THE AMERICAN INDIAN IN PAINTING.

By

H. Chadwick Hunter.

Tho a complete story of the many paintings extant, of American Indians, would require a volume of several thousand pages, it shall be our effort to tell here briefly of the early painters who as pioneers endured a life of adventurous toil among the Indians, for the purpose of recording their life and customs. The golden era for painting the Indian is behind us; to paint him now is a simple matter, comparatively. A well directed effort, to record on canvas the Indians of today, is now under way in the southwestern states, notice of which has been taken by Art and Archaeology, and other publications.

Dr. Edgar L. Hewett writes, in December, 1916, Art and Archaeology, "The Indian race has had few to maintain its sacred fires. The disposition has been to put them out rather than to preserve them." He makes it clear that the life of the Indian, on the evidence of his cultural remains, was marvelously unified and socialized, and that virtually every form of activity, esthetic, industrial, social, centered in the practice of his religion. "In
quest of food, sitting in council, taking part as musician or dancer or priest in the ceremony, developing the symbolic design on utensil or garment, building the sanctuary, erecting the monolith, dedicating the temple and embellishing it with statuary, stucco, or mosaic—he was putting his whole spiritual life into it."

There is record of two painters, who came with the very early adventurers and colonists to these shores: Le Moyne accompanied the French expedition led by Laudonniere to Florida in 1564, and made many pictures of the Indians. These were engraved by De Bry and published with the narrative in 1591. Another was John White, a member of the second English expedition sent to Virginia by Raleigh in 1585. White was an artist and his original drawings, made in America during the summer of 1585, are now in the British Museum. They were engraved by De Bry and served as illustrations to accompany Hariot's narrative, printed in 1591.

Had there been others, much more might have been preserved to us from that early time which Dr. Hewett defines so admirably.

A little later, however, there were artists who, recognizing a new and vigorous race, felt the necessity for its preservation, on canvas—and on his part the Indian
offered as varied subjects for his brush as the artist might desire.

The American Indian is a striking, picturesque, and distinctly individual being from whatever angle we view him, and for this reason excites our liveliest interest. Certainly a comparison of the world's races strengthens our belief in the superiority of the American aborigine as a subject for the painter's art. It is to be regretted, therefore, that among the earliest colonists there were not a number of experienced competent artists, capable of rendering on canvas a record of the habits and customs of the people of the new world. It was none too early to attempt to record them in their colorful dramatic, and tragic life in the less contaminated Indian environment of long ago. The encroachment of civilization has banished forever the deeper romance of earlier Indian days. The Indian of later times is less picturesque; he is less familiar with the ancient myths and customs of his forefathers; he is less attractive to the artist.

It was in the latter part of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries that impetus was given to an effort to paint the Indian; to graphically preserve the culture of what was, even then seen to be a declining and vanishing race, and he became an object of
serious interest to the artists of that time, chief among whom were C. W. Peale, James Otto Lewis, Charles Bird King, George Catlin, James M. Stanley, and Seth Eastman.


Including Peale's and Lewis' there were six notable collections of Indian paintings, namely the Peale, Lewis, King, Catlin, Stanley, and Eastman.

Peale painted portraits of Indians who visited Philadelphia as long ago as 1774. Later these portraits became scattered through sale or otherwise until the "last several were sold at the final dispersion of the Peale collection in 1854." James Otto Lewis painted sixteen Indian portraits, which formed the nucleus of the "National Indian Portrait Gallery". Mr. Hodge writes: "The gallery received additional works of A. Ford, S.M. Charles, G. Cooke, Shaw, and an artist who signed the initials R.T.,
and Charles Bird King."

According to Dr. Matthews, Lewis accompanied Col. H.L. McKenney and Governor Lewis Cass on tours of the west as early as 1819. In 1835 and 1836 Lewis issued nine portfolios containing seventy-two portraits and landscapes without descriptive text. Mr. H. R. Schoolcraft writes, March 4, 1836, "Mr. James Otto Lewis of Philadelphia furnishes me several numbers of his Indian Portfolio. Few artists have had the means of observation of the aboriginal man in the great panorama of the west where he carried his easel. He has painted the Indian lineaments on the spot and is entitled to patronage as a first and original effort."

