

**THE FUTURE INDIAN: A
BRIEF TREATISE ON THE
INDIAN QUESTION**

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The Future Indian: A Brief Treatise on the Indian Question by S. C. Gilman

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A BRIEF TREATISE

ON THE INDIAN QUESTION

NEW YORK
* CARLTON *
BY

S. C. GILMAN



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1891

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INTRODUCTION.

ANOTHER "Indian outbreak," not unattended with destruction to human life, has occurred in the West—this time among the Sioux. But happily, through a wise and conservative policy, the troubles were brought speedily to an end, and a prolonged Indian war has been averted. During these troubles, charges of mismanagement and of injustice to the Indians came from sources that must be respected. Men do not usually go to war without some good reason. These Indians had some cause for their action, as has been clearly shown during the last four months. And now this question is before us: What are we going to do about it? Are there simply to be a series of receptions to the representatives of a people whom a month ago we denounced

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as treacherous vagabonds? Will we work ourselves into a furore for the time being, over these delegates from Pine Ridge, and then forget all about them, after they have gone away? Are there to be a few more pledges made that, if adhered to at all, will be done so in a half-hearted way?

What was the lesson conveyed by this last Indian trouble?

This trouble differed from the previous ones in that it possessed a religious aspect. It is significant that when despair comes to a man—when he is completely lost, and all hope and earthly help is gone—he will turn to some higher and immortal power to save him. So it was with the Indians. They did not know that that power had already come. True, missionaries had told them of a Messiah that had come to save all mankind, and some had believed. But many, in their simplicity, could not distinguish between the false and the true, and when civilization came and white men mistreated them, and told them lies—all

lies—they spurned the religion the white man brought and wanted none of his civilization. They had never been offered our best civilization. The only real happiness they had ever known had been in the wild, free life of the past. They saw that could never be again. Their lands were gone, their game was gone, and the civilization they had learned to hate was every day creeping in upon them. In their despair they turned to an immortal power to save them. One day, one of their number who been away in the Northwest, came back and told them of a Messiah, whom he had seen and talked with, who was to take them all out of their troubles, who was to destroy the white people, and restore to the Indians not only their lands and abundant game, but their dead. No doubt there were some who took advantage of the craze that followed, and worked the Indians up to a frenzy that would bring on a war. But the most of them did believe the story and were sincere, and when actual warfare did come

they faced death as only mad men would, firmly believing that the sacred robes they wore would shield their bodies from the soldiers' bullets. We all know the story of this whole affair. How the Indians inaugurated the strange ghost dance. How they practiced it, until the white people became suspicious and alarmed. How an attempt was made to stop it, which only made the Indians more earnest than ever. How the soldiers then came, and how the Indians did not abandon the cause until their own blood had been shed and they began to realize the folly of it all.

The real Messiah, I have said, had come. At least that is what we believe. That is what we love to preach and sing about and read. We commemorate His birth in a beautiful manner every Christmas time. Why, then, had He not come to the Indians as He had to us? Was it left for us to tell them about Him? If so, why have we not done it in a more general way?

Turning over in my mind this Indian

question, with its many phases, I have been prompted to write the following brief treatise on the subject, and while it may not sparkle, perhaps, with "deep, heavy argument," I trust there will be found therein some thought expressed—some truth clearly defined—that will give us all a better consciousness of our individual responsibility in this matter.

THE WRITER.

INDIANAPOLIS, IND., Feb. 5, 1891.