

LO, THE POOR BUCK

Bill Nye Gives a Letter From One of the Pawnee Tribe

TELLING OF HIS GREAT WOES

From Which It Will Be Seen That He Is Much Misunderstood—How the Indian Nation Has Suffered.

The following letter from a Pawnee Indian who lives near the Cherokee Strip, a small territory so called because the Cherokee used to go there for that purpose, is handed to me by mail with a request that I will be kind enough to edit and correct it, and then, if thought best, allow it to fall into the hands of the press. The letter is written by an Indian, somewhat advanced in years, to



COMING HOME WITH A FRIEND. his son, who is attending the Indian school at Carlisle, Pa., and shows so much humanity, even in the broad bosom of the stoical warrior, that there can certainly be no harm in publishing it.

CHEROKEE STRIP, Aug. 20.

MY DEAR SON—We got your letter last week regarding your matriculation fee, but I could not answer till I had went to town and found out what it was. That took time, and besides I met a number of old friends who was with me in the late war when, as you remember, the Pawnees seceded from the United States. We met in town and passed the time of day, after which we went to the drug store and opened a bottle of pain killer, and I was late getting home. Your mother says that you must not overdo this matriculation business, as times here are not very plenty.

If I had known that education comes so high, and had been told about this matriculation business when I was east to see the White Father, I would have touched him for aid. He was very kindly toward me and wished to know what he could do for my people. I said that we wished to know more of the white man's religion, and which one of them was the best. We have made it a business, as you know, to ask the different White Fathers at Washington this question, so that we might know, and their answers have been different. One White Father, when we asked him this question, told us to go to—! So we still grope in darkness.

I note what you say regarding the head, and trust that you shall learn to play upon it if you can have a suitable uniform and buy an orphedicle. You know how anxious I am to see you get an education, and that I shall try to keep you in funds if possible, but it worries me at first to do it because you know what a poor farmer I am. The Indian, however, suffers, but he does not weep. He can endure anguish, but he declines to cry like a woman. I am an aged hemlock, so is your mother.

Possibly some day when you get educated you may redeem your people. You may be the Moses of our race. In the future you may get a position in a bank, had then times with my people will not be so scarce as they are now.

I want you to learn all the languages and to spell the hardest word, as did Bruno Dem-Johnson, who went to the Indian school at Haskell and is writing this letter for me. Learn also to respect the laws of the land in which you live and how to turn a jack from the bottom of the pack without ostentation.

I shall try to meet your demands for money to purchase your studies to the bitter end. I have had no advantages myself, but nature endowed me richly with a massive brain, and no man ever outclassed me except your mother, and that was when I had my skates on, as you say at college, having been out the night before brooding over the wrongs of my people.

I want you to become familiar with the laws of your country, so that you can keep out of jail and not plead guilty, as I did in Kansas City once, not knowing then that it was customary to plead not guilty and then let the other side find out whether you are so or not.

If I had my life to live over again I would get a classic education and keep store in Kansas, dealing in drugs, paints, oils, dyes, stiffs, toys, notions and stomach bitters for medicinal purposes.

Try to study economy along with your other branches, as I hate to beef the old cow before cold weather, and the calf is too small to turn into money or yet.

Learn all the languages, as I say, so that you can talk as well with a foreigner from New York as you can with an American.

Learn astronomy, I am now sixty years of age and did not know till yesterday that the sun is 32,000,000 miles from here. These things are pathetic when you come to think about it. There was no one here to tell me when I was a lad that it would take a train of cars 250 years to go to the sun, even if there was no accidents. I was a giddy young thing and thought only of the present. To go fishing as soon as the law was up was my delight, and to lead an outdoor life was the thing that my physician thought best for me at the time.

So I did not know until recently that it took 20,000 years for the light of a star to reach the earth, and even then that it does not amount to much. I grew up wild and free, and would have laughed to see the man who could overtake and overtake me.

Look at Alexander the Great! I did not know that he studied eloquence without Aristotle. I did not know that an educated man could take the tariff, for instance, and use it as an excuse for leading an immoral life.

