

From the original by  
Capt. G. W. Grayson.  
Secured for the O. H. S.  
from Mrs. Johnson Tiger  
of Wewoka, Oklahoma,  
by Mrs. Czarina C. Conlan  
December 2, 1931

#### MOTY TIGER

The subject of this sketch is the present (May 1908) principal chief of the Muscogee or Creek Nation. The name Moty Tiger by which he is known is only an Anglicism of his Indian name -- Hoomah Tika, (the first to cross over) given him in his infancy. In view of the well known custom and practice of the early Creeks of christening their offspring in honor of praiseworthy deeds enacted either in war or the hunt by their ancestors, we are entirely justified in this case in confidently assuming that the name commemorates the bravery of an ancestor who at some time in the past in the face of great danger had the courage to be the first of a party of warriors to cross a stream that assured advantage over the enemy. Owing to the illiteracy and general lack of education in the people of the early years of the Creek Nation, the date of his birth was not recorded, and the exact date of that important event is not known, but

from trustworthy and reliable data obtained by himself, he has computed his present age to be sixty seven years. He is a member of the old and aristocratic town of the Creek Nation known as Took-e-pah-chee, and is the third son of Tulsa Fixico, a man long prominent in the affairs of the nation, in earlier years who was himself a member of the Thlop-thloc-co Town. Tiger claims to be one quarter white and the rest pure Indian blood, and while reading and writing fluently in the Indian language, he is deficient in the English, and insists on transacting all business of importance through an interpreter of his own choosing. He enlisted in the Confederate service during the civil War as a private, and served to its close, mustering out as a Sergeant to which post he had been promoted. He married his first wife in about the month of Dec. 1865, and shortly thereafter, hostilities being now at an end, he returned to the Creek country from the Chickasaw nation in which he, together with a large number of the Creeks had taken refuge from the advancing lines of the Federal forces. As did others of the Creeks who by the ravages of war had lost everything save their courage and industry, he addressed himself at once to the laudable work of building for himself a home with almost every element of discouragement against him.

With his own hands and indifferent implements, he chopped and felled the trees of the forest, rived them into clapboards, hewed and fashioned others into rude building materials, while others still he split into fence rails with which he fenced his farm, and thus in course of time he so successfully improved his material surroundings as to insure the permanent comfort of himself and family. The Creeks having returned from the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations where they had refuged, to their own country and occupied such of their old deserted homes and farms as were found intact, after much bitter contention and delay, succeeded finally in establishing a constitutional government patterned measurably after the governments of the surrounding states. Some time during the early life of this establishment, Moty Tiger was elected Captain of the Light Horse company of the judicial district of Deep Fork, which Company together with the Captain, numbered five men, exercising much the same functions as the county sheriffs of the surrounding states. After serving two years in this office, his town elected him to a membership in the House of Kings, the upper house of the national council where he served four years. After this he was invested with the judgeship of the judicial district of Deep Fork, where he served two years. He was next

elected to a membership in the House of Warriors, the lower branch of the national council where he served out the regular term of four years, and was next honored with the superintendency of the Creek Orphan Home near Okmulkee which he successfully managed for the period of three years. He next served as Prosecuting attorney for the Nation and was in this service when the law commonly known as the Curtis Act providing for the abolishment of the judiciary of the Indian governments was passed by Congress terminating his service under the regime of the constitutional government of the Creek Nation. Congress however, continued the lives of the national councils as also the executive branch of the governments of the nations with very restricted powers; only so much as was necessary to give official sanction and authority to such transactions as in the future would be necessary in closing and terminating the business growing out of the treaty relations subsisting between the nations and the United States. Under this modus vivendi, Tiger was, in a general election elected to the Second or vice chieftaincy of the nation.

Serving out this term of four years, he was, at the ensuing election again elected to the same office, receiving a larger vote than any Candidate standing for any office in the said election, and thus for the second

time he filled the office of 2d chief of his nation, and was serving in that capacity when the principal chief Pleasant Porter suddenly died in 1907, which event under operation of Creek law, and supplemented as it was by the formal official appointment by President Roosevelt, created him the present principal chief of the Creek nation. When the United States commission to the Five Civilized Tribes visited the tribes and was endeavoring to induce the Indians to change their system of land tenure and adopt the plan proposed by the government of taking and holding their lands in individual allotments, the proposition was bitterly opposed by the Creeks and in consequence there was dissatisfaction and deep concern among the people throughout the nation.

On a certain occasion a large mass meeting of the Creeks was assembled on the open grounds fronting the capitol building at Okmulkee where the question of acquiescing in the proposed policy of the government was fully discussed. None of the speakers spoke favorably of the government's plan, when in a loud voice the motion was made by some one, that all in the audience who were in favor of taking their land in severalty as proposed by the government, should step over on a certain side of a walk that extended north and south through the audience.

After a few moments of almost breathless silence, Moty Tiger, true to his convictions, solitary and alone, deliberately crossed over the walk, the only one in that vast gathering of the Creeks who was favorable to the land policy outlined for the Indians by the government. When such an act at such a time must be regarded by well-nigh all of his countrymen and friends as treason; and when it is remembered that no one present understood the situation better than did he, it will clearly appear that moral courage of a high order was required for such a venture. But Tiger saw the inevitable, and believed it to be his duty to his people to thus publicly indicate to them what might be construed as his interpretation of the hand writing on the wall, and acted accordingly. -- In the autumn of 1907, he was called to Washington D. C. by the Secretary of the Interior and reached that city on the 21st of November and has diligently endeavored with the aid of the delegation accompanying him, to aid in furnishing the authorities and committees of Congress with such trustworthy information and suggestions relating to Creek affairs as ought to enable them to so shape legislation as to effectually protect the landed and other interest of his people.

Along with his varied duties as conservator of

the political interests of the Creek people, chief Tiger finds some time to devote to the duties of a spiritual adviser, and in his character of a Methodist minister he is often found exhorting them in the ways of righteousness.