## "The Indians at Washington," *Vermont Republican and American Yeoman*, February 25, 1822.



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[Transcription Page 1, Column 5]

## THE INDIANS AT WASHINGTON

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From the National Intelligencer. To the Editors.

Gentlemen. Several persons having expressed an earnest wish to see some account of the last conference of the Indians with the President, the inclosed letter, intended for a distant friend, is at your service. I regret that I have not leis-ure to make it more worthy of the public eye.

A SUBSCRIBER

Washington, Feb. 6. 1822.

My Dear Friend: Happening to make a morning visit to the President two or three days ago, I learnt that the Indians, now in Washington, would be there in a few minutes, for the purpose of having a talk with their Great Father, and I was tempted to wait and witness a spec--tacle to me so novel and interesting. -They accordingly soon arrived, and were shewn into the chamber to the right of the drawing room. When I entered, I found the whole thirteen, that is twelve men and one woman, seated round the room, and Major O'Fallon, the officer who has charge of them, with four or five other gentlemen, standing at the fire place. They were all dressed in blue cloth surtouts, with red cuffs and capes, blue pantaloons and boots — in short, in complete American costume, except that they wore on their heads a sort of coro--net bedizened with red and blue foil, and

stuck all round feathers of the gay--est colours. Their faces, too, were painted, though in a less fantastic style than usual. The squaw sat on a sofa near her husband, dressed in scarlet pan--taloons, and wrapped in a green cam--blet cloak, without any ornament on her long black hair. They consisted, as I was told, of the Pawnees, Kansas, Ot--toes, Mahas, and Missouries. The five chiefs were distinguished by two silver epaulettes, and the two half chiefs by one. They were evidently not easy in their new habiliments — their coats seem--ed to pinch them about their shoulders; now and then they would take off their uneasy head dresses, and one sought a temporary relief by pulling off his boots.

Upon Major O'Fallon suggesting that they left the presents they intended for the President, the young men were im--mediately despatched by their chiefs, and the squaw by her husband, for their intended tokens of friendship and good will. They returned in a few minutes, with buffalo skins, pipes, mocasins, and feathered head dresses. The President en--tered, with the Secretary of war, and taking his seat, delivered to them, through the interpreters, an extempore address, from the notes held in his hand and, as they used two distinct languages, it was necessary that every sentence should be twice interpreted. The Pres--ident told them he was glad to see them — that, when he had met them before, he was too much engaged in receiv--ing his great council to show them the attention he wished — and that now he had more leisure, and he was as pleased to see them in the dress of their white

brethren as he had been before in that of their own country. He adverted to the visit they had made to our large towns - to our arsenals, navy yards, and the like, and told them that as much as they had seen, it could give them but a faint idea of our numbers and strength - as the deer and the buffalo they might chance to meet in passing through their forests bore a small proportion to those they did not see. That they had met

## [Transcription Page 2, Column 1]

With but few of our warriors, because they were not wanted at the seat of government, and because we were at peace with all the world — but if we were in a state of war, all our citizens would take arms into their hands and become brave warriors. He enjoined them to preserve peace with one another, and to listen to no voice which should persuade them to distrust the friendship of the United States. They were told that they should receive some presents, and be conducted safely back to their wives and children by Major O'Fallon, whose advice they were told to consider as the advice of their great father, the President, and were earnestly recommended to pursue it.

This address was interpreted, sentence by sentence, and at the end of each, first those who spoke one language, and then those who spoke the other, gave, invariably, a sign of assent, which was a sort of articulate sound or grunt. Before the President had finished, the Judges of the Supreme Court, and some others, happening to call on the President, increased the number of attentive

auditors.

When the President had finished. Major O'F. then told them their Great Father was ready to hear what they had to say, and he encouraged them to speak with the same freedom that they would use in their own village. The principal Pawnee Chief then stept [stepped] forward, and, having shaken hands with the President, the Secretary of War, and Major O'Fal--lon, he delivered his oration, pausing however, after every two or three sent--ences, until the interpreter could do his office. He appeared to be about 45 years of age, was 6 feet high; had a fine face and person, a dignified gravity, and gestures which, though violent and ex--cessive, were never ungraceful and al--ways appropriate. He was followed by the four other Chiefs, each of whom ex--hibited a style of oratory of his own, though they all used the same vehement and significant gesticulation. Short speeches were then made by their follow--ers — they brought their presents, and, laying them at the feet of the President, made some pertinent remarks on each, explaining its history or use.

Of these numerous speeches I regret that I had not thought of taking notes, or even of impressing on my mind what was said by each. As it is, I can only recal [recall] some of their most striking re-marks, without always remembering by which speaker they were made.

The first speaker said, that he had heard the words of his great Father, and they had gone in at one ear, but would not go out at the other; that they had seen our chiefs, our towns, our buildings, and were much pleased with

all they had seen. They found the Uni--ted States populous and powerful, while they were weak and few; that the Great Spirit had made some men white and others red; the white men could make fine houses, and clothing, and guns, and furniture. The red men could make nothing; the white man lived upon the animals he raised at home; the red man hunted the buffalo, whose skin he wore and whose flesh he ate. Yet the Great Spirit intended there should be red men and white men, and protected them both. He said that some white men had offer--ed to send preachers among them, to teach them their way of worshipping the Great Spirit, and of cultivating the ground. He said there were a good many buffaloes in his country, which his nation wished to be permitted to hunt a while longer; and after he was dead and the buffalo extinguished, his nation might plant corn and raise animals like the whites. He gave thanks for their new clothes, professed friendship for the whites, and hoped soon to return to his own country.

