

Money Sacred to Indians

Ethnology

Wampum, the money of the Indians of the Atlantic States, such as the Delawares, was not the "filthy lucre" of civilized man, but a sacred thing. In fact, all transfer of property from one Indian to another, was really a gift. The passage of wampum to the donor was not in the nature of payment for value received, but as a charm to protect from any evil influence that might be transferred with the gift and make itself manifest as illness in the recipient. This has been found out by Dr. Frank G. Speck, professor of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, and a leading authority on American Indians of the East.

"In the exchange of vendable property, even extending to gifts between friends," said Dr. Speck, "there lurked a potency for evil that might develop in who knows what quarter,

More Light!

Invention

Last Monday, February 11, Thomas Alva Edison celebrated his eighty-second birthday. The entire country heard his voice on that occasion over the radio. But when the scene shown on our cover took place he was just approaching fame. A few of his inventions had been given to the world, others remained in the future. Then he was at work on the problem of producing an electric light for the home, that would have none of the disadvantages of the arc light.

The story of the dramatic events at Menlo Park, N. J., on October 21, 1879, have often been told—how the bulb of the lamp was pumped for many hours to exhaust the air, how he had the glass-blower seal off the bulb from the pump, how it was mounted on a wooden base and the current started through it. A brilliant glow came. But would it last? Already other lamps had been made and had started off just as brilliantly, only to burn out too soon. Edison watched. The cover painting, made for the General Electric Company by H. H. Mott-Smith, shows this vigil, the "death watch" as his assistants called it. For hour after hour the lamp glowed, with Edison calmly and patiently sitting by. Forty hours elapsed before the lamp burned out. At last a successful lamp had been produced and the electric lighting industry, that affects everyone so vitally, had been born.

Science News-Letter, February 16, 1929

producing malice or resentment among the parties concerned. It could even result in bodily poison to one or both. It is strictly correct to state that in the attitude of the eastern Indians toward such affairs, the passage of shell money, or wampum as they called it, from the hands of the receiver of a gift or purchase to those of the giver performed the function of medicine. The wampum protected them against spiritual infection and its manifestation in the body in the form of sickness. Wampum was a purifier, purging the transaction from latent evil force. And should evil have leaked through the transaction the wampum would function as a purgative for its keeper. The same wampum was a spiritual emblem believed by them to have come originally from supernatural sources and embodying within it profound supernatural dynamics.

"We can understand why a com-

pact sealed with the transfer of wampum was as sacred as one sworn on an oath by the Bible, the Koran or the beard of Abraham. It was such an attitude toward exchange and currency that our colonial forebears encountered when they bartered for land and peltry with the aborigines of New England and the Middle Atlantic States. The colonists handed out their exchange with the European notion of intrinsic value, receiving the return with the native idea of spiritual and supernatural interplay.

"The Dutch in buying Manhattan for 60 guilders of trinkets undoubtedly drove a shrewd bargain with the Delawares. But who has told us that in the eyes of these same Delawares the currency was the symbol, not the value equivalent, of their relinquishment of their exclusive hereditary rights to the land as well as its products?"

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SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER, The Weekly Summary of Current Science. Published by Science Service, Inc., the Institution for the Popularization of Science organized under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Edited by Watson Davis.
Publication Office, 1918 Harford Ave., Baltimore, Md. Editorial and Executive Office, 21st and B Sts., N. W., Washington, D. C. Address all communications to Washington, D. C. Cable address: Scienserve, Washington.

Entered as second class matter October 1, 1926, at the postoffice at Baltimore, Md., under the act of March 3, 1879. Established in mimeographed form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trade-mark, U. S. Patent Office.

Subscription rate—\$5.00 a year postpaid. 15 cents a copy. Ten or more copies to same address, 5 cents a copy. Special reduced subscription rates are available to members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Advertising rates furnished on application.

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