



"Battle of the Thames -- Death of Tecumseh" by Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887), New York Public Library.

## A VOICE CRYING OUT IN THE WILDERNESS: The Speeches of Chief Tecumseh

*"The native American has been generally despised by his white conquerors for his poverty and simplicity. They forget, perhaps, that his religion forbade the accumulation of wealth and the enjoyment of luxury. To him, as to other single-minded men in every age and race, from Diogenes to the brothers of Saint Francis, from the Montanists to the Shakers, the love of possessions has appeared a snare, and the burdens of a complex society a source of needless peril and temptation. Furthermore, it was the rule of his life to share the fruits of his skill and success with his less fortunate brothers. Thus he kept his spirit free from the clog of pride, cupidity, or envy, and carried out, as he believed, the divine decree -- a matter profoundly important to him..."*

*"There was undoubtedly much in primitive Christianity to appeal to this man, and Jesus' hard sayings to the rich and about the rich would have been entirely comprehensible to him. Yet the religion that is preached in our churches and practiced by our congregations, with its clement of display and self-aggrandizement, its active proselytism, and its open contempt of all religions but its own, was for a long time extremely repellent. To his simple mind, the professionalism of the pulpit, the paid exhorter, the moneyed church, was an unspiritual and unedifying thing, and it was not until his spirit was broken and his moral and physical constitution undermined by trade, conquest, and strong drink, that Christian missionaries obtained any real hold upon him. Strange as it may seem, it is true that the proud pagan in his secret soul despised the good men who came to convert and to enlighten him!..."*

*"...When distinguished emissaries from the Father at Washington, some of them ministers of the gospel and even bishops, came to the Indian nations, and pledged to them in solemn treaty the national honor, with prayer and mention of their God; and when such treaties, so made, were promptly and shamelessly broken, is it strange that the action should arouse not only anger, but contempt? The historians of the white race admit that the Indian was never the first to repudiate his oath.*

*"It is my personal belief, after thirty-five years' experience of it, that there is no such thing as 'Christian civilization.' I believe that Christianity and modern civilization are opposed and irreconcilable, and that the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is essentially the same..."*

*"Such are the beliefs in which I was reared -- the secret ideals which have nourished in the American Indian a unique character among the peoples of the earth. Its simplicity, its reverence, its bravery and uprightness must be left to make their own appeal to the American of to-day, who is the inheritor of our homes, our names, and our traditions. Since there is nothing left us but remembrance, at least let that remembrance be just!"*

~ Dr. Charles Alexander Eastman, aka Ohiyesa, *The Soul of the Indian* (1900), pp. 9-24, 171.<sup>1</sup>

The migration westward of masses of Americans and transplanted Europeans following the Revolutionary War was from the beginning fraught with elements out of which bitter strife and tragic loss of life were the ineluctable result, viz.: the ousting of long settled Indians, greed on the part of settlers and

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.archive.org/details/soulindian01unkngoog>

real estate magnates, government officials promoting a wide and vigorous expansion policy;<sup>2</sup> left over scores to settle from the Revolutionary War; with no doubt a not inconsiderable amount of the diabolical thrown to keep the flames of hatred, prejudice, and revenge recurrently fanned. And even if the vast majority of both Indians and whites were opposed to flagrant theft, cruelty, and related outrages, there were always enough bad whites and bad Indians to exacerbate matters and ruin things for the rest. Even Shawnee Chief Tecumseh (1768-1813),<sup>3</sup> one of the most vociferous proponents of war against United States encroachment, realized it was incumbent on the Indians themselves to maintain a higher moral dignity if they were to defeat the whites. And yet as much as he tried, even his efforts could not succeed in curbing the rank savagery and brutality of some of his own adherents and allies -- a failing which, sure enough as he could have predicted, did, by giving his opponents a real or seeming pretext, have a devastating effect on undermining Indian military efforts and claims for justice.

It is little appreciated that *legal technicalities* won the west as much as money, (albeit perhaps "well-meaning") con-artists, guns, liquor, and disease. In spirit the United States was hypocrite in its dealings with the Natives insofar that it was careful to deny the latter the opportunity of self-determination, democratically combine, and choose their own representatives; just as the British had denied the same of the colonists. And since the Indians were not allowed the choice of uniting, it then became a relatively easy matter of assailing them piecemeal -- which is in fact and of course how they were conquered.

