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TO DELIVER THE WEAK.

JOHN CLARK RIDPATH'S STUDY OF THE "MESSIANIC INSANITY."

A Delusion Prevalent Among Oppressed Peoples and Races—Resemblance of the Soudanese Agitation to the Ferment at the Sioux Reservations.

[Copyright by American Press Association.] How sad are the delusions of the human race! Among these none is sadder, none more fatal, than that of ethnic insanity which expects a Messianic deliverer. It is a kind of tribal or race disease which afflicts the mind, just as a physical malady



EL MAHDI. attacks the body and destroys life. The wild craze of the Indians of the western plains and mountains furnishes a striking example of the character and effects of this fearful disease.

The law of human history is that when any tribes or races of men are hard driven by a certain kind of distress excited and highly morbid expectation of a Messiah appears among them. When it has once appeared it runs its course like a contagion. The delusion seizes all classes, and all are insane together. The first thing to be noted about such a fact is that it requires certain peculiar forms of distress to produce it.

It cannot be doubted that the principal antecedent of the Messianic insanity is the oppression of one race by another. This cause is always requisite to bring on the ethnic paroxysm. Without this condition the belief in a phenomenal deliverance by a savior never arises. No other kind of distress will produce it. There may be earthquake and pestilence, ravages by fire and deluge, but these things are not sufficient of themselves to engender the delusion. The Messiah is always expected in the character of a race deliverer. It is the heavy hand of one race pressing upon the breast of another, with the consequent sense of suffocation and despair, that produces the delirious dream of a miraculous salvation.

But while the oppression of one race by another is the prime cause of the delusion, hunger and famine, either present or expected, are the occasion. Famine alone is not sufficient to bring on the fever. Men may die of starvation; whole tribes and kindreds may suffer or even perish from hunger and thirst, and yet give no sign of the Messianic delusion. It is only when the sense of race degradation is present that famine cries out for the Christ.

The second thing to be observed is that the Messiah is always one of the suffering race. He is not a deliverer from abroad, but one of the oppressed. Moses and the Christ are ever of the down-trodden tribe. No other than the pure seed of slaves is worthy to lift them up; no alien can be the swift coming avenger, the warring evangel of hope and restoration to the tribes about to perish.

There is in all this a kind of logic—the logic of insanity. The broken syllogisms run thus through the fevered brain. We are oppressed by the strong and the wicked. They are invaders and aliens, for the land was ours aforesaid, and our fathers'. It is ours yet, and will be ever. We have tried to free ourselves by battle—to save ourselves by war—but the oppressor was strong and slow our people. Therefore is he unjust. But there must be a deliverance, and hence a deliverer. Lo, he comes quickly, and his vengeance and his reward are with him. The good Christ will be one of us. He will be on our side. He will love us and hate our enemies. He will fight our battles and the proud shall lie low before him. Behold we starve. The children of our people are dying for food, but the deliverer will bring us plenty. He will take from the haughty who have despoiled us their storehouses full of wheat, their vineyards and their cattle. Let us watch for his coming, for he will appear to-morrow.

In this form and with this feverish dreaming, the delusive hope of a Messiah has returned in many ages and among many peoples. It is one of those miscegenated phenomena which have led men to believe and say in the language of the aphorism that history repeats itself. The saying is not true; but it is true in part. That is, it seems to be true—just as the retrograde movement among the planets



A GHOST DANCE LEADER seems to be retrogression. It is not true that human events ever come around again to where they started. That were indeed impossible. It is not true that our race "runs in a circle," returning ever into its old track. It is not true that the general aspect of history in any age is the aspect that existed in any former age. It is not true, in a word, that a given form of man life on the earth will ever recur again. But it is true that when certain special conditions are present in a given age and among a given people those conditions will be attended with consequences which may always be expected with the certainty of the calculus when the same conditions arise in other centuries and among other races. This it is that gives to history the principle of science. The expectancy of a Messiah has been

one of these recurring phenomena, and the delusion has cost mankind a considerable fraction of its sorrow. In the last decade we have had two notable instances of this strange race delirium. One of these has been witnessed on the scene of the oldest civilization of mankind, and the other on our own western plains—the one in Egypt and the other in America. The reader may well be astonished to note the analogy of the Egyptian and the Indian Messiah.

