

#101

The world's Greatest Religious Poetry

Notes show that on Sunday, March 6, 1927, Indians were in, and we discussed the Sioux Indian view that intoxicants deadened or killed the free working of the Spirit, for realizing what is in abdito (occult) That, by request of Indians, I looked-up in the Bible the teaching of Paul (whom Indians much appreciate) on this point, and we found that while Paul advocates a mild use of wine, he strongly opposes drunkenness, with the idea that it hinders the free working of the Spirit, together with other harm. That Indians claimed that the "White Lodge Society" always opposed any use of whiskey, upon the ground that it kills the higher- capacity for sensing higher things which was the aim of this Society. These old Indians present rehearsed the old Indian belief that the "soul" or "mind" is not in the body, as many or all white people believe, but is around the body as the heavens and the "all-animated space" is around the earth---though connected with the earth as the "soul" is with the body. That with some Indians more than with others this "soul" which is around the body, at times, may expand so as to reach regions far away and sense the things there, both the physical things on the earth and also things in the "world invisible" which is around the terra firma. That in this "world invisible" around the physical earth there are almost countless spheres of movement of living persons of some sort (not at all emphasizing departed spirits, id including them); these spheres generally harmonizing in their movements, though sometimes in conflict; and that all human persons here in this earthly living are connected with some one of these invisible spheres. So that persons in the same nation or tribe or community, are actually living in different worlds. That while this is and was always true, yet drinking the whiteman's whiskey gives to the capacity of this aura-"soul" for expanding a sort of deadening paralysis, with darkness and tendency to "crumple-up within one's own small self". Therefore, as they claimed, those not given to becoming intoxicated should "separate from drunkards", they said, as Sitting Bull taught. They also, talking among themselves, mentioned cases where soldiers, and even officers, had done most unjust and cruel things while full, of whiskey, which, as they said, proved that the Sioux Indian view of this matter was correct; mentioning particularly how an officer (name withheld by me) when drunk, had Chief Two Bear's people over the river from Fort Yates, rounded-up and about all their valuables burned and made them come over onto the Fort Yates side of the river to live, though they had never been otherwise than submissively obedient to all requirements of the Government. This was in the late autumn of 1876, after the Sitting Bull-Custer Battle. These old Indians all agreed that the most harmful thing to young Indians tending to dull their capacity to grasp the whiteman's ways successfully, now that the old civilization is gone, was whiskey. They all said that Sitting Bull never even tasted whiskey, though he observed its influence upon those who did drink it. They mentioned that in appointing a "Keeper of the Ghost" (a "sinless" man to have charge of one or more of the sacred bundles for the year prior to the ceremony of "Letting go of the Ghost") no one would think of appointing a man who ever drank whiskey, lest he might fail to aid the departed spirits in finding "The Beautiful Islands Away in the West" (See in "Toward the Sun" my poem on this, and the same in "Greatest Religious Poetry of the World", indexed under "Sioux Indian"---Your humble "scrub-dub" here in a box is one of the less than 500 in all known places, races & ages who has, by this translation, been included in this small number---and I am told that "Simagua" and "The Death of the Wolfe" will also be in the next edition. Isn't it ridiculous to put me into so select a group?) Well, I feel it in my bones that your book will be a first-class classic, at least in time to come. Put into it your very best. One must not so slavishly observe fixed literary rules as to fail in being free and lyric. The face of the REAL must appear out of the pumpkin-shell. It is Sitting Bull to the front. I have an affidavit (pledged to be secret) of the man who brought the large amount of whiskey to the Rosebud. In the account of the Arikaka scout-company under Varney, the Arikara tell of the large amount of drunkenness there, & soldiers drunk & bad. Libby suppressed this in his published book (& lots of other things, thereby making the book that might have been a sensation, rather banal. I advised to include all, as we had impartially taken-down all. Some of this whiskey, with teams, followed Custer, or Reno's part of the army. (Cus-ter himself did not drink, or smoke, but he gambled, and after his death his wife paid some gambling debts) S.B. said that this whiskey would be the best possible aid of the Sioux in the coming battle. I've also heard old Indians talk about the father of the Chief commanding the Cheyennes in the battle dying of drunkenness, which made a great impression upon S.B. I have heard that S?B. said "When a "soul" goes far out and away to the home of "Great Spirit", it comes back bigger & better, once crumpled-up in the body of a drunken man, it is dwarfed forever." A thing you cannot say: SB is reported to have said "The Roman (Shina Sapa) Church is the best of all the Churches, because the minister of that Church drinks all the wine himself and does not give it to the members of his Church". Also "With whiskey replacing the buffaloes, there is no hope for Indians." Also "The 'soul' of a whiteman is so odored with whiskey that it will have to hang-around here on earth for hundreds of years before the winds and storms will so purify it that the perpole in the other life can endure the smell of it there, and let it come in."