To add to their difficulties, the Indians generally did not have resources, patience, and discipline to fight a standing army, and organizationally and logistically speaking were little better than militia. Yet when the United States threw their own militia at the Indians the Natives on a number of occasions managed to triumph against them -- as at Harmar's Defeat (Oct. 19-22, 1790) and The Battle of the Wabash (Nov. 4, 1791). At the Wabash (aka "St. Clair's Defeat"), the worst military catastrophe the United States *ever* suffered at the hands of the Indians, indigenous leaders Miami Chief Michikinikwa (Little Turtle) and Shawnee Chief Weyapiersenwah (Blue Jacket) against St. Clair played roles not unlike that of Shelby and Campbell against Ferguson; and rank these chiefs with King Philip, Pontiac, Black Hawk, Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, Geronimo, Modoc Captain Jack, Chief Joseph, for highest military honors in AmerIndian history. Looking at the map, it comes as a bit of surprise how deeply into the interior these earliest battles were fought; that is on the border of present day states Ohio and Indiana, and which serves to show how aggravated and provoked the Natives were by United States demands and aggression.

When Tecumseh tried to unite the tribes against the invaders he was pursuing a cause that was late in coming and had little real hope of succeeding. If we remember him today with admiration it was for the valiant and honor-saving gesture of what he attempted; for few then or later expected it was feasible for him to accomplish what he set out on to do. For one thing (among the many we might mention), the Indians were not all communalists; some themselves owned slaves. Further, like the U.S. in the Revolutionary War, they were not without some in their midst who were ready to sell their own people for a price; others who (like the Loyalists of the Revolutionary War; per the British) understandably felt it more safe and practical to side with the United States, and as earlier mention it was necessary to maintain a certain moral integrity for purposes of providing the Indian movement with political (or what we might call public relations) credibility. In order then to prevail, Tecumseh in other words had to be both Congress and George Washington -- a most ambitious of tasks to state it mildly.

Yet if Tecumseh did have one quality that *might* have made it all possible it was his famous skill as an orator. Both friend and foe alike expressed great respect for his force and ability in this regard. Perhaps then the best way to remember and commemorate him is by his speeches. For this purpose therefore I have assembled a number that have come down to us. How accurate they are in reporting what was originally spoken is open to question. But they would nonetheless seem to be authentic in their parts and in substance if not always in word for word detail.

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<sup>2</sup> Including linking the Eastern states with the Mississippi for economic purposes; and the Southern states with the Gulf of Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> Which properly pronounced, by the way, sounds more like "Te-coom-suh" than "Te-cuhm-suh." It is said to mean "Panther Across The Sky;" that is "Shooting Star."

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*Speech given in response to the establishment by the U.S. of Fort Dearborn (present day Chicago) as recalled by Chief Simon Pokagon of the Potawatomi Nation. This appeared as part of a larger article by Pokagon, "The Massacre<sup>4</sup> of Fort Dearborn at Chicago;" found in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, vol. XCVIII, No. 586, March 1899, pp. 649-656. States Pokagon: "My father and many others who listened to the speeches of Tecumseh many times repeated to me his words when I was a boy, but it was impossible to give an idea of their spirit and power."*

Before me stand the rightful owners of kwaw-notchi-we au-kee [this beautiful land].

The Great Spirit in His wisdom gave it to you and your children to defend, and placed you here.

But ä-te-wä [alas!] the incoming race, like a huge serpent, is coiling closer and closer about you.

And not content with hemming you in on every side, they have built at She-gog-ong [Chicago], in the very center of our country, a military fort, garrisoned with soldiers, ready and equipped for battle.

As sure as waw-kwen-og [the heavens] are above you they are determined to destroy you and your children and occupy this goodly land themselves.

Then they will destroy these forests, whose branches wave in the winds above the graves your fathers, chanting their praises.

If you doubt it, come, go with me eastward or southward a few days' journey along your ancient mi-kan-og [trails], and I will show you a land you once occupied made desolate.

