

## THE CHEROKEE INDIANS.

### Four Thousand Indians in Council--Speech by the Principal Chief--Alliance with the Confederate States.

The determination of the Cherokee Indians to unite their fortunes with the Confederate States of America has already been announced. A grand council, consisting of about four thousand persons, was held at Tahlequah on the 21st of August, when John Ross, the principal Chief, delivered the following address:

*Friends and Fellow-Citizens*—It affords me great pleasure to see so many of you on the present occasion. The invitation to you to meet here went from the Executive Department in compliance with the wishes of many citizens, who desired to make stronger the cords that bind us together, and to advance the common welfare. The circumstances under which you have assembled are full of import. You have precious rights at stake, and your posterity, it may be, will be affected by the sentiments you may express. You need not be told that evil times have befallen the great Government with which we have been connected. Rent by dissensions, its component parts stand in hostile array. They have marshaled powerful armies, who have already engaged in deadly conflicts. The United States claim to contend for the integrity of their Government—the Confederate States for their independence and a Government of their own. Gigantic preparations are made by both sides to carry on the war. The calamities, the length, and the result of that war cannot be foretold. The Cherokees will be concerned in its issue, which, in all probability, it now appears will be the establishment of the new Government. The attention of your authorities was early directed to the subject from their position, and by correspondence with officers of the Confederate States, and the delicate and responsible duty devolving upon them of de-

deciding to some extent the course to be pursued by the Cherokee Nation in the conflict between the whites, to whom she was equally bound in peace and friendship by existing treaties. Our political relations had long been established with the United States Government, and which embraced the seceding as well as the adhering States. Those relations still exist. The United States have not asked us to engage in the war, and we could not do so without coming into collision with our friends and neighbors, with whom we are identified by location and similar institutions. Nor, on the other hand, had we any cause to take arms against the United States, and prematurely and wantonly stake our lives and all our rights upon the hazards of the conflict. I felt it to be my duty, therefore, then to advise the Cherokee people to remain neutral, and issued a proclamation to that effect. I am gratified to know that this course has met the approbation of the great mass of the Cherokee people, and been respected by the officers of both Governments in a manner that commands our highest gratitude. Our soil has not been invaded, our peace has not been molested, nor our rights interfered with by either Government. On the contrary, the people have remained at home, cultivated their farms in security, and are reaping fruitful returns for their labors. But for false fabrications, we should have pursued our ordinary vocations, without any excitement at home or misrepresentations, and consequent misapprehensions abroad as to the real sentiments and purposes of the Cherokee people. Alarming reports, however, have been pertinaciously circulated at home, and unjust imputations among the people of the States. The object seems to have been to create strife and conflict, instead of harmony and good will among the people themselves, and to engender prejudice and distrust instead of kindness and confidence towards them by the officers and citizens of the Confederate States.

My fellow-citizens, you have now an opportunity to express your views in an authoritative manner upon the policy which has been pursued by your officers in the present juncture of affairs and upon questions affecting

the harmony of the people, and upon the domestic institutions of the country. The people are here! say whether you are arrayed in classes one against the other—full blood against the white and mixed blood citizens? Say whether you are faithful to the constitution and laws of your country? Whether you abide by all the rights they guarantee, particularly that of slavery? And whether you have any wish or purpose to abolish or interfere with it in the Cherokee Nation?

The position I have assumed in regard to all the important questions which affect the Cherokee people, has been too often proclaimed to be misunderstood, however much it may be misrepresented. The great object with me has been to have the Cherokee people harmonious and united in the full and free exercise and enjoyment of all their rights of person and property. Union is strength. Dissension is weakness, misery, ruin. In time of peace, enjoy peace together; in time of war, if war must come, fight together. As brothers, live; as brothers, die. While ready and willing to defend our firesides from the robber and murderer, let us not make war wantonly against the authority of the United or Confederate States, avoid conflict with either, and remain strictly neutral on our own soil. We have homes, endeared to us by every consideration, laws adopted to our condition, of our own choice, and rights and privileges of the highest character. Here they must be enjoyed, or nowhere else. When your nationality ceases here, it will live nowhere else. When these homes are lost, you will find no others like them. Then, my countrymen, as you regard your own rights, as you regard the welfare of your posterity, be prudent how you act. The permanent disruption of the United States is now probable. The State on our border, and the Indian Nations about us, have severed their connection from the United States and joined the Confederate States. Our general interests are inseparable from theirs, and it is not desirable that we should stand alone. The preservation of our rights and of our existence are above every consideration. And in view of all the circumstances of our situation, I do say to you frankly that, in my opinion, the time has now come when you should signify your consent for the authorities of the Nation

to adopt preliminary steps for an alliance with the Confederate States upon terms honorable and advantageous to the Cherokee Nation.

The following preamble and resolutions were subsequently adopted by acclamation :

*Whereas*, we, the Cherokee people, have been invited by the Executive of the Cherokee Nation, in compliance with the request of many citizens, to meet in general meeting, for the purpose of drawing more closely the bonds of friendship and sympathy which should characterize our conduct and mark our feeling toward each other, in view of the difficulties and dangers which have arisen from the fearful condition of affairs among the people of the several States; and for the purpose of giving a free and frank expression to the real sentiments we cherish toward each other, and of our true position in regard to questions which affect the general welfare; and particularly on the subject of slavery: Therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That we fully approve the neutrality recommended by the Principal Chief, in the war pending between the United and Confederate States, and tender to Gen. McCulloch our thanks for the respect he has shown to our position.

*Resolved*, That we renew the pledges given by the Executive of this Nation, of the friendship of the Cherokees towards the people of all the States, and particularly towards those on our immediate border, with whom our relations have been harmonious and cordial, and from whom they should not be separated.

*Resolved*, That we also take occasion to renew to the Creeks, Choctaws, Seminoles,

Chickasaws and Osages, assurances of continued friendship and brotherly feeling.

*Resolved*, That we hereby disavow any wish or purpose to create or perpetuate any distinctions between the citizens of our country as to the full and mixed blood, but regard each and all as our brothers, and entitled to equal rights and privileges, according to the Constitution and Laws of the Nation.

*Resolved*, That we proclaim unwavering attachment to the Constitution and Laws of the Cherokee Nation, and solemnly pledge ourselves to defend and support the same, and as far as in us lies, to secure to the citizens of this Nation all the rights and privileges which they guarantee to them.

*Resolved*, That among the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and Laws, we distinctly recognize that of property in negro slaves, and hereby publicly denounce as calumniators those who represent us to be Abolitionists, and as a consequence, hostile to the South, which is both the land of our birth and the land of our homes.

*Resolved*, That the great consideration with the Cherokee people should be a united and harmonious support and defence of their common rights, and we hereby pledge ourselves to mutually sustain our nationality, and to defend our lives and the integrity of our homes and soil, whenever the same shall be wantonly assailed by lawless marauders.

*Resolved*, That reposing full confidence in the constituted authorities of the Cherokee Nation, we submit to their wisdom the management of all questions which affect our interests growing out of the exigencies of the relations between the United and Confederate States of America, and which may render an alliance on our part with the latter States expedient and desirable.