But I was left to run wild, as it were, making faces at people in the square

time of life, and now in the autumn of my days my name is Dennis. Here on the Cherokee Strip I am all the time brought in contact with inferior people who have never been east. Since I have been east myself I can see how rough and coarse we are here in the west. We are earnest and open hearted, but we lack refinement.

We had a little merrymaking here when I got home from Washington, D. C. Fungus Tamarac, a Brule Sioux who is spending the summer with us, drank a bottle of iodine that I got in Pittsburgh for my rheumatism.

Those who opened him with suitable exercises said that on the inside he looked like a Mardy Graw, whatever that is.

I want you to become refined and get good manners. The government will pay for the bulk of your education, but I want you also to learn etiquette and roulette while east. Our table manners, too, here on the Cherokee Strip are very tart and tacky, I find. Even Black Hawk, the great orator, while dining with Lord Baltimore, I am told, put sugar and cream on his olives and blew the pits across the room at a mark.

It is such things as these that have kept the Indian back and induced people to hesitate about inviting him to the annual dinner of the bong tong.

Sitting Bull was just beginning to obtain social recognition at Washington when in reaching across the table one day at the White House to help himself to the president's kummed he dragged the corner of his Pullman blanket through the butter by mistake, and then, with a merry laugh, wiped it on his hair.

This afterward unblighted his whole life, and he hardly went out any more after that, regarding life at the capital as hollow and artificial.

It has been the unfortunate history of our eminent red men that whenever their talents have thrown them into good society they have almost universally corked themselves. Look at Red Shirt, in Paris, and Poor Dog, in London. It is but a repetition of our sad history as a people.

Red Shirt during the engagement of the Wild West show in France was invited to dine with President Carnot and Ferdinand de Lesseps—pronounced de Les-sep—at the restaurant of Brabant, the French Delmonico, and when the pale green pistache ice cream came on, and the finger bowl, Red Shirt, the great warrior, who looks almost exactly like Napoleon, the first emperor, in order to show Carnot and his gang that he had traveled and observed a great deal, evidently took the ice cream brick for a cake of castile soap and bathed with it freely in the finger bowl, coming out after awhile to run along the bank and restore his circulation.

My dear son, the Indian nation has suffered on account of these things, for they get into the papers and hurt us. You must learn not only the habits of the Meles, the Persians and the Free Will Baptists, but how to hold your knife at table. That is what you are there for. That is what I am beefing the old cow for. That is what I am going to wear your old baseball suit next to me this winter for. That is why your mother weeps at night and wears your pajamas by day.

Poor Dog hurt our people as much in England as Black Hawk did us good by his speeches. He was invited to dine in the royal grounds, they tell me, and while the party was strolling through the grounds, the queen having been frightened by a mouse, Poor Dog, thinking to show his gallantry, gave chase to the mouse, and when he caught it under the chair of the Princess Alexandria it fell in order to show her majesty that there was no deception about it.

These matters of history connected with the rise and fall of the red man give me a pain in the neck. You may redeem your people, my son, and astonish these pilgrims who came here to our



COULD NOT GET NEAR ENOUGH. country because they couldn't make a living in Europe, and who now ask us to work for them and take an order on the store.

I have already said much through the hand of Demi-Johnson, and he grows weary with much writing, so I will soon cease, but I cannot do so without asking you once more to weigh well what I have said.

As I said at the beginning, I am an aged hemlock. In my limbs the katy-dids and the wild woodtick nestle. To you I look for the redemption of our race. You can do it if you will. Come home prepared to pull the Pawnee out of his hole and emancipate him. The government will aid you. So will I. I am not wealthy, but my credit is good.

Once I went on my own bonds to appear before the court on the 9th day of October in Omaha, and I had to get up out of a sickbed and ride eighteen miles but I did it, my son, I did it—and my case of smallpox together.

I always do what I say I will. The red man may suffer, but he declines to cry like a woman. He may get trampled onto, but he never squeals. That is one thing I notice about me that I like.

When do you have to pay another matriculation fee? Let me know in some-time to make it.

If you see any of the government I wish you would say that it is about time we see one from our place should visit the White Father at Washington, and remaining in Washington five or six weeks to lay before him the wrongs of my people, and get a few more of those Cuba orders which go so far toward brightening up our sad lives here on the Cherokee Strip.

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