

*Attahallahkallah*, *Willanawaugh*, and the *Pigeon*. He added to the reputation of a profound Indian statesman and orator, the inestimable character of being uniformly respected for his integrity and truth; in this last point it was said of him by all of his acquaintances, that throughout a long and useful life in his own country, he was never known to stoop to a falsehood. The Corn Tassel was a stout, mild and decided man, rather comely than otherwise; and of a smooth and somewhat fat and inflated face.

At the treaty of Long Island, in July, 1777, he was the principal spokesman, and on the proposition of the American Commissioners that the Cherokees should cede a much greater extent of country than was agreed to in the result, the following able reply on his part is given from a memorandum of a gentleman who was present;<sup>10</sup> yet it is supposed to have been bereaved of much of its native beauty by the defects of interpretation; for the manly and dignified expression of an Indian orator loses nearly all its force and energy in translation.

#### SPEECH OF ONITOSITAH

"It is a little surprising that when we entered into treaties with our brothers, the whites, their whole cry is *more land!* Indeed, formerly it seemed to be a matter of formality with them to demand what they knew we durst not refuse. But on the principles of fairness, of which we have received assurances during the conducting of the present treaty, and in the name of free will and equality, I must reject your demand.

"Suppose, in considering the nature of your claim (and in justice to my nation I shall and will do it freely), I were to ask one of you, my brother warriors, under what kind of authority, by what law, or on what pretense he makes this exorbitant demand of nearly all the lands we hold between your settlements and our towns, as the cement and consideration of our peace."

"Would he tell me that it is by right of conquest? No! If he did, I should retort on him that *we* had last marched over his territory; even up to this very place which he has *fortified* so far within his former limits; nay, that some of our young warriors (whom we have not yet had an opportunity to recall or give notice to, of the general treaty) are still in the woods, and continue to keep his people in fear, and that it was but till lately that these identical walls were your strongholds, out of which you durst scarcely advance.

"If, therefore, a bare march, or reconnoitering a country is sufficient reason to ground a claim to it, we shall insist upon transpos-

and Calendar of Virginia State Papers. Corn Tassel visited Philadelphia in 1787, for the purpose of laying before Congress, not then in session, the complaints of his people against the whites because of trespasses on the domain of the Cherokees. He met Benjamin Franklin, who gave a talk to the chief: "I am sorry that the Great Council Fire of our Nation is not now burning, so that you cannot now do your business there. In a few months the coals will be raked out of the ashes, and the fire will be again kindled. Our wise men will then take the complaints and desires of your Nation into consideration and take the proper measures for giving you satisfaction." (June 30, 1797.) Corn Tassel succeeded Oconostata in the principal chiefship or kingship.

<sup>10</sup>The gentleman referred to was William Tatham, himself.

<sup>11</sup>This reference to the lust for lands on the part of the whites long continued to be much on the mind of Corn Tassel. In June, 1787, he wrote Governor Randolph of Virginia: "I observe in every treaty that we have made that a bound is fixed but that your people settle much faster shortly after a treaty than before. . . . Truth is, if we had no lands, we should have fewer enemies." Calendar Virginia State Papers, IV, 306.

ing the demand, and your relinquishing your settlements on the western waters and removing one hundred miles back towards the east, whither some of our warriors advanced against you in the course of last year's campaign.

"Let us examine the facts of your present eruption into our country, and we shall discover your pretensions on that ground. What did you do? You marched into our territories with a superior force; our vigilance gave us no timely notice of your manœuvres; your numbers far exceeded us, and we fled to the stronghold of our extensive woods, there to secure our women and children.

"Thus, you marched into our towns; they were left to your mercy; you killed a few scattered and defenseless individuals, spread fire and desolation wherever you pleased, and returned again to your own habitations. If you meant this, indeed, as a conquest you omitted the most essential point; you should have fortified the junction of the Holstein and Tennessee rivers, and have thereby conquered all the waters above you." But, as all are fair advantages during the existence of a state of war, it is now too late for us to suffer for your mishap of generalship!

"Again, were we to inquire by what law or authority you set up a claim, I answer, *none!* Your laws extend not into our country, nor ever did. You talk of the law of nature and the law of nations, and they are both against you.

