

From a Typewritten copy
in the Library File
Oklahoma Historical Society
F. S. Barde, Guthrie, Oklahoma

LETTER OF ALEX POSEY ABOUT CHALOGEE

Eufaula, Oklahoma,

July 23.

Alexander Posey, the Creek poet, delighted in the traditions and folk lore of the Creek people, from whom are said to have come the animal stories that made Joel Chandler Harris famous as a writer. The Creek prophet or "medicine" man, Chaloguee, appealed keenly to Posey's fancy, and he wrote of Chaloguee:

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 ivy 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 until scarcely a trace of them remains. 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. He passed and repassed so much that Tom and I knew almost to a 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. Eighty or ninety years were not a burden to him. He jumped backward further than Tom could jump forward, hop, step and a leap, made a wide detour and plodded on in the same old 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 believe Chalogee believed he stepped on a live snake. Tom and I had the idea 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 that we had an

erroneous idea.

In personal appearance, Chaloguee 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 lightning. 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, when the crops were burning up, my father offered Chaloguee five salt barrels of corn for some rain. Chaloguee accepted the offer, promised 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 a mighty cauldron. Chalogee went ashore and awaited results. Presently, he heard a low rumble 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 lightning 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 walked back in dejection.

Night came and morning came; still it rained as it had never rained before. A horrible thought flashed through Chalogee's mind. The world would be inundated and mankind destroyed!

He rushed out and ran down the creek like a madman. All day he searched in the drifts for his thunder bolts or bullets. The stream rose higher and higher and the rain did not cease. At last, however, when he had about given up the search, he found them lodged in a cottonwood drift near the mouth of Limbo Creek; whereupon the clouds scattered, and the waters subsided, and the second deluge was nipped in the bud.

The Alabama Prophet rivalled in greatness his contemporary, Chalogee. 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 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 cover of darkness to the shadowy shores of the mystic River Strange, and yanked the horns off the terrible Tying Snake? Did not his medicine bag hold, in profound secrecy, the dust of ages, the tooth and hoof of things without name or record? He was no

amateur like his less famous contemporary Chaloguee, 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 westmost limits of Tulledega. Here he pitched his tent, built his hut, cleared his sofky patch and entered upon his long career as a prophet. His success was remarkable. He lived in utter seclusion, in close and solemn communion with nature, and had nothing to do with men, except at long range. 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. 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.

The Alabama Prophet charged no more than his patient was willing and able to pay. It made no difference whether or not he was paid in cash. But he always insisted upon some kind of settlement -- he would take a shoat, a colt, a yearling, a due bill or anything, except a stand off. For a local rain, he charged about ten dollars; for a general rain -- a ground soaker, a gully washer -- he charged the value of a cow and a calf, invariably 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 Pleasant Porter's army -- he freely donated his prophecy to the Creek people. But it was not until he had suffered persecution that he gave the best he had in his shop.

A certain very self-important young man of the name of Lumky Billy was made prosecuting attor-

ney of the district in which the Alabama Prophet resided. Lumky Billy was just out of one of the mission schools, where he developed a most sincere dislike of heathen and false prophets. He could read a little and write his name like a hen scratching. This was the same Lumky Billy of whom the following story is so often related: "What is the latest today, Billy?" "Oh, nothin', nothin'," Billy replied, "'cept the white mens tryin' to cut up the worl'".

Now that the way was open, Lumky Billy desired to do something great and lasting. He looked about for opportunities. The Alabama Prophet seemed to offer a fine field of operation. Why had he not thought of this sooner? He trumped up charges against the Prophet and caused a warrant to be issued for his arrest. The news of the arrest of the Prophet by the Lighthorse spread over all the country, and on the day appointed for the trial, the people flocked to the court house from far and near in great numbers.

The jury impanelled, the indictment read, the witnesses heard, Lumky Billy began his prosecution. The Prophet sat as calm as Socrates. He

had employed no attorney, intending to do his own pleading, and placing his hope of acquittal in the injustice of the charges. But when Lumky Billy shouted at the top of his voice, "Gentlemen, the prisoner before you is an imposter, and I know he is guilty!" the Alabama Prophet sprang to his feet, surveyed the court room, and then lifted up his face and said: "This wrong shall not go unavenged! I'll call down the lightning to my aid!"

Just then, as if to emphasize his awful threat, there came a blinding flash from the clouded heaven above the court house, followed by a clap of thunder that seemed to reverberate to the ends of the earth.

There was turmoil, consternation and confusion. 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; others never jumped on their horses at all. The throne of justice lay on the floor, irreparably damaged, and wholly overcome, if Lumky Billy could be called the throne of justice. In a moment the Alabama Prophet was the sole occupant of the room, 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.