Thus we may assume that Schoolcraft credits Lewis with being the first American artist to paint the Indian.

"What became of the original paintings by Lewis, of which there were at least eighty-five, has not been determined," according to Mr. Hodge, "but seventy-two of them were used in an "Aboriginal Portfolio," and King made copies of at least twenty-five of the originals for the Indian Gallery, --1826-7, and A. Ford made six others."

Mr. Hodge credits McKenney with being the "chief spirit in the formation and growth of the Gallery of Indian paintings." McKenney's motive is made plain in his own words, "Apart from the great object in preserving in some form, the
resemblances of an interesting people, whose original aspect is fast fading away, and will soon be gone; and to whose country we have succeeded, and who are perishing before our presence, and because of it; there is another, if of less interest, yet perhaps of more active influence, and can be seen to be proper by more people, it is presumed, than can comprehend the value to posterity, of being ready with the answer to the question, which it is fair to presume will be asked: What sort of being was the red man of America?

Charles Bird King was born in Newport, R. I., in 1785. He studied art in London under Allston, Leslie and Benjamin West. Returning to America in 1818 he resided in Washington D. C., until his death in 1862. He was a "gentleman of the old school; his simplicity of character was marked." Upon occasion he was most forgetful. Having invited a friend to view his gallery of paintings on 12th street between E and F streets, Washington, D. C., he forgot him; and himself leaving the gallery, locked the door, his guest a prisoner who made his escape through a back window.

The greater number of paintings in the Indian Gallery were made by King and tho they are said to have been accurate, and to have greatly interested Black Hawk and fellow warriors in 1833, the portraits rather lacked delicacy of finish. Upon King's death his own gallery
went to the Redwood Library of Newport, R. I.

A list of the King collection of Indian portraits in oil, 147 paintings, may be found in "An account of the Smithsonian Institution, its founder etc." by William J. Rhees, Washington, D. C., 1859.

King's entire Smithsonian collection was destroyed by fire after nearly all the portraits had been copied by Henry Inman for use as illustrations in McKenney and Hall's "History of the Indian Tribes of North America."

Our illustrations of Kai-pol-e-qua, (people of the yellow earth) a Sauk Indian, and No-way-ke-sug-ga, of the Otoe tribe, are from portraits by King.

George Catlin was born at Wilkes Barre, Pa., July 26, 1796, and was educated for the bar. He started to paint in 1840, at which time he was poor, and also wrote for the general public in order that he might live and pursue his art studies among the Indians. He admits his "narrations were a little highly colored." Catlin's travels, in search of material for his brush, took him throughout North and South America during a period of eight years, at the end of which time the collection being nearly completed it began a tour of Europe. He accompanied his collection
with live Indians and he and his proteges were received and entertained at the homes of English nobility, by Louis Philippe, and the King and Queen of Belgium. Dr. Matthews writes: "George Catlin was, to use his own expression, 'a lion of his day.' He enacted in Europe much the same role that Buffalo Bill (William F. Cody) has played in our own day, but in a more scholarly manner. He was the genial showman of the American Indian and the Wild West."

Little criticism may justly be made of Catlin's accuracy and spirit in drawing his subjects and if any is merited of him as a colorist it must be remembered his subjects were colorful and his fancy was attracted, probably by that element in his sitters. Catlin's Indians were usually in full "war paint and feathers:" because the Indians preferred to appear in their proper habiliments. Time however has quite modified the color of his pictures and not always to their enhancement. His sketches of the scenery along the Upper Missouri are well worthy a place in a treatise on geology, of which he knew little at the time he made the drawings. He fully appreciated the distinctive features of the scenes before him, which fact probably influenced him to study geology, and in later years he became a good geologist. His pictures have high historical value as fixing an irrevocable past, they show us land marks in the west that have long since disappeared.
Many of Catlin's pictures are devoted to Indian games and hunting scenes and do, therefore, possess high scientific value. The game of "Tchung-kee" which we show in our illustration was played throughout North America at the time of discovery. Catlin himself had the true spirit of the hunter and many of his paintings are subjects of the Buffalo hunt. He was an excellent rider and a good shot and delighted to take part in the scenes he painted, indeed he has painted himself in some of his pictures.