There the forests of untold years have been hewn down and cast into the fire!

There be-sheck-kee and waw-mawsh-ka-she [the buffalo and deer] pe-nay-shen and ke-gon [the fowl and fish], are all gone.

There the woodland birds, whose sweet songs once pleased your ears, have forsaken the land, never to return.

And waw-bi-gon-ag [the wild flowers], which your maidens once loved to wear, have all withered and died.

You must bear in mind these strangers are not as you -- they are devoid of natural affection, loving gold or gain better than one another, or ki-tchi-tchag [their own souls].

Some of them follow on your track as quietly as maw-in-gawn [the wolf] pursues the deer, to shoot you down, as you hunt and kill mé-she-bé-zhe (the panther).

But a few years since I saw with my own eyes a young white man near the O-hi-o River who was held by our people as a prisoner of war. He won the hearts of his captors with his apparent friendship and goodwill, while murder was in his heart.

They trusted him as they trusted one another. But he most treacherously betrayed their confidence, and secretly killed not less than nech-to-naw [twenty] before his crimes were detected, and then he had fled.

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<sup>4</sup> Also known as the battle of Fort Dearborn, 15 August 1812. Pokagon's article in *Harper's* also furnishes a moving, very informative (on a number of levels), and by all appearances, accurate and trustworthy account of the same. I would reproduce it here in its entirety but for the need to stay within the bounds of our allotted topic.

After this, when Chief [Josiah] Harmar [a United States general] invited some of our head men to meet him at Fort Harmar to try and settle our war spirits, that same young man lay in wait, and secretly shot down me-no au-nish-naw-by [a good Indian man] just as he reached the treaty grounds; and yet for that outrageous crime he went unpunished, and today is being petted by wau-be au-nene-eg [white men] as you pet him who kills mé-she-bé-zhe [the panther].

I speak of this case -- and there are many of them within my own personal knowledge -- that you may know our enemies are cunning, crafty, and cruel, without honor, without natural affection.

When we were many and strong, and they were few and weak, they reached out their hands for wido-kaw-ké-win [help], and we filled them with wie-aus and maw-daw-min [meat and corn]; we lived wa-naw-kiwen [in peace] together; but now they are many and strong, and we are getting few and weak, they waw nen-dam [have forgotten] the deep debt of mawmo-i-wendam [gratitude] they owe us, and are now scheming to drive us towards ke-so [the setting sun], into desert places far from ke-win [home] and da-na ki aukée [our native land].

Eh [yes], they come to us with lips smoother than bi-me-da [oil], and words sweeter than amose-póma [honey], but beware of them! The venomous amo [wasp] is in their odaw [heart], and their dealing with us when we have not tamely submitted, has ever been maw-kaw-te and ashki-koman [powder and lead]; against such mau-tchi au-nene [wicked men] our only pagos-seni-ma [hope], our only inin-ijim [safety] is in joining all our tribes, and then, and not until then, will we be able to drive the soulless invaders back! Fail in this, and awak-ani-win [slavery] and ne-baw [death] are ours!

And lastly, do not forget that what peace you have enjoyed the past 50 years in your homes and on your hunting grounds you entirely owe to the brave Pontiac, who, at the risk of his own life, destroyed the forts of your enemies around the Great Lakes, driving the white invaders back.

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*Speech given at Vincennes to General and Governor William Henry Harrison, 12 (or as given elsewhere, 11) August 1810; as presented in American Eloquence: A Collection of Speeches and Address (1857) by Frank Moore, pp. 354-356. Moore in turn quotes from Biography and History of the Indians of North America (1818), by Samuel G. Drake, and notes "Mr. Drake, the author from whom this speech is taken, expresses some doubts of the correctness of this version of it; but adds: 'nevertheless it may give the true meaning. One important paragraph ought to be added, which was, that the Americans had driven them from the sea-coast, and that they would shortly push them into the lakes, and that they were determined to make a stand where they were.'"*

