



*Nature's false  
Nobleman*

gard the North American wilderness as his natural home and he read every book he could find about the Indian way of life. He started living like an Indian, making the most of the wooded areas around Hastings where he hunted and fished, prepared his food over an open fire, and slept under the stars as often as he could.

Such things understandably upset his aunts. They loved the boy but could not help but think that this obsession with Indians was at least unhealthy and could well be downright wicked.

Years later, when Belaney had become a famous writer, he tried to make amends by dedicating one of his books: "To an aunt to whom I must give credit for the education that enables me to interpret into appropriate words the spirit of the forest and the feelings of its inhabitants."

### **Wore buckskins**

Belaney was in his 18th year when he arrived in Canada, stepping on shore at Halifax on April 6, 1906. Within four months he was in Northern Ontario where he worked as a trapper and a wilderness guide. He let his hair grow long, wore buckskins and blended perfectly with the other trappers in the region. At the outbreak of war in 1914 he joined the Canadian army and saw service in France, where he was seriously wounded and gassed.

On his return to Canada, he went through the ancient ritual of becoming a blood brother of the Ojibways and was given the name Grey Owl which he made internationally famous.

At this time, too, he was becoming uneasy about trapping. The war had left him with a revulsion to killing but he did not know how he could survive without trapping. He eventually found a way with the help of a young Mohawk woman whom he met in the summer of 1925 while she was working as a waitress at a lodge on Lake Temagami where he was a guide. Anahareo was 19 and he was 36, but the mutual

Grey Owl wasn't unmasked as Englishman Arthur Belaney until after his death in 1938.

Macmillan of Canada has reissued Wilderness Man, the biography of Grey Owl which was first published in 1973. It was written by Lovat Dickson, Grey Owl's British publisher and his good friend, who was grieved to observe the calumny that was heaped upon Grey Owl when the public learned that he was not Indian.

Dickson, who died in 1987, regarded the fuss about Grey Owl's race as so much sensational trivia. As he said often: "Whether he was Indian or not is not important. The fact is that he tried to get recognition for the Indians, not as characters in western novels but as people who have special attributes which should be treasured throughout Canada. As such, Grey Owl was a walking symbol of the Canadian Indian."

Grey Owl was also the champion of the beaver and other animals and was internationally famous as a conservationist. During the last decade of his life he wrote voluminously for nature magazines on both sides of the Atlantic, and his half-dozen

books became best sellers. Two of these, *The Men of the Last Frontier*, first published in 1931, and *Tales of an Empty Cabin* (1936) have been reissued in paperback by Macmillan at \$5.95 each.

### **Loved Indians**

Grey Owl was born Archibald Belaney on Sept. 18, 1888, in his grandmother's house in Hastings, a resort town on the English Channel coast. His father, George Belaney, had found that running the family business was tiresome and went to the United States to find some easy money. He returned four years later with a young, pregnant wife and disappeared again after the birth of his son whom he left in the charge of two maiden aunts.

His aunts wanted Archie to grow up as a proper middle class gentleman, but he had other interests. He was fascinated by North America and the American Indians whom he wished to emulate not as "noble redskins" but as people who had sensibly come to terms with their environment.

At an early age he came to re-