The greatest value of the Catlin Gallery lies in its portraits of Indians. His most favored Indian heroes were Four Bears, Rushing Eagle, Osceola, Keokuk and Black Hawk.

The collection was in grave danger in its first voyage across the Atlantic, in 1839, because of a storm. In France it so pleased King Louis Philippe, who had travelled as a fugitive in America, that he gave it a place in the Louvre and considered purchasing it. About this time the revolution of 1848 broke out and the citizen king fled to England. Catlin was fortunate enough to rescue his collection and follow the king across the channel.

The collection of six hundred paintings is now on view in the U. S. National Museum, it having been presented to the Smithsonian Institution May 15, 1879 by Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr., of Philadelphia, Pa.

Catlin's labors did not end with the formation of his
gallery; he continued his work during extensive travels in North and South America. The materials collected in these later wanderings are (1889) in the hands of his heirs. Mr. Catlin died in Jersey City, N. J., Dec. 23, 1872.

The introduction to the Catlin Catalogue of Paintings is as follows:

"I wish to inform the visitors to my Collection that, having some years since become fully convinced of the rapid decline and certain extinction of the numerous tribes of the North American Indians; and seeing also the vast importance and value which a full pictorial history of these interesting but dying people might be to future ages--I sat out alone, unaided and unadvised, resolved (if my life should be spared), by the aid of my brush and my pen, to rescue from oblivion so much of their primitive looks and customs as the industry and ardent enthusiasm of one lifetime could accomplish, and set them up in a Gallery unique and imperishable, for the use and benefit of future ages.

"I devoted eight years of my life exclusively to the accomplishment of my design, and that with more than expected success.

"I visited with great difficulty, and some hazard to life, forty-eight tribes (residing within the United States, British, and Mexican Territories), containing
about half a million of souls. I have seen them in their own villages, have carried my canvas and colours the whole way, and painted my portraits, etc., from the life, as they now stand and are seen in the Gallery.

"The collection contains (besides an immense number of costumes and other manufactures) near six hundred paintings, 350 of which are portraits of distinguished men and women of the different tribes, and 250 other paintings, descriptive of Indian Countries, their Villages, Games and Customs; containing in all above 3000 figures.

"As this immense collection has been gathered, and every painting has been made from nature, by my own hand—and that too when I have been paddling my canoe, or leading my pack-horse over and through trackless wilds, at the hazard of my life—the world will surely be kind and indulgent enough to receive and estimate them, as they have been intended, as true and fac-simile traces of individual life and historical facts, and forgive me for their present unfinished and unstudied condition as works of art.

"GEO. CATLIN."

Our illustration of Muk-a-tah-mish-o-kah-kaik, Black Hawk, Algonquian tribe, shows him in his war dress and paint, strings of wampum on his neck, and his medicine bag (the skin of a black hawk) on his arm. The portrait was painted at
the close of the war, while he was a prisoner in Jefferson Barracks. Washington Irving describes him at the age of seventy as "having a fine head, a Roman style of face and a prepossessing countenance."

Few Indians have obtained a celebrity so widely extended as Black Hawk. Tho not a chief he became the directing head of the war waged by the Sauk tribe against the United States. He was the lion of the day upon a trip made to Washington, D. C., with several companions.

Osceola, The Black Drink, Seminole, was a warrior of great distinction. The portrait was painted five days before his death, while he was a prisoner at Fort Moultrie. He was a remarkable man, and taking the lead in the Seminole war was followed by the chiefs, and looked upon as a master spirit of the war.

