

SPIRITUALISM AMONG INDIANS.

The treaty with the Omaha Indians by which they ceded their lands in Nebraska to the general government was completed in June, 1854, and proclaimed by President Franklin Pierce. Under that treaty the tribe was to receive in the early spring of 1855 a certain sum of money. The amount was fixed and definitely known. No one better understood the financial, social and religious conditions of the Omahas than Colonel Peter A. Sarpy, whose trading post was then at the foot of the bluffs in Bellevue, near where the Burlington & Missouri River railroad depot now stands.

And the colonel knew when he had credited, at his store, each head of a family among the Omahas up to a sum which would pretty nearly absorb his portion of the coming spring payment. But savage and barbaric man, even in tribal relations, is as fond of running in debt as his civilized cousins. And like a cultivated human being of the Bellamy, socialist, or other gregariously inclining type, an Indian will take and use credit with payday so distant in his mind that he really believes it will never arrive. And like all civilized socialists and communists the Indian thinks things unequally distributed and labor and temperate frugality a very crude and unphilosophical method of getting a redistribution. Like the alchemists of old the big medicine men of the Indians are trying to make something out of nothing. Their fiat-money relatives in civilization show how small the distance is from educated to uneducated minds when the impossible is attempted.

But to return to the debt-contracting habit of the Omahas. It had reached the limit of safety. And Colonel Sarpy informed the editor of THE CONSERVATIVE, one bright day in December, 1854, that if he would call at the trading post council chamber the next morning at 9 o'clock he could see an Indian council and hear how to manage Indians so as to keep them from running into debt so deep that they could not pay out.

Promptly on time, at the appointed hour, the council began. Colonel Sarpy occupied a chair and the chief headmen and braves of the Omahas squatted upon the floor against the walls of three sides of the eighteen-foot-square room. When repose and silence had been secured a big tomahawk pipe filled with kinakinick was lighted and passed from hand-to-hand. Each Indian inhaled a tremendous volume of smoke and leisurely extruded it through his nostrils. After all present had taken a puff Col. Sarpy arose and, very nearly, as follows, after shaking hands with Shon-ga-ska (Logan Fontanelle) E-Sta-mah-za (Joe Le Flesche) Wha-no-ke-ga, the village maker, and other chiefs, headmen, and braves, addressed them:

"My brothers: For many, many moons we have been good friends. We

have hunted the buffalo on the prairies and we have trapped beaver, otter and mink on the streams together and we have never quarreled. But game is going away forever. It is now more than a hundred miles to buffalo. Deer and antelope are getting scarcer. It is more work now to hunt than when we were young. We travel a long ways to find plenty of game.

"Last night was very beautiful. The air was clear, the stars were bright and seemed near enough to reach up and touch with a pipe. And I said to my friend, Stephen Decatur: Come, let us go out under the shining stars and upon the high hill to the grave of Big Elk.

"He went with me.

"We sat down on the grass by the grave of that great chief of the Omahas.

"We smoked silently. We were remembering his courage in battle and his great teachings in peace. And then there came out of the sky from away up among the stars a strong voice.

"That voice said: 'Sarpy, How!' and I knew it was the voice of Big Elk. Then Big Elk said:

"'Sarpy, my brother, you have been always good to my children the Omahas. But now you are too good to them. You let them have too much sugar, coffee, flour and other things. You so make them lazy. They will not hunt. The men are like squaws.

"'Sarpy, you must stop trusting my children. If you do not stop they will sicken and die.'

"And," continued Sarpy, "I promised. Therefore, not until next summer, after your hunt, when you have peltry and furs can we trade any more." He ceased.

Deep silence pervaded the room. And then So-da-nak-ze or Yellow Smoke, arose and said:

"I know you speak truth. Words come to us from graves. Words drop down from the sky. They are the words of spirits. We obeyed those spirits when they were our chiefs. We must mind them now."

Then Gah-he-ga-gin-gah, or Little Chief, expressed his faith in the message from the spirit of Big Elk and all gave the sign of assent and concurrence by a deep and sonorous "Ugh! Ugh!"

And the council adjourned and credit to the Omaha Indians, at the trading post of the American Fur Company of Bellevue, Nebraska, was by spiritual communication suspended for six months by mutual and amicable agreement.

"CONFISCATION." Henry George, while expressly stating that it was not necessary to confiscate land, did undoubtedly propose to "confiscate rent." This use of the word "confiscation" is, in my judgment, to be regretted, because it has been the chief stumbling-block in the minds of conscientious men to the acceptance of the

general doctrine of the single tax. It has very naturally led most readers to believe that Mr. George proposed to punish land owning as if it were a crime. This impression has been confirmed by other passages in Mr. George's writings, in which he spoke of private property in land as a gigantic robbery. The misapprehension thus arising is due to the extreme accuracy with which Mr. George endeavored to express ideas which could not easily be expressed in familiar words, and to his using many words, in a strictly scientific sense, in accordance with their original and proper meaning, regardless of the great perversion of that meaning which had taken place in popular usage. There is no better example of this than in his use of these two words "confiscate rent." In the general public mind, "confiscation" means a form of punishment for crime, especially for treason and smuggling. In common usage, "rent" means the annual price paid for the use of houses and improvements upon land, quite as much as for the use of the land itself. But the scientific, original and only strictly proper meaning of the verb "to confiscate" is merely "to take into the public treasury;" and the only scientific and strictly proper meaning of the word "rent" is the price paid for the privilege of using land, irrespective of buildings or other visible improvements. Mr. George explained, once for all, that he used the word "rent" in this sense, and in this only. And, although he did not make the explanation, it is none the less a fact that he used the word "confiscation" only in the sense of taking into the public treasury, which is its precise meaning. Within that meaning, every tax is a confiscation.—Thomas G. Shearman in Self-Culture.

One can hardly suppose, from the writings of the Reverend Cotton Mather and his contemporaries, that the early founders of America were likely to stake sums of money on any contingency whatever, even on the election of a new pastor or the arrival of a relief-ship from England. Yet the habit must have prevailed largely at some time, or why should terms of betting have passed into such general use in our language, that many people customarily say they "will bet" so and so, when they merely mean to express a surmise or conjecture?

The practice is offensive to some, but it has been reserved for that great man, Mr. Dewey of Manila, to invent a treatment for it. It is said that he one day, not long ago, perceived a person waiting in his path with an amiable smile, who, on his near approach, extended his hand to him, saying "Admiral, I'll bet you don't remember me." The admiral did not relish this address, or perhaps the man's looks displeased him. "You've won your bet" he said, and kept right on walking.