

A GEM FROM THE GRAVE—A LEGEND OF SARPY.

[The following sketchlet was written by the editor of THE CONSERVATIVE about thirty years ago and first published by his friend Dr. George L. Miller in the Omaha Daily Herald. It is reproduced by request and because "away off in some of the islands of the Pacific" the West has already been found though not yet "settled in full and finally perfected."]

The beautiful bluffs that rise so majestically from the Missouri at Bellevue, Nebraska, were shimmering in the morning sunlight, and the deep verdure which covered them that summer day, made them look, while the dew lay still upon them, like a string of gigantic emeralds just fallen from the clouds. The air was still, and supreme solitude locked the landscape in a hazy, drowsy, rest.

Col. Peter A. Sarpy that morning met me up back of the old mission house by the grave of the great Omaha chief, Big Elk. He was buoyant, and his eye glistened with the exuberance of health and good spirits. He was dressed neatly, and upon his breast I noticed, for the first time, a solitaire diamond, which gleamed and flashed with striking brilliancy.

"Colonel," said I, "you have been adding to your jewels," and, looking steadily at the gem,— "is that something new?"

"Oh, no, my friend," said he. "That is old, very old, and I will tell you all about it if you will listen, and what is to come of it, too, in the hereafter, if you will."

Signifying my assent with great alacrity, Col. Sarpy proceeded as follows:

"Many, many years ago when St. Louis was a village, my good Catholic mother died—may God rest her soul in peace—in that town. We children followed her remains to the cemetery and laid them quietly in the grave, and wept until our eyes could weep no more. And then, shortly after, I came up here into Nebraska among the Indians to trade, and brother John B. remained in St. Louis.

"But a few years ago I went down to that city to purchase goods, and one afternoon, after I had been there several days, my brother said:

"Peter, I want to see you privately in the counting room to talk about the dead." And so I went in and John B. said:

"Peter, this city is growing very rapidly. It is stretching out to the south and the west and the north. It needs more room, and the old graveyard where our mother is buried must be given up. We must move her remains to another resting spot, and we will do it together while you are here. We will do it tomorrow." And so the very next day we went out to mother's

grave, and carefully we brought the coffin to the light and lifted it up tenderly onto a bier. It was sadly decayed. It looked like punk wood. The top was moved a little to one side, and I could not restrain a desire to look in. As I did look, the sunlight streamed in, and I saw something gleaming there. At once I remembered the diamond which my mother had worn always and which had been buried on her breast, and I reached in and took it out, and this is it which you now see.

"It is mine now, and when these bright days come I feel young again, and, remembering my mother, I put it on and wear it, for it makes me a better man.

"It is a charm, sir, an amulet, and the memories which it brings to me are brighter and richer and more precious than all the gems in the world, for they are the sacred recollections of a Christian mother, a holy woman, whose teachings were purer than any diamonds that ever glowed.

"And now, while men think I am only an old Indian trader who sees nothing in the future, who believes in no destiny for this beautiful Nebraska of ours, I know, sir, that not many years will come and go, before I, too, will be called to another life in another world. And then these fertile lands, these vast plains, will have been settled up, and somewhere in this Missouri valley, perhaps in sight of where we now stand, a great city shall have been builded and there will ever and ever go up hence a hum of contented industry. Then I may have been in my grave many years, and with me will have rested in that darkness this gem. And having no children, no kinsmen, as the land fills up with many people and the cities grow, very likely, sir, some day they will come to you, as they did to brother John, about our mother, and say:

"Here, sir, your old friend, Peter A. Sarpy, sir, is in the way. The city needs room, sir, and you must take his old bones away."

"And if so, do it; do it decently and kindly, as I know you will, but remember this diamond. Peep into my old coffin—it is a pure gem, sir, first water, and will surely flash whenever your eye can see. Then you reach in—I'll be still—and snatch this diamond out and put it on and wear it.

"The years will roll on and the people will still flood in, and this shall be one of the grandest gardens of the world, and you will have grown old too, and, possibly, become a citizen of some great city away out, on what we now call the plains, and then death will rap at your door and you, too, will come into that other life in that other world. Tell your boys to bury this stone with you. But not many years more will have followed the trail of those which are already gone into the shadowy hunting

lands, before the boys will be called upon by the authorities to move your bones too. You will have gotten in the way, too, and they'll tell the boys to move the old man—move him and make room, sir, for the great city on the plains.

"Tell the boys, when that time comes, to reach into your coffin again and take this glistening jewel out from the grave.

"Tell the oldest to put it on and wear it, and be buried with it, too, leaving instructions for its re-resurrection again.

"And so, sir, we'll keep this diamond glittering in the vanguard among the generations to come. It shall be buried and raised and worn and buried again, and finally it shall be buried for the last time, away off in some of the islands of the Pacific, where the west shall have been found and settled in full, and finally perfected.

"I tell you, sir, this cry for 'room, room, more room!' for the living, for the many peoples, for the great cities, will never, never cease.

"And let this diamond go on from grave to grave, from generation to generation, gleaming and flashing forever like a star, in the shield of one who shall always be a pioneer in progress and civilization."

He stopped his speech, and in silence we walked to the old trading post. But there was the eloquence of prophecy and the irresistible power of prescience in that summer morning talk of Colonel Sarpy, which makes it ring in my ears and thrill in my veins even unto this day.

He looked into the future as into a mirror, and saw the face of today and tomorrow as clearly and plainly as a child sees trees and flowers shadowed in a pure brook.

There are dull
THE DULLEST men who vote and
MAN. duller men who
assume to tell

others how to vote and who and what to endorse by their ballots. But the dullest man in Nebraska can, by a little effort at intensity in mental processes, discover that the industrial advancement and welfare of this state is never in the keeping, nor getting nourishment, of Bryanarchy, except when the ghost dancers of that tribe are on the trail of offices.

The recent investments in Nebraska City packing houses and the capital which will soon renovate and restore them to useful activity were not furnished by either populists or the sons of populists. It has been admitted by even the followers of the peerless fakir that orations are less nutritious than pork chops and bacon. Even the self-laudatory grandiloquence of Smyth, Bryan & Co. denouncing Nebraska City's manufacturing interests last autumn is not as good subsistence for a family as promptly-paid wages in the Starch Factory or Stock Yards and Packing Houses.