

THE PAWNEE REPUBLIC.

There is a very long, though uneventful river running through Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas, called the Republican River. There is also in Colorado, west of Denver, a Republican Mountain. The name of the latter is explained by the presence, directly confronting it, of a mountain known by the name of Democrat. Is the river dedicated to the political party like the mountain? Probably most people would offer this theory; it was the writer's when he came to Nebraska and for several years thereafter.

It is, however, wholly erroneous. The Republican River has nothing to do with the Republican party. How it did come by its name is precisely the puzzle which this article proposes, not to solve, but to state. What is certain is that the name was introduced into this part of the country by men who had no knowledge of the political parties of the United States, and that a certain band of Indians, the Republican Pawnees, were in some way involved in the christening.

The writer is not able to assert that the river has borne the name too long to have gotten it from the party; the earliest occurrence of it known to him is no older than 1806, while the old Republican party, the one to which Thomas Jefferson belonged, had its beginning in 1792; but it is plain for another reason, which will be given further on, that there can have been no connection between the two.

The Problem.

The case is this: we find at the time of the first exploration of this region by Americans the name Republican borne by a river, a tribe of Indians and a fixed settlement or town. The question is this: to which of the three was it first applied? Was it the river, and did the town and its inhabitants acquire it from being located upon that river? Or did the Indians first bear it, and so bestow it upon their town and upon the river that they frequented? Or was their settlement in fact something like a republic, so that its citizens and the neighboring stream caught a name from it?

One might understand that it was the first from a statement quoted by Dr. George Bird Grinnell; the second from one made by Dr. Edward Everett Hale; the third from the language used by Lieutenant Pike.

Not An Indian Name.

No light can be gained on the inquiry from Indian sources. The Indians in question formed one of the four well known bands of the Pawnee tribe, and have universally been called the Republican Pawnees by white men, but their name in their own language is *Kit-ke-hak-i*, which means nothing in any way resembling Republican. It signifies merely "on a hill" or uppermost, and

has reference to their customary location in encamping with the other bands. Their civilized name must therefore have been bestowed upon them by the white men, and these could have been no other than French fur traders, for the very good reason that there were no other white men in the country prior to 1800; unless it were now and then a French or Spanish missionary.

Murray.

This appears, in fact, to have been the general understanding among early travelers. The Honorable Charles Murray, for instance, a young Scot who took it into his head to make a sojourn among the Pawnees in 1835, says on this point, "it is needless to say that the names of the different Pawnee tribes are given by the French traders according to their absurd fancies." He also gives his version of the Indian name for the Republicans, which is sufficiently close to that given above; he does not know its meaning, but he bears unwitting testimony to the correctness of the translation offered above, by observing that this band always formed the right wing when on the march, which brought them to the westward when they encamped, in the instances observed by him. This matter of order was so strictly regulated, he says further, that even each individual lodge had its prescribed place in the camp, in which it was invariably to be found.

Grinnell.

This agrees exactly with Grinnell's statement, which is that the Republicans always took the western end of the camping-place, the Grands the center and the Tapage or "racket" Pawnees the east, and that the names which the bands bore in their own tongues had reference to these locations.

As to the origin of the white man's name, Dr. Grinnell quotes "an old French trader, who has known these people for many years" to the effect that "the *Kit-ke-hak-i* were called Republican from the river of that name. This explanation," he adds, however, "is not altogether satisfactory;" but he offers none in place of it.

Dunbar.

Grinnell is one of the two great authorities on the Pawnees, the other being John B. Dunbar. Mr. Dunbar is on record as confessing his ignorance concerning the source of the name Republican. He says that some allege it to have been applied to the Indians from their having formerly resided upon the river of that name, but he considers the process to have been the reverse, citing the analogy of the Kansas and Osage rivers, which were named from Indian tribes, not the tribes from them. He says further, "there has been a tradition that it was first suggested by the semi-republican form of government observed among them when first known; but this

feature was no more marked with them than among the other bands." From Mr. Dunbar's own account of the social organization of the Pawnees, it appears that with them the office of head chief was hereditary, so that they had even less claim to be called a republic in their own right than had some of the other western tribes.

Pike.

Lieutenant Pike, who in 1806 was the first white man to visit and investigate them, spoils the "republic" theory; "their government," he says, "is the same as that of the Osage, an hereditary aristocracy; the father handing his dignity of chieftain down to his son." This is explicit, and may remove some misconception of the explorer's meaning; for he is the very one who, by persistent use of the expression "Pawnee republic" must have given many readers an idea of a community resembling in kind the Argentine republic, for example. In only three cases, so far as the writer has observed, does he speak of this Indian town in any other way; once he calls it "the Pawnee village;" once "the village of the Pawnee republic;" once "the Pawnee republican village."

Others.

Among other old-timers who have left observations to the purpose is old Jim Beckwourth, who in the fall of 1820, when he was young Jim, came to "the Republican Pawnee villages" and found them deserted for the winter. It is not clear from his story where these villages were; possibly on the Platte. The missionary Parker in 1835 passed "the villages of the Tapage and Republican Pawnee Indians" two days west of the Loup fork, on the Platte. The painter Catlin, about the same year, found all four bands dwelling a few miles asunder on the Platte; and Colonel Inman says that in 1835, discouraged over a severe defeat inflicted on them at Ash Hollow by the Sioux, they abandoned all their villages, including that on the Republican river, and concentrated near the mouth of the Loup, where buried remains of ancient villages have been found in great abundance ever since the settlement of the country; scraps of pottery, arrow-heads and rotted posts, on both sides of the Platte. Here they in fact remained until 1874, when they were removed to the Indian Territory; and there last year 664 of them still existed, miserable relic of a tribe that, it was said, could in the early part of the century raise 30,000 to 40,000 warriors.

One other eminently respectable authority, though not at first hand, may be cited, Dr. E. E. Hale, who in 1854 made mention of the "Republican Pawnees, who gave its name to Republican Fork of the Kansas." In this he agrees, it will be remembered, with Mr. Dunbar.

Neither should the testimony of the