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He surrendered at Fort Sill

Quanah Parker 1849-1911

By Marjorie Snowden North

They called him half-breed
and the connotations were good or bad,
depending on your side of the fence,
but true at any rate;
Cynthia was his mother's name, Nacona his father's.
Both fearless and feared, respected and sometimes —
but not always — loved,
he did what he had to do
in defense of his territory, his people.

Government made peace treaties
but Quanah knew no peace
for his way of life was being eroded
like prairie winds beating at sandhills;
ideals were being scattered like grains of sand,
irretrievable,
buffalo disappearing, land swallowed up
by fences and railroads and settlements
and by pale-faced men with tight cloth trousers
and wide-brimmed Stetsons and ropes and firearms.

The stage was set and young Quanah stepped out
with his band of Kwahadis to meet the challenge,
raided wagon trains, ranches, frontier towns,
plundered, killed, shook defiant fists in reality's face
until the Red River War, 1874, 1875.

The Army's orders: keep the red ones moving,
no time for rest, no time to hunt food,
no time for horses to graze, no time for peace.
Brutal weather, cold rains, snowstorms white and blinding,
shivering, bone-weary humans-turned-animal,
the chase grueling for red man and white man alike,
survival imperative for one,
victory for the other.

"The Wrinkled-Hand Chase" red men would call
this campaign later, and it ended one day
at Ft. Sill, June 2, 1875,
Surrender.

But Quanah was not one to sit,
and in the final analysis, not one to hold grudges.
Presidential appointments came
and the white man's fiercest adversary became
a reconciler, peacemaker between two great races
whose blood surged, intermingled
in his own veins.