

STAR-VINDICATOR

McAlester, Ind. Ter.
Feb. 17, 1877
Vol. 4 No. 2
McPherson, Editor

CHOCTAW CLAIM BY ALBERT PIKE

It is understood that an effort will again be made to-day to suspend the rules and pass the bill referring the Choctaw claim to the Court of claims for adjudication. The friends of this measure claim that the United States owe the Choctaw Indians not less than \$3,000,000 for land ceded to the Government by this tribe. On the contrary, old and experienced members of Congress allege that the claim has been paid. Let the facts be what they may, Congress should investigate the whole matter thoroughly before opening the vaults of the Treasury to a legion of lobbyists. If the United States honestly owe the Choctaw Indians a sum of money, be it great or small, it should be paid and the law directing such payment should be so framed that the honest claimants are made the recipients, and not that swarm of vultures who infest the lobbies of the House. If the scheme now on foot is consu-

mated the Choctaw Indians would not receive ten per cent of the three millions. Any bill, therefore, seeking to take millions from the public Treasury, or to raise money by the indorsement of the Government, by the suspension of the rules is, to say the least, subjected to the gravest suspicions. There has never been a time in the history of the Government when Congress should be more deliberate and circumspect.

The above appeared in the Washington Union of January 29th, and what follows are the closing remarks of Gen. Albert Pike in answer to it, addressed to the Senators and Representatives in Congress. We would like to give the whole of Gen. Pike's able and unrefutable answer, but our limited space forbids:

I say upon my honor, under every obligation which rests upon me to speak the simple truth, that the award of the Senate was just and righteous; that the case was fairly gained by fair array of the facts, honest, and fair, argument; that there is no ground nor the faintest shadow of a reason, in law or right; for impeaching it, and that it is preposterous to imagine that any unfair practice could

have been used to obtain it. And as a lawyer of many years and some reading, I do aver that the award is as final, absolute, and unimpeachable as the Geneva award was, and the sum awarded a part of the public debt in judgment.

All contracts made with counsel for the prosecution of this demand were rescinded three years ago, by the Choctaw council, at my instance, because it was desired by the Committee of Indian Affairs of the House, or its chairman; and I must be content with such compensation as, at the end of the case, the General Council may think me entitled to.

There were once too many persons meddling with the case -- some actually employed, others only pretending to be so. I had no arrangements or communications with any or them, and knew only one of two by sight. Four years ago I was applied to in behalf of a number of persons to consent to give up a large part of any fee I might receive, and assist in otherwise arranging for them to have out of the whole amount that might be recovered, over a million of dollars. The name of the principal person was made known to me; and I was assured that if the ar-

rangements should be made, they could "put the claim through." I refused to enter into any kind of arrangement, and advised the Delegate against it, and the project came to naught.

If any "ring" now has anything to do with the Choctaw claim, except to slander it, I do not know it. I will be no man's accomplice to wrong a helpless people, nor will I be one to practice extortion on any client. There are possessions that an old man, at least, ought to value more than money.

But blackmailing has long been very common and very profitable at Washington; and to malign and libel and threaten to defeat a just claim, unless one is employed in it, has not been at all unusual. The claim of the Choctaw people is now being legitimately prosecuted by their Delegate; with competent and respectable legal advisers, who are not ashamed of an honorable employment. If it can be defeated now, Congress will have done its utmost to throw it into the hands of a ring, since one is no doubt ready to take advantage of a present defeat.

No other action is now asked for than that the Choctaw people may be allowed the common privilege, which no debtor can honestly deny his creditor,

which a nation cannot decently deny to those who are its wards, to present their demand to the Court of Claims and have its merits judicially discussed and determined. If they were competent to be contracted with, it is not fair or just or honest or decent, to deny them a remedy, without which a right ceases to be a right. I court for them the most searching investigation by the Court of Claims and the Supreme Court; and when the investigation has been had, if that which is justly due them, and which they have waited for so long as almost to have lost all hope, is paid, I mean that they shall have it. If they owe any one for services, they are perfectly competent to settle with him, and honest enough to pay him, and shrewd enough not to be defrauded. Congress ought to protect them against spoliation when it shall provide for payment of the award. To protect them against cormorants by refusing to pay all, may starve the cormorants, but it will starve the Indians as well.

I have the honor, gentlemen, to be very respectfully your obedient servant,

ALFRED PIKE,
Counsellor at Law.

Washington, Jan. 31, 1877.

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