"Indeed, much has been advanced on the want of what you term civilization among the Indians; and many proposals have been made to us to adopt your laws, your religion, your manners and your customs. But, we confess that we do not yet see the propriety, or practicability of such a reformation, and should be better pleased with beholding the good effect of these doctrines in your own practices than with hearing you talk about them, or reading your papers to us upon such subjects.

"You say: Why do not the Indians till the ground and live as we do? May we not, with equal propriety, ask, Why the white people do not hunt and live as we do? You profess to think it no injustice to warn us not to kill our deer and other game from the mere love of waste; but it is very criminal in our young men if they chance to kill a cow or a hog for their sustenance when they happen to be in your lands. We wish, however, to be at peace with you, and to do as we would be done by. We do not quarrel with you for killing an occasional buffalo, bear or deer on our lands when you need one to eat; but you go much farther; your people hunt to gain a livelihood by it; they kill all our game; our young men resent the injury, and it is followed by bloodshed and war.

"This is not a mere affected injury; it is a grievance which we equitably complain of and it demands a permanent redress.

"The great God of Nature has placed us in different situations. It is true that he has endowed you with many superior advantages; but he has not created us to be your slaves. *We are a separate people!* He has given each their lands, under distinct considerations and circumstances: he has stocked yours with cows, ours with buffalo; yours with hog, ours with bear; yours with sheep, ours with deer. He has, indeed, given you an advantage in this, that your cattle are tame and domestic while ours are wild and demand not

<sup>12</sup> The mention of a fort at this place may have been the source of Colonel Arthur Campbell's suggestion (1780) to the same effect. Jefferson concurred with that view: "If you can effect this, a right should be reserved for building a fort at the confluence of Holston and Tennessee." February 17, 1781, Writings of Jefferson, I, 295.

only a larger space for range, but art to hunt and kill them; they are, nevertheless, as much our property as other animals are yours, and ought not to be taken away without our consent, or for something equivalent."

### CORN-STALK

#### *One of the Warriors of the Shawnees.*

This chief was averse to the commencement of hostilities against the whites; but when his nation had concluded upon it, he is said to have boldly addressed them to the following effect:

"You have now declared a war against the white people in direct opposition to my counsel, my experience and my opinion; but as it is the sense of my country, I hold it to be my duty to acquiesce. Remember, however, that I am of long-tried courage as a man and a warrior, and that the right of commanding rests upon me. I shall not fight, because I disapproved the quarrel; I shall, nevertheless, be on the ground and see that you perform the task you have undertaken. Conceiving this to be my duty, I obey; but I shall not advance further; and no man among you will dare impute my refusal to a want of courage."

Early in the morning, before sunrise, the proposed action was brought on, through a mere casual discovery of the Indians (in council) by the late General Robertson, Valentine Sevier, brother of the general of that name, and a third person who was killed; and the action lasted until the curtain of the night afforded the Indians a safe retreat.<sup>13</sup>

In the early part of the day, *Corn-stalk* performed his promise, and lay at some distance back in the rear, resting on his elbows upon the trunk of an old tree and viewing the action as spectator.

When the militia approached, he is reported to have said to the young warriors, "You now behold the birds which you have been looking after; let me see you pluck their feathers!"

After the action began to be very warm, a young warrior who had boasted pretty roundly beforehand began to fly back towards the place where he lay. In the first instance he upbraided him and drove him forward to his post; but finding the whites getting the better, and the same warrior giving way a second time, he shot him, stepped forward himself, encouraged his men and assumed command.

From this moment (say those who were in the engagement) the success of the day wore a different feature. He formed his men in three orderly ranks, each succeeding the other; and the front always carried off their dead and wounded as they retired to the rear to load there, while the center advanced to replace the front which had last fired.

Thus the conflict continued until dark, and numbers were slaughtered on both sides. The whites, however, remained all night on the ground; and the Indians made good their retreat with an address and an ability which would have honored a regular army.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>The Battle of Point Pleasant (October, 1774). Robertson and Sevier were sergeants in the company of Captain Evan Shelby and both were from the Watauga Settlement, as were some others of the same company.

<sup>14</sup>It seems that Cornstalk, with fourteen of his Shawnee warriors, visited the Cherokees in the summer of 1776. North Carolina Colonial Records, X, 782. The object, doubtless, was to persuade them to act in alliance with the British forces.