



Tahan, Out of Savagery Into Civilization: An Autobiography

Joseph K. Griffis

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AN amazing story that reads like romance, and yet is true. Arthur C. Parker, State Archaeologist of New York, writes the introduction and vouches for the trustworthiness of the narrative. Mr. Parker followed Tahan's trail through the West and had from the lips of the Indians with whom Tahan lived and from captives with whom Tahan bunked in tepee and barracks, confirmation of the story. Tahan is the Indian name of the Rev. Joseph K. Griffis, a Presbyterian clergyman, former pastor of the South Church of Buffalo. His father was a hunter, trapper and scout, famous many years ago on the frontier under the soubriquet of California Joe, companion of such men as Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill. Tahan's mother was an Indian woman of the Osage tribe, and was killed by a Kiowa war party. The boy was brought up among the Kiowa Indians, and the story of his boyhood is vastly interesting. He took part in Indian sports, was initiated into Indian mysteries, and in time himself became an Indian warrior. He served as scout and interpreter for United States troops, deserted, was captured, sentenced to death, and escaped. Years after this episode, a Christian and a minister, Mr. Griffis was able to obtain an official pardon for his military offense. In his development out of savagery, Mr. Griffis first found friends in the Salvation Army in Canada. Arrested with other Salvationists, he was sent to prison, where he learned to read and write. He became an officer in the Salvation Army in Toronto. His phenomenally alert mind and habits of industry in self-education presently qualified him for the ministry. After serving as assistant pastor and engaging in rescue mission work, he was admitted to the Presbyterian ministry in which he has had commendable success. His style is vivid and colorful. His observations on racial differences and life in general are shrewd and thought-provoking.

Mr. Parker states: "It is difficult to believe that the cultured gentleman whom one knows as Joseph K. Griffis, the friend of the scientist and literary critic, was once a be-feathered warrior who was the most reckless bareback rider that ever rode a bronco or trotted off with a herd of cattle that didn't belong to him; who was the most prized captive, the most honoured too, among the Kiowas, Comanches and Apaches, for his ability to plan successful raids."

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