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Report on Indians of the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1820

by Morrill Marston

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November 1820.

Sir,
 Your letter dated "Hackettville June 20 1820,"
 requesting me to give you the names of the Indian tribes
 around me within as large a circle as my information
 can be extended with convenience & accuracy — the
 extent of the territories they respectively occupy, with
 the nature of their Soil & Climate — their mode of life,
 Customs, Laws & political institutions, — the talents &
 Character of their Chiefs & other principal & influential men,
 and their disposition in respect to the introduction & promoting
 among them of education & civilization; what improvements
 in the present System of Indian trade could in my opinion
 be made, which would under this commercial intercourse
 with them more conducive to the promotion of peace between
 them & us, & contribute more efficiently to the improvement
 of their moral condition; together with a number of
 Particular Questions to be put to the Indians for their
 answers, or to be otherwise answered according to Common
 Stances, came to hand in due time & would have been
 answered immediately, had it been in my power to have
 done so as fully as I wished.

Soon after the receipt of your Communication, I invited
 four of the principal Chiefs of the Sauk & Fox nations to
 my Quarters, with a view of gaining all the information
 I could ^{as requested from them,} wish, three of whom accordingly attended, When I
 made known to them, that you as an agent of the Presi-
 dent had requested certain information relating to their
 two nations, which I hoped they would freely communicate
 to the best of their knowledge & belief, and their gratification
 the President was anxious to be made acquainted with their

Question to Wah-bal-lo. What the names by which it has been known among Europeans?

Answer - The French called us Renards & since, the white people have called us Foxes.

Question. Are any portion of your tribes scattered in other parts?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Where?

Answer. There are some of our people on the Missouri, some near Fort Edwards & some among the Pottawattamies.

Question. To what nations are you related by language?

Answer. The Sauk, Fox & Kickapoo nations are related by language.

Question. Manners & Customs?

Answer. The Sauk, Fox & Kickapoo's manners & customs are alike, except those who have had intercourse with the Whites. - One of the Chiefs added, that the Shawnees descended from the Sauk nation