*As preface, Moore explains "Tecumseh received the stamp of greatness from the hand of nature, and had his lot been cast in a different state of society, he would have shone as one of the most distinguished of men. He was endowed with a powerful mind, with the soul of a hero. There was an uncommon dignity in his countenance and manners; by the former he was easily discovered after death, among the rest of the slain, for he wore no insignia of distinction. When girded with a silk sash, and told by General [Henry] Proctor that he was made a brigadier in the British service, for his conduct at Brownstown and Magagua, he returned the present with respectful contempt. Born with no title to command but his native greatness, every tribe yielded submission to him at once, and no one ever disputed his precedence. Subtle and firm in war, he was possessed of uncommon eloquence; his speeches might bear a comparison with those of the most celebrated orators of Greece or Rome. His invective was terrible, as may be seen in the reproaches which he applied to General Proctor, a few days previous to his death. His form was uncommonly elegant; his stature about six feet, and his limbs were perfectly proportioned. He was honorably interred by the Americans, who respected him, as an inveterate, but a magnanimous enemy.<sup>5</sup> He left a son, who, when his father fell, was about seventeen years of age, and who fought by his side. To this son, the King of England, in 1814, sent a present of a handsome sword, as a mark of respect for the memory of his father.*

*"In 1809 Governor Harrison purchased of the Delawares and other tribes of Indians, a large tract of country on both sides of the Wabash, and extending up the river sixty miles above Vincennes. Tecumseh*

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<sup>5</sup> Accounts vary as to what happened to Tecumseh himself and his remains; with the truth of which yet to be formally settled.

*was absent during the time of the negotiation, and at his return expressed great dissatisfaction with the sale. On the twelfth of August of the next year (1810) he met the governor in council at Vincennes, when he addressed him as follows:”*

It is true I am a Shawanee. My forefathers were warriors. Their son is a warrior. From them I only take my existence; from my tribe I take nothing. I am the maker of my own fortune; and oh! that I could make that of my red people, and of my country, as great as the conceptions of my mind, when I think of the Spirit that rules the universe. I would not then come to Governor Harrison, to ask him to tear the treaty and to obliterate the landmark; but I would say to him, sir, you have liberty to return to your own country. The being within, communing with past ages, tells me that once, nor until lately, there was no white man on this continent. That it then all belonged to red men, children of the same parents, placed on it by the Great Spirit that made them, to keep it, to traverse it, to enjoy its productions, and to fill it with the same race. Once a happy race. Since made miserable by the white people, who are never contented, but always encroaching. The way, and the only way to check and to stop this evil, is for all the red men to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was at first, and should be yet; for it never was divided, but belongs to all for the use of each. That no part has a right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers; those who want all, and will not do with less.

The white people have no right to take the land from the Indians, because they had it first; it is theirs. They may sell, but all must join. Any sale not made by all is not valid. The late sale is bad. It was made by a part only. Part do not know how to sell. It requires all to make a bargain for all. All red men have equal rights to the unoccupied land. The right of occupancy is as good in one place as in another. There cannot be two occupations in the same place. The first excludes all others. It is not so in hunting or travelling; for there the same ground will serve many, as they may follow each other all day; but the camp is stationary, and that is occupancy. It belongs to the first who sits down on his blanket or skins which he has thrown upon the ground; and till he leaves it no other has a right.<sup>6</sup>

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*Speech to the Creeks at Tuckabatchee (in modern day Alabama) in October 1811; as recorded by Sam Dale; see The Life and times of General Sam Dale, the Mississippi Partisan (1860) by John Francis Hamtramck (1809-1884), pp. 59-61. Dale was an Indian fighter; so it is not unreasonable to surmise that the version he gives is or may be biased in order to depict Tecumseh in a more than usual hostile light.*

In defiance of the white warriors of Ohio and Kentucky, I have traveled through their settlements, once our favorite hunting grounds. No war-whoop was sounded, but there is blood on our knives. The Pale-faces felt the blow, but knew not whence it came.

Accursed be the race that has seized on our country and made women of our warriors. Our fathers, from their tombs, reproach us as slaves and cowards. I hear them now in the wailing winds.

The Muscogee was once a mighty people. The Georgians trembled at your war-whoop, and the maidens of my tribe, on the distant lakes, sung the prowess of your warriors and sighed for their embraces.

Now your very blood is white; your tomahawks have no edge; your bows and arrows were buried with your fathers. Oh!