The next orator, in a different language, began by shewing his Hans, and
stating that they were clean — unstained
with blood; that he had from a boy
been a friend of the whites, and had been,
on that account, an object of suspicion
among his own tribe. He said he had
seen our towns, and our churches, and
that we worshipped the Great Spirit one
way, and they worshipped him another.
He, like the first speaker, deprecated the
habits of civilization so long as the buffalo
were abundant in their country.

One speaker began by saying he had

been very wicked in his life; he had been like a mad dog; he had killed men be-longing to all three tribes, pointing to the rest; but, since he had known his father, (Major O'F.,) he had been at peace. For the last three years, he had been as if his arms were broke — he had not struck a blow.

An ardent attachment to their country as well as their habits of life was frequently manifested. They said to their "Great Father," you have a fine country, great towns, large houses to live in, fine clothes to wear; but we love our country as much as you love yours. — You love to work — we don't want to work as long as we can kill buffalo and steal horses. Our villages are small — we wont lie and say they are as large as yours — but our men are as brave. Such as you see us, such are the men we left behind us.

Two of them spoke with great humility of the red people compared with the

## [Transcription Page 2, Column 2]

whites, whom they distinctly admitted the Great Spirit had made their super--iors. They all expressed the pleasure they derived from their new clothes, and one said he felt in his new dress like an animal that had shed his old hair and come out sleek in the spring.

Though they in general have a com--posedness and self-possession which is unknown to civilized men, it was clear that the first speaker was not quite at his ease. Each succeeding orator, how--ever, seemed to feel less of imbarrass--ment or rather reserve, until the fourth

was as loud as you ever heard a lawyer at a county court bar.

After the chiefs & half chiefs had spo--ken, each of their followers also made a short speech. One of these, a young man about 25 years of age, upward of six feet high, with a remarkably handsome face, shewed a hesitation at first that produced a general smile from the more experienced orators. He was flu--ent enough, however, after he had be--gun. He said that his father had died when he was very young, and that he had grown up like the grass which again shoots forth after it seems to have been killed by the frost. He was not yet a great man — he was a mere boy — he was not equal to his chief, but he endeavor--ed to keep close behind him (putting one fore finger behind the other.) He hop--ed one day to be a leader in his tribe. This youth had been mentioned by his chief in warm terms of commendation and friendship, and an epaulette indirect--ly solicited for him.

When our lordly sex had finished their speeches, which they seemed as fond of making as are the members of some great councils, the squaw, a come--ly young woman of eighteen, urged by some of them, apparently in sport, ap--proached the President, and hanging her head on one side, with a pleasing smile and yet more pleasing timidity, said that her Great Father had given the red men new clothes like white men, and they looked very well in them; that those who had no silver medals would look still better if they had them, and that she would like to be dressed as a white woman if her Great Father

would give her a new dress. I suspected the first part of her speech was suggested by others, and the last was as natural as her blushes and smiles. You see that the love of finery is not created by civilization; it merely becomes more chaste and discriminating.

Before the presents were delivered, the chief of the Great Pawnees decorated himself in a singular head dress of tur--key feathers, so stuck in the ridge of a long slip of wampum as to form a crown round his brows, and a large oval down his back, which it almost completely covered. An elderly chief of the Mis--souri tribe, who proved to be the hus--band of the squaw, followed his example, and substituted his native head dress for that which had been given him. This consisted of a profusion of horse hair, stained, of a bright scarlet, and sur--mounted (risum teneatis?) With two pol--ished taper horns, as long as those of an ox. There was, however, I assure you, nothing in the looks or demeanor of his spouse to justify the wicked ideas which this ill-omened ornament suggested.

After the conference was at an end, they partook of wine, cake, and other refreshments, of which they were no wise sparing; and then lighting their pipes, filled with wild tobacco, they smoked a while, and presented their several pipes to the President; Chief Justice, and others, to take a whiff, in toke of peace and amity.

It is impossible to see these people, and believe, as I do, that they are des-tined, in no very long lapse of time, to disappear from the face of the earth, without feeling for them great interest.

With some vice, and much grossness, they possess many fine traits of charac--ter; and we never can forget that they were the native lords of that soil which they are gradually yielding to their in--vaders. Yes, I firmly believe that all our liberal and humane attempts to civ--ilize them will prove hopeless and una--vailing. Whether it is that they acquire our bad habits before our good ones, or that their course of life has, by its long continuance, so modified the nature of their race that it cannot thrive under the restraints of civilization, I know not; but it is certain that all the tribes which have remained among us have gradual--ly dwindled to insignificance or become entirely extinct. You know that every experiment to rear the young wild duck has failed, and that they die as certainly by your kindness as your neglect. It may be so with them. Considering the race to be thus transient, I have often wished that more pains were bestowed, And by more competent persons, in re--cording what is most remarkable and peculiar among them, now that those peculiarities are fresh and unchanged by their connections with us. And I am sorry that I have not been able to give you a more faithful picture of a scene which. I believe above all others, is cal--culated to shew them to the best advan--tage. I am sure I have given you a faint idea of the very lively gratification it afforded.

I am truly, your friend, &c.