It was about the year 1880 that the name of the Mahdi—that is, the Arabic Christ of upper Egypt—began to be seen in the newspapers of the western nations. But who was the Mahdi? The historical notes of the east abound with references to his name. At the bottom lies a Mohammedan superstition which runs back almost to the days of the Prophet. The third caliph of the house of Abbas was called El Mahdi—that is, the Messiah. Afterward the term was adopted by the Shiite sect as the name of their expected deliverer. In the year 879 the twelfth of the Imams, named Abul Kassin, mysteriously disappeared, but the Shiites never accepted his death as a fact. Their belief in his reappearance as the leader and avenger of his people is to the present day somewhat similar to that of the German peasants who hold to the tradition that Frederic Barbarossa still sits in the cave of Salzburg, and will come forth when Fatherland is endangered. From this superstition germ the delusion spread, and throughout the Mohammedan empire the ignorant and infatuated are ever ready to say, "Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!"

Sometimes several eastern mahdis have appeared at once. In 1888 there were at least three pretensions of this character. The Mahdi El Senui appeared in Tripoli, another led the ignorant in Adin, and the third, namely, the Sheik Mohammed of Dongola appeared in the Egyptian Soudan as the true El Mahdi. He it was who, when Arabi Pasha was leading what promised to be a successful national revolution in lower Egypt, headed the wild natives of the Soudan in a war for deliverance from foreign domination. The fanatical Soudanese gathered by thousands to his Messianic banner, and it was by the swords of his followers that "Chinese" Gordon was hacked to death in the streets of Khartoum.

To the student of history it must seem strange, indeed, that such a personage as Mohammed El Mahdi, pretending to the Messianic leadership of his people and eagerly welcomed by them as such, marching from village to village across the waste



"WHERE BARBAROSSA SITS NODDING." places of the rainless Soudan, should have reappeared as the pseudo Christ of the Sioux among the rocks of the Bad Lands and in the ghost dances of the plains. JOHN CLARK RIDPATH.

THE TUNNEL AT PORT HURON.

Something About the Men Who Had Charge of the Work.

Sir Joseph Hobson and T. E. Hillman are two men who have accomplished a great engineering feat—the building of a mile tunnel with four miles of approaches under the St. Clair river at Port Huron.



SIR JOSEPH HOBSON—T. E. HILLMAN. Mich. The work was commenced over a year ago and is now completed. The tunnel has no counterpart in this country, being, in fact, simply an iron tube 6,000 feet long and 20 feet in diameter. It will be used by the railroads, and will be opened for traffic in a short time.

Sir Joseph Hobson, the man who planned the tunnel, was a railroad builder in Canada and the United States until 1870. He was the resident engineer of the International bridge at Buffalo, and was responsible for its successful construction. Following that he was made chief engineer for the Grand Trunk railway of Canada, and, backed by that company and the government, he built the Port Huron tunnel. He is a Canadian by birth and is about 55 years old. T. E. Hillman is due the credit of the actual work of building the tunnel. He lives at Sarnia, Ont., and is 50 years old.

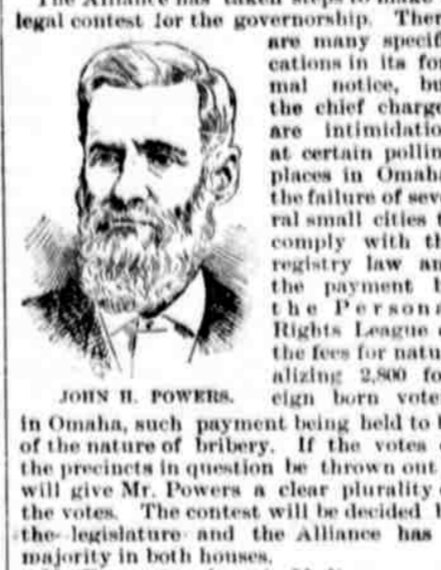
The President and the Mormons. President Harrison narrowly escapes being honorous in portions of his message, and especially in the paragraph relating to the Mormons. His suggestion that though they profess to have abandoned polygamy they still regard it as divine, and that, therefore, "those who believe it to be rightful should not have the power to make it lawful," is very neatly and happily expressed. It is a fact overlooked by many voters that a state could establish any marriage system it chose and the general government has no power to interfere as it has in a territory.

They make "single blessedness" a costly luxury in Venezuela. Every unmarried man over 35 is required to pay an income tax of 1 per cent, on an income of not more than \$5,000, or 2 per cent, if his income exceeds that amount.