Muscogees, brethren of my mother, brush from your eyelids the sleep of slavery; once more strike for vengeance; once more for your country. The spirits of the mighty dead complain. Their tears drop from the weeping skies. Let the white race perish.

They seize your land; they corrupt your women; they trample on the ashes of your dead!

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<sup>6</sup> For a significantly extended and more complete version of this same speech, see: <http://www.snowowl.com/hhtecumsehsspeech.html> Though what their source is they don't state.

Back, whence they came, upon a trail of blood, they must be driven.

Back! back, ay, into the great water whose accursed waves brought them to our shores !

Burn their dwellings! Destroy their stock! Slay their wives and children! The Red Man owns the country, and the Pale-faces must never enjoy it.

War now! War forever! War upon the living! War upon the dead! Dig their very corpses from the grave. Our country must give no rest to a white man's bones.

This is the will of the Great Spirit, revealed to my brother, his familiar, the Prophet of the Lakes. He sends me to you.

All the tribes of the north are dancing the war-dance. Two mighty warriors across the seas will send us arms.

Tecumseh will soon return to his country. My prophets shall tarry with you. They will stand between you and the bullets of your enemies. When the white men approach you the yawning earth shall swallow them up.

Soon shall you see my arm of fire stretched athwart the sky. I will stamp my foot at Tippecanoe, and the very earth shall shake.<sup>7</sup>

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*Address to the Osages 1811; as per Memoirs of a Captivity Among the Indians of North America, from childhood to the age of nineteen: with Anecdotes Descriptive of Their Manners and Customs (1823), by John Dunn Hunter (1798?-1827), pp. 45-48.*

Brothers, we all belong to one family; we are all children of the Great Spirit; we walk in the same path; slake our thirst at the same spring; and now affairs of the greatest concern lead us to smoke the pipe around the same council fire!

Brothers, we are friends; we must assist each other to bear our burdens. The blood of many of our fathers and brothers has run like water on the ground, to satisfy the avarice of the white men. We, ourselves, are threatened with a great evil; nothing will pacify them but the destruction of all the red men.

Brothers, when the white men first set foot on our grounds, they were hungry; they had no place on which to spread their blankets, or to kindle their fires. They were feeble; they could do nothing for themselves. Our fathers commiserated their distress, and shared freely with them whatever the Great Spirit had given his red children. They gave them food when hungry, medicine when sick, spread skins for them to sleep on, and gave them grounds, that they might hunt and raise corn. Brothers, the white people are like poisonous serpents: when chilled, they are feeble and harmless; but invigorate them with warmth, and they sting their benefactors to death.

The white people came among us feeble; and now that we have made them strong, they wish to kill us, or drive us back, as they would wolves and panthers.

Brothers, the white men are not friends to the Indians: at first, they only asked for land sufficient for a wigwam; now, nothing will satisfy them but the whole of our hunting grounds, from the rising to the setting sun.

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<sup>7</sup> As happened, prophecies made by Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa, the prophet, regarding earthquakes and a comet as well proved true; in the case of the comet thanks to astronomical forecasts provided by the British. Similar and strange predictions made by Indians also took place in the related War with the Creeks (1813-1814).

Brothers, the white men want more than our hunting grounds; they wish to kill our old men, women, and little ones.

Brothers, many winters ago there was no land; the sun did not rise and set; all was darkness. The Great Spirit made all things. He gave the white people a home beyond the great waters. He supplied these grounds with game, and gave them to his red children; and he gave them strength and courage to defend them.

Brothers, my people wish for peace; the red men all wish for peace; but where the white people are, there is no peace for them, except it be on the bosom of our mother.

Brothers, the white men despise and cheat the Indians; they abuse and insult them; they do not think the red men sufficiently good to live. The red men have borne many and great injuries; they ought to suffer them no longer. My people will not; they are determined on vengeance; they have taken up the tomahawk; they will make it fat with blood; they will drink the blood of the white people.

Brothers, my people are brave and numerous; but the white people are too strong for them alone. I wish you to take up the tomahawk with them. If we all unite, we will cause the rivers to stain the great waters with their blood.

