

# CHEMAWA AMERICAN

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## SCOTT'S HALF-DONE BOOK WILL BE FINISHED

When Maj. Gen. Hugh L. Scott, veteran Indian fighter and peacemaker, died in Washington a few weeks ago he left half-finished a work to which he had devoted the later years of his life and which would have been of inestimable value to American ethnology—a compilation of a dictionary of the universal sign language of the American Indian.

To complete the work the Smithsonian Institution has brought to Washington General Scott's informant and closest Indian friend—Richard Sanderville, 70-year-old Blackfoot and probably the greatest living authority on what ethnologists regard as one of the most remarkable systems of communication known to man.

Perhaps the nearest familiar parallel to the Indian sign language can be found in the sign language of the deaf—but the two are very different in principle. The Indian system was not phonetic or grammatical. It was a highly complex system of action symbols composed of hand and finger movements.

## SCORES OF DIALECTS

The North American Indians had literally scores of word languages, some of them used over limited areas. Some were closely related, some vaguely related, and some apparently isolated with no known relations whatever. An Indian seldom knew any spoken language other than his own. But the sign language was an intertribal, continental system of communication. It extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Practically all Indians learnt it in childhood and became quite proficient. Intertribal conferences were conducted in it. This sign language is considered by ethnologists as one of the most remarkable systems of communication ever employed by mankind.

It reached its highest development among the Indians on the Great Plains area. With these Indians General Scott formed his closest contacts, first as foe and later as closest friend and defender. He started recording the symbols. He was himself a proficient converser in the silent language.

## TWO THOUSAND SYMBOLS AT LEAST

When General Scott died he left more than 2,000 cards, each of which was intended to contain a word and its sign symbol. The vocabulary of the sign language was at least that large and probably much larger.

But when the cards were turned over to the Bureau of America Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution it was found that many of the cards contained only the English word without its manual symbol.

Use of the language has declined among the Indians themselves almost to the vanishing point. Few of the younger generation of Plains Indians know much about it.

Mr. Sanderville is a boyhood contemporary of the Indian heroes of the Plains warfare. He constitutes a remarkable bridge between two ages and two cultures. On the one side he is steeped in the old lore and crafts of the Plains tribes, as he absorbed them in his boyhood and young manhood. On the other side he is a scholarly gentleman of the twentieth century, able to bring a critical appreciation to bear upon the past of his people.—Reprinted *The Leader*.

## CHAPEL

On Oct. 28 Dr. J. Vinton Scott, of Salem, who was for many years a missionary in China showed moving pictures in the Chemawa auditorium of many interesting sites in the Orient. He took his audience on an imaginary trip through China, Japan, the Hawaiian Islands, to Seattle and back to Salem. Dr. Scott gave an interesting interpretation of the pictures during their showing.

Instead of having the regular chapel last Sunday an organization known as "The Deep River Plantation Singers" rendered a very entertaining program. Their varied program consisted of dramatizations, humorous numbers, and the offerings included many melodies and spirituals characteristic of the colored race. The program was well received by all those present.

## ART EXHIBIT GIVEN BY S. H. S.

An art exhibit featuring 150 reproductions the worlds famous paintings and a group of living pictures was featured by the art department of Salem high school last week. Three of the famous paintings which was modeled by living persons were: "Madame LeVrun and her daughter," "Taos Indian roasting Corn," and "Whistling Boy." This program of living pictures is formed by having a large frame which represents the the frame of the picture. Behind this is a back ground of the picture. Francis Thomas, a former student, now attending Salem high school portrayed the Indian picture in the exhibit.