Keokuk--Watchful Fox. A chief of the Kiscoquah band of Sacs and Sauks and head chief of the combined Sacs and Foxes. Catlin was evidently very much impressed with Keokuk, finding him his ideal red man upon his last visit to the Foxes. His wonderful necklace was composed of bear claws fastened to a cape of otter skins. His headdress consisted of an Indian belt around the head, on top were eagle feathers painted, and on top of the scalp lock was the extreme end of a deer's tail painted with vermillion. Our full-length illustration of Keokuk, one of several Catlin painted, shows him in greater picturesqueness and more gorgeous array than our meager description implies.
James M. Stanley was born in Canandaigua, N. Y., in 1814. He moved to Detroit in 1835. Attracted by life among the Indians, he began a tour of the northwest in 1842, with the object of painting them; an enterprise that resulted in what proved an ill-fated collection of Indian paintings of which he himself said: "The collection comprises accurate portraits from life of forty-three different tribes of Indians, obtained at the cost, hazard, and inconvenience of a ten years' tour through the Southwestern prairies, New Mexico, California and Oregon. Of course, but a short description of the characters represented, or of the leading incidents of their lives, is given. But even these brief sketches, it is hoped, will not fail to interest those who look at their portraits, and excite some desire that the memory at least, of those tribes may not become extinct."

The important series of Indian portraits and scenes of Indian life, by James M. Stanley was deposited in the Smithsonian Institution by the artist in 1852. Like the Catlin Gallery, it was offered for sale to the Government but its purchase was never consummated. It consisted of fifty-two canvases, executed between 1842 and 1852. Subsequent additions were said to have been made to the collection, but only the original series was described in the catalogue published by the Institution. While chiefly of
ethnological value, the pictures were considered to have considerable artistic merit.

The portraits were taken from life and were said to have been accurate drawings of the Indians. The faithfulness of the likenesses have been attested by persons who have recognized among them portraits of those Indians with whom they were personally acquainted.

It was Stanley's ardent wish that his paintings be preserved, as a national asset, in some place in the National Capitol of his country, expressing his belief in the merit of his own work.

The Smithsonian fire in 1865 destroyed the entire collection except five paintings which are now in the National Museum. In the sixth volume of Schoolcraft's "Indian Tribes of the United States" may be found engravings in steel from Stanley's paintings.

Stanley resided in Washington, D. C., after his travels and continued to paint until his death, April 15, 1872.

Our illustration of a buffalo hunt is from one of the five original Stanley paintings now in the National Museum.

General Seth Eastman was born at Brunswick, Maine, Jan. 24, 1808. He graduated from West Point Military Academy in
1829. While on frontier duty in the west he saw much of Indian life and being an artist of considerable ability painted many Indian portraits which were engraved on steel and printed in Schoolcraft's History of the Indian Tribes of the United States" as well as in an "Aboriginal Portfolio" by his wife, Mary H. Eastman.

One of General Eastman's paintings now hangs in the room of the Committee on Indian Affairs in the United States House of Representatives and another "Ball Playing Among the Sioux Indians" formerly hung in the Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington, D. C.

Eastman was a student of History and in his writings was ably assisted by his wife. He was a member of the National Academy of Design and interested himself in art until his death which occurred August 31, 1875.

In "A Seer Attempting to Destroy an Indian Girl by a Pencil of Sunlight," by Eastman, the Indian, under the benign influence of the Medicine Man or necromantic manipulators who have revealed to him the will of Great Spirit and infused his mind with doctrines of sorcery and magic, believes he can produce death by letting a beam of sunlight fall upon his sleeping victim through an orifice he has made in the wigwam.

In "The Death Whoop" the warrior shouts the death cry.
Murder, hatred, and bloody triumph, united in one voice to sound victory. The prostrate dead Indian had a moment before been actuated by the same guilty passions. The victor is filled with joy; his enemy is dead at his feet. He has taken his scalp, his first perhaps, with unalloyed delight at the opportunity to kill.

Guarding the Cornfield shows a peculiar mode the Indian women adopted in guarding the cornfield from birds that would destroy after they had planted and cultivated it, after the custom of the Indian women doing such labor while the braves indulge in war and other pastimes.

