THE PASSING OF A GREAT GEOLOGIST— ROBERT T. HILL

CHAS. N. GOULD, Norman

On Sunday, October 26, 1941, on the summit of Round Mountain 7 miles west of Comanche, Texas, were strewn the ashes of one of the great men of America. This was in fulfillment of his expressed desire. The ceremony had not been publicized. Only his two daughters and a few close friends were notified. These gathered to pay a last tribute to a great man.

It was on Round Mountain in the 1870's that young Bob Hill, an orphan boy born in Nashville, Tennessee, then working in a print shop in Comanche, first found fossil shells. From the white limestones there exposed as a starting point, he expanded and worked out the Comanche series, now recognized wherever geology is taught.

Dr. Hill came more nearly being a geological genius than any other man I have ever known. Most of us have to work at our geology. He seemed to know it instinctively. He could travel by train or on horseback across a country, make a section of the rocks here, collect a few fossils there, and sketch an outcrop elsewhere, come back to his office and write a report better and more accurately than most of us could do after a season in the field.

He was almost the last of that galaxy of brilliant men of science who during the last two decades of the nineteenth century laid broad and deep the foundations of our science in North America. Included in this group were Powell, Gilbert, Dutton, Walcott, Hayes, Willis, Branner, Cross, Van Hise, Emmons, Chamberlain, Kemp, Shaler, Dana, Russell, Dawson, Calvin, Orton, Rice, and Coleman.

He was extremely versatile and achieved eminence not only in geology but also in geography, paleontology, physiography, hydrology, history, and archaeology. Apparently all the earth sciences were his province. He possessed the inquiring mind, always seeking, seeking after new truth.

The bibliography of his writings includes 330 titles. His monumental work was the classic *Geography and Geology of the Black and Grand Prairies of Texas*. Not less outstanding, but not so well known, were his studies on the geology of Cuba and the Antilles. Two great pieces of work are still unpublished, viz: *The Geology of Trans-Pecos Texas* and *The Geology of the Los Angeles Basin*. His outstanding achievement was to give form to the Comanche series now taught throughout the world.

Dr. Hill's work in Oklahoma was accomplished in the late eighteen eighties and early nineties. It included a study of the outcrops of the Comanche south of the Ouachita and Arbuckle Mountains. The report entitled *Geology of Parts of Texas, Indian Territory and Arkansas Adjacent to Red River* was published in 1894. One of my most prized possessions is the manuscript map drawn with pen and ink, the handwork of Dr. Hill, which was used to illustrate this report. It now hangs on the wall of my study.

He was the nomenclator of the following formations exposed on the

surface in Oklahoma: Tishomingo granite, Trinity sand, Goodland limestone, Kiamichi formation, Woodbine sand, Eagle Ford shale, and Bingen formation. The type localities of Tishomingo, Goodland, and Kiamichi are in this state.

Robert T. Hill was my friend for 47 years. I first met him in 1894 when I was a mere cub in geology, blundering about over the rocks of western Kansas, picking up oyster shells and plesiosaur bones, trying to learn how this old earth had been stuck together and why it had been all mussed up. He employed me to act for 10 days as guide on a trip to Belvidere, near the head of the Medicine River, where he wished to inspect some outcrops of the Comanche series which had been reported by F. W. Cragin. The friendship there formed was terminated only by his death July 28, 1941. The inspiration secured on this trip did much to set my feet in the way of geology, from which they have never since departed.

During my scientific career it has been my good fortune to know intimately many hundreds of scientific men. Of this number a few, perhaps a score in all, may be considered outstanding. But as I look back across the years, I can count on the fingers of one hand the men who, judged by critical standards, may be considered truly great men. Two of these men were school men, educators and administrators: David R. Boyd, the far-sighted first president of the University of Oklahoma, and W. B. Bizzell, the wise and scholarly administrator who developed this school into a great university. Three of them were scientists: Lester F. Ward, America's first sociologist and phytopaleontologist, with whom I spent two summers in the field; Samuel W. Williston, the vertebrate paleontologist and teacher of teachers; and Robert T. Hill, the great reconnaissance geologist.

There probably will be no monument of bronze or granite erected to Dr. Hill. He needs none. Little men may need monuments. Great men do not. He has monuments galore in his published works and in his contribution to knowledge.

The name of Robert T. Hill has been graven so deeply on the geology and related sciences of Texas, Oklahoma and the rest of the Southwest that a thousand years will not eradicate it. Geologists whose grandfathers will not be born for a half a millennium will still follow the broad outlines laid down by this great man.