It is said that a hundred writers have written Gladstone's life and are simply waiting for his death in order to rush into print with the "only authorized edition" of the great statesman's biography.

CONTESTING BOYD'S SEAT.

The Farmers' Alliance Man Claims to Be Elected Governor of Nebraska. Experienced political prophets predict that John H. Powers, the Farmers' Alliance candidate, will be the next governor of Nebraska, although the Democratic nominee has a plurality of 1,144 on the face of the returns. The state had always been overwhelmingly Republican, but at the recent election the Democrats cast 71,331 votes for governor, the Farmers' Alliance 70,187, and the Republicans 68,828.



The Alliance has taken steps to make a legal contest for the governorship. There are many specifications in its formal notice, but the chief charges are, in substance, that certain polling places in Omaha, the failure of several small cities to comply with the registry law and the payment by the Personal Rights League of the fees for naturalizing 2,500 foreign born voters in Omaha, such payment being held to be of the nature of bribery. If the votes of the precincts in question be thrown out it will give Mr. Powers a clear plurality of the votes. The contest will be decided by the legislature and the Alliance has a majority in both houses.

DISAGREEMENT AT CONCORD.

New Hampshire Politicians Engaged in Perpetual Arguments.

There is a lively struggle in progress at the capital of New Hampshire, and the storm center for some days has been around Dr. Gallinger, ex-congressman and now candidate for the United States senate, to succeed Senator Blair. Mr. Blair of course desires to succeed himself. The great struggle has been over the control of the legislature, and it involves so many issues that only an expert on the ground can understand their merits.

These are as to whether men who served as census enumerators are "federal office holders," and therefore disqualified as members; whether men who moved out of their districts are still qualified if they declare their intention to move back; whether the towns are entitled to representation according to this year's census, and, most of all, whether the deputy clerk of the last legislature shall make up the roll of the next, the chief clerk having moved to another state and resigned. On the determination of these it depends whether Democrats or Republicans shall control.

Dr. Gallinger and his supporters are earnestly opposed to the policy recommended by Senator Chandler, and refuse to join in all the measures proposed by their fellow Republicans, and this adds another element of uncertainty. The governor convened the legislature (which has a legal existence till the constitutional date for the one chosen in November to meet), and the first struggle was on the right of that legislature to adopt unusual measures to prevent trouble when the next one meets, the Gallinger party of Republicans being classed as the "moderates."

Every Family Has an Isaac. "Mrs. Partington's" anxieties and perturbations have served to amuse millions, for the American press gave wide circulation to her "felicitous infelicities of speech." They long divided honor and applause with the airy paragraphs and sharp wit of George D. Prentice. "Ike," the irrepressible and very human boy, was a live presence in thousands of households at a time when John Godfrey Saxe, Mortimer M. Thompson ("Dosticks") and Capt. George Horatio Derby were convulsing a continent with their quips and quirk, odd whims or whimsical oddities.

The century renowned dramatic prototype of this species of misunderstood and misunderstood feminine was assuredly not the model chosen by our home bred humorist. Richard Brinsley Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop was an egotistic, gaudily dressed, well bestowed, imperious and effusively aristocratic ignoramus, who had a good heart and a weak head. Name and idea may both have been borrowed by Humorist-shillaber, but his creation of "Mrs. Partington" is none the less unique or distinctive. "Ike" is a literary creation far beyond all other pranks boys that grin from the pages of modern books. He is natural in his mischief, and acts like an impulsive youngster always does when he has too much play time and too many tempting opportunities. Every family that boasts of its half dozen active, healthy boys has one or two Isaacs in the house, and they are too wide awake to nod in broad daylight.

The Charm of Gen. Booth's Book.

One charm of Gen. Booth's recently published book, "In Darkest England," is the frankness with which he treats of all other schemes of reform—Christian socialism, land nationalism and the like. He has a good word for all of them and one criticism—they look to a distant future. He frankly confesses that he cannot work that way—he wants to help those who are in misery now, no matter whether it is their fault or not. And, another unusual proceeding for his class, he flatly declares that in a majority of cases the misery is largely the fault of the miserable. Hence—and this is the strong element in his book—we must attack the evil physically and spiritually at the same time. All schemes working on one side only of man's nature will fail as all such have failed.

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