Captain A. A. Gibson, of whom we find no record, was doubtless, a contemporary of Eastman, since he was in the army, and his paintings have been used as illustrations in Schoolcraft's "Indian Tribes."

His "Nocturnal Grave Light" deserves mention. Tho the episode comes within range of the "influence" that actuates the warrior in "The Death Whoop," the painting is of poetic character and charm rarely found in paintings of Indian subjects, and illustrates the belief in the mystic influence of fire and its use in the Indians' superstitious rites and customs.

We would fail signally if we omitted reference to the famed Pocahontas, the story of whom, familiar as it is,
never ceases to hold our rapt attention. That "All the world loves a lover" applies with sweet insistence to America's most famous Indian woman who stands a star in the firmament of romantic drama of Colonial days in Virginia. Her story, an eloquent writer has said, is "that exquisite episode in the history of the new world, which appealing equally to the affections and the imagination, has never lost the charm of its original loveliness and freshness, even though a thousand iterations have made it the most familiar of all our forest stories. It is one of those tales, which, combining several elements of the tender and the tragic—like that of the Grecian daughter—like that of the Roman Virginius—more certainly true than either of these legends, and not less touching and beautiful, the mind treasures up, naturally and without effort, as a chronicle equally dear to its virgin fancies and its sweet sensibilities." We shall not review her story here, full as it is, of bold and striking tableaux vivants, in each one of which she is revealed in full length life and completeness.

Many have doubted whether a genuine likeness of Pocahontas existed, but by dint of constant effort one has been found, painted between the years 1616 and 1617, during her visit to England, in company with her husband, Mr. Rolfe. The remains of the original are at this time, November 20, 1843, in possession of Doctor Thomas Robinson, in Petersburg,
Virginia. Mr. R. M. Sully, the artist made the copy from the original.

There is considerable documentary proof as to the accuracy of this portrait of Pocahontas and some of the names of famous Virginians have been recorded in its favor.

Charles Deas, the artist was born in Philadelphia in 1818 and having seen the Catlin Gallery prepared for a western journey for the purpose of painting Indians. He left New York in 1840, joined his brother, who was in the Army, at Fort Crawford in the Indian country. Deas made a tour among the Chippewas, Sacs and Foxes, Sioux, Winnebagoes and Pawnees. His tour is fully described in Tuckerman's "Artists Life." He remained with the Indians until 1842 when he established himself in St. Louis. Deas was a man of great genius and promise. He was a grandson of Ralph Izard, the patriot, and was a pupil of John Sanderson of Philadelphia. His work is now seen in books on Indians. His last years were sad ones, as he became deranged and died about 1859.

Peter Rindisbacher, a Swiss, is another artist whose paintings were used to illustrate McKenney and Hall's volumes. We have little record of Rindisbacher whom Donaldson mentions as "among a few other Indian painters." A collection of eighteen paintings of his are said to be at West Point, New York, where there is no history of them.
He resided on the frontier for several years prior to 1838 about the same time that Charles Bodmar, another Swiss artist, visited the Indians for the purpose of making illustrations for books.

Paul Kane was born at Little York, (now Toronto) in 1810. He painted in Canada until 1835 and afterward in the United States until 1841 when he went to Europe for study in France, Italy and other art centers. In 1845 he left Toronto for the wilds; for a tour to the Pacific Ocean and back again. Kane's pictures are seldom seen says Ten Kate. Besides those belonging to Mrs. Allen, he painted a few for the Hudson's Bay Company, and twelve under commission by the Legislature of Canada. Kane died in 1871.