Brothers, if you do not unite with us, they will first destroy us, and then you will fall an easy prey to them. They have destroyed many nations of red men, because they were not united, because they were not friends to each other.

Brothers, The white people send runners amongst us; they wish to make us enemies, that they may sweep over and desolate our hunting grounds, like devastating winds, or rushing waters.

Brothers, our Great Father [the King of England] over the great waters is angry with the white people, our enemies. He will send his brave warriors against them; he will send us rifles, and whatever else we want -- he is our friend, and we are his children.

Brothers, who are the white people that we should fear them? They cannot run fast, and are good marks to shoot at: they are only men; our fathers have killed many of them: we are not squaws, and we will stain the earth red with their blood.

Brothers, the Great Spirit is angry with our enemies; he speaks in thunder, and the earth swallows up villages, and drinks up the Mississippi. The great waters will cover their lowlands; their corn cannot grow; and the Great Spirit will sweep those who escape to the hills from the earth with his terrible breath.

Brothers, we must be united; we must smoke the same pipe; we must fight each other's battles; and, more than all, we must love the Great Spirit: he is for us; he will destroy our enemies, and make all his red children happy.

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*Speech to and at a conference with William Henry Harrison at Vincennes in 1811; reported in Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet (1878), by Edward Eggleston and L. E. Seelye, pp. 182-86.*

Brother: I wish you to listen to me well. As I think you do not clearly understand what I before said to you, I will explain it again. Brother, since the peace war made, you have killed some of the Shawnees, Winnebagoes, Delawares, and Miamis, and you have taken our land from us, and I do not see how we can remain at peace if you continue to do so. You try to force the red people to do some injury. It is you that are

pushing them on to do mischief. You endeavor to make distinctions. You wish to prevent the Indians doing as we wish them -- to unite, and let them consider their lands as the common property of the whole; you take tribes aside and advise them not to come into this measure; and until our design is accomplished we do not wish to accept of your invitation to go and see the President. The reason I tell you this, you want, by your distinctions of Indian tribes in allotting to each a particular tract of land, to make them to war with each other. You never see an Indian come and endeavor to make the white people do so. You are continually driving the red people; when, at last, you will drive them into the Great Lake, where they can't either stand or walk.

Brother, you ought to know what you are doing with the Indians. Perhaps it is by direction of the President to make those distinctions. It is a very bad thing, and we do not like it. Since my residence at Tippecanoe we have endeavored to level all distinctions -- to destroy village chiefs, by whom all mischief is done. It is they who sell our lands to the Americans. Our object is to let our affairs be transacted by warriors.

Brother, this land that was sold and the goods that were given for it were only done by a few. The treaty was afterwards brought here, and the Weas were induced to give their consent because of their small numbers. The treaty at Fort Wayne was made through the threats of Winnemac; but in future we are prepared to punish those chiefs who may come forward to propose to sell the land. If you continue to purchase of them it will produce war among the different tribes, and at last, I do not know what will be the consequence to the white people.

Brother, I was glad to hear your speech. You said that if we could show that the land was sold by people that had no right to sell, you would restore it. Those that did sell did not own it. It was me. These tribes set up a claim, but the tribes with me will not agree with their claim. If the land is not restored to us you will see, when we return to our homes, how it will be settled. We shall have a great council, at which all the tribes will be present, when we shall show to those who sold that they had no right to the claim that they set up; and we will see what will be done to those chiefs that did sell the land to you. I am not alone in this determination; it is the determination of all the warriors and red people that listen to me. I now wish you to listen to me. If you do not, it will appear as if you wished me to kill all the chiefs that sold you the land. I tell you so because I am authorized by all the tribes to do so. I am the head of them all; I am a warrior, and all the warriors will meet together in two or three moons from this; then I will call for those chiefs that sold you the land and shall know what to do with them. If you do not restore the land, you will have a hand in killing them.

Brother, do not believe that I came here to get presents from you. If you offer us any, we will not take. By taking goods from you, you will hereafter say that with them you purchased another piece of land from us... It has been the object of both myself and brother to prevent the lands being sold. Should you not return the land, it will occasion us to call a great council that will meet at the Huron village, where the council-fire has already been lighted, at which those who sold the lands shall be called, and shall suffer for their conduct.

