice" is a small dog.

"Sure; that's easy," said the darkey. "We will go to the scene of the combat and destroy some of the hair you tore from by burning, after which I will throw some medicine in the fire and he will die."

So the darkey and the fice proceeded at once to the field of action, and sure enough the ground was broken for yards around—and there was plenty of hair. The darkey built a fire and picked up a handful of hair and was about to consign same to the flames when the fice thus interrupted him; "Wait a minute; let me see that hair."
The darkey handed it to him and picked up another handful which he was likewise about to throw in the fire.

"Hold on a minute," said the fice, "let's not be in too great a hurry about this burning. Let me look at that hair."

The darkey collected another handful and walked toward the magical blaze. This time the fice heaved a heavy sigh and addressed his friend the magician as follows:

"Don't burn that hair. I have been thinking. Now, it would be hard on the monkey's family if he were to die and I would be sorry to bring them into trouble. We will burn no hair this time, but in the future he must beware how he boasts about that fight, for I tell you it was a most awful battle."

Moral: If historians confined themselves to facts, fewer complete victories would be recorded and less hair would be burned.

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VITA

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