In "The American Indian in Sculptural Art" we had occasion to refer to E. W. Deming. His paintings of Indian Subjects, like his sculptures, depict the myths of the Indians and are indicative of his familiarity with Indian life and customs, the romantic and poetic phases of which have strong appeal to Mr. Deming, who lived among the Indians for several years. His paintings are now on exhibition in the National Gallery. Deming has painted a number of mural decorations for several homes, including that of Frederick Remington, who died before the murals were installed, Mr. Deming states. He is at present engaged on murals for the Museum of Natural History, New York, and is now living at Washington, D. C.
Alfred L. Donaldson's tribute to the picture, by

E. W. Deming, entitled "The Good Luck Arrow."

A lonely brave of lithe and tapering length,
Looms from the evening folds of damask light.
A copper-colored cameo of strength,
Carved on a dusky panel of the night.

He stands at gaze on lone Kiwassa's shores,
Whose waters, at his feet faint plashments make,
While from the sky, veiled in fine film of gauze,
A slumberous sheen falls on the purple lake.

The hunter's eye is on the misty moon
That silvers slowly in a cloud-spun weft,
He turns not at the wailing of a loon
Nor heeds the track a ten-tined buck has left.

But soon he fits an arrow to his bow,
And bends it double with a grip of steel,
Then, aiming at the silver-tangled glow,
He sends aloft his missile of appeal.

So speeds the "Good Luck Arrow" through the air,
An offering to the "Goddess of the Chase"
The feathered utterance of a fervid prayer
The childish ritual of a childish race.

And do we smile in pity at this deed
Devoutly done to win Diana's boon?
First let us ask if arrows from our creed
Are never aimed at some far-distant moon?

It was the custom among some tribes to shoot the "good luck arrow" at the new moon to propitiate the spirit of the chase.


E. A. Burbank, after studying in European Schools has devoted himself to painting Indians since 1897. Mr. E. E. Ayer, of Chicago, has many oil paintings by Burbank and Mr. J. G. Butler, Jr., of Youngstown, Ohio, has a large collection of Burbank's drawings as well as those of Sharp, Remington and Deming.

Henry F. Farny, W. J. Metcalf and Frederick Remington are justly celebrated for their Indian paintings. Of these Remington is the best known, by reason of the number of paintings of scenes of Indian life which he made during his years of life on the plains. He was an author of note as well, but it is in his sculpture that he excels. His work, however, is so well known that we need not discuss it here. His early death, in 1909 at the age of 48 years ended a career that promised greater things than ever he had done.
To George de Forest Brush the poetry and pathos, the mystery and mysticism of the Indian have great appeal. Ordinary phases of Indian character have no charm for Brush; his themes are not commonplace, he loves the drama of the Indian race.

A. Zeno Shindler, who was attached to the Smithsonian Institution for twenty-five years doing excellent service as a painter of ethnological portraits of Indians died Aug. 15, 1899. Twelve of his paintings are now in the National Museum, one of which is a portrait of "Spotted Tail," a Sioux. The face is well modelled and typical. The figure, draped in a red blanket in the conventional manner, is well posed.

Of the several Indian pictures in the U. S. Capitol perhaps the least said the better. Concerning the "Baptism of Pocahontas," George C. Hazleton says, "Tho the picture is most sympathetic to popular fancy the whole as a work of art is unworthy of serious criticism."

The most beautiful painting of an Indian subject of early times that I have ever seen is by Leon de Pomarede and is owned by D. I. Bushnell, Jr., who purchased it in New Orleans several years ago. It was painted about 1850 and depicts a scaffold burial ceremony near the base of a weathered sandstone cliff that swings rearward and
is seen in the extreme background. The group of figures is in the act of lifting the body of the dead Indian wholly enshrouded in skins, according to custom, to the top of the scaffold. The colors are soft and harmonious in the twilight of a far spent day. The gentle low tone greens recall to my mind similar tones in some of Daubigny's paintings. Size 48" in length, 32" in height.

There are, of course, many others who painted Indian subjects, or pictures that contained Indians. Among these were Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, De Cost Smith, F. D. Millet, Edwin A. Abbey, R. A. Blakelock, E. H. Blashfield, C. Y. Turner, Oakley, Dodge, Edward Trumbull, E. T. Eakins. These in that period between the older and modern painters of Indian subjects.

H. Chadwick Hunter.