Brother, I wish you would take pity on the red people and do what I have requested. If you will not give up the land and do cross the boundary of your present settlement, it will be very hard, and produce great troubles among us. How can we have confidence in the white people? When Jesus Christ came on earth, you killed him and nailed him on a cross. You thought he was dead, but you were mistaken. You have Shakers among you, and you laugh and make light of their worship. Everything I have said to you is the truth. The Great Spirit has inspired me, and I speak nothing but the truth to you... Brother, I hope you will confess that you ought not to have listened to those bad birds who bring you bad news. I have declared myself freely to you, and if any explanation should be required from our town, send a man who can speak to us. If you think proper to give us any presents, and we can be convinced that they are given through friendship alone, we will accept them. As we intend to hold our council at the Huron village, that is near the British, we may probably make them a visit. Should they offer us any presents of goods, we will not take them; but should they offer us powder and the tomahawk, we will take the powder and refuse the tomahawk. I wish you, brother, to Consider everything I have said as true, and that it is the sentiment of all the red people that listen to me.



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*Speech to British Maj. Gen. Henry Proctor given shortly before the battle of the Thames, Oct. 5, 1805; said to have been found among Proctor's captured papers following that conclusive engagement. American Eloquence: A Collection of Speeches and Address (1857) by Frank Moore, pp. 354-356.*

Father, listen to your children! you have them now all before you. The war before this our British father gave the hatchet to his red children, when old chiefs were alive. They are now dead. In that war our father was thrown on his back by the Americans, and our father took them by the hand without our knowledge; and we are afraid that our father will do so again at this time.

Summer before last, when I came forward with my red brethren, and was ready to take up the hatchet, in favor of our British father, we were told not to be in a hurry, that he had not yet determined to fight the Americans.

Listen! When war was declared, our father stood up and gave us the tomahawk, and told us that he was ready to strike the Americans; that he wanted our assistance, and that he would certainly get us our lands back, which the Americans had taken from us.

Listen! You told us, at that time, to bring forward our families to this place, and we did so: -- and you promised to take care of them, and that they should want for nothing, while the men would go and fight the enemy. That we need not trouble ourselves about the enemy's garrisons; that we knew nothing about them, and that our father would attend to that part of the business. You also told your red children, that you would take good care of your garrison here, which made our hearts glad.

Listen! When we were last at the Rapids, it is true we gave you little assistance. It is hard to fight people who live like ground-hogs.

Father, listen! Our fleet has gone out; we know they have fought:<sup>8</sup> we have heard the great guns: but know nothing of what has happened to our father with one arm.<sup>9</sup> Our ships have gone one way, and we are much astonished to see our father tying up every thing and preparing to run away the other, without letting his red children know what his intentions are. You always told us to remain here and take care of our lands. It made our hearts glad to hear that was your wish. Our great father, the King, is the head, and you represent him. You always told us that you would never draw your foot off British ground; but now, father, we see you are drawing back, and we are sorry to see our father doing so without seeing the enemy. We must compare our father's conduct to a fat animal that carries its tail upon its back, but when affrighted, it drops it between its legs and runs off.

Listen, Father! The Americans have not yet defeated us by land; neither are we sure that they have done so by water -- we therefore wish to remain here and tight our enemy, should they make their appearance. If they defeat us, we will then retreat with our father.

At the battle of the Rapids,<sup>10</sup> last war, the Americans certainly defeated us; and when we retreated to our father's fort in that place, the gates were shut against us -- We were afraid that it would now be the case, but instead of that, we now see our British father preparing to march out of his garrison.

Father! You have got the arms and ammunition which our great father sent for his red children. If you have an idea of going away, give them to us, and you may go and welcome, for us. Our lives are in the hands of the Great Spirit. We are determined to defend our lands, and if it is his will, we wish to leave our bones upon them.

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<sup>8</sup> That is at the Battle of Lake Erie, 10 Sept. 1813.

<sup>9</sup> Commander Robert Heriot Barclay, and who had lost his left arm in naval fighting in 1809.

<sup>10</sup> Fallen Timbers, 20 August 1794.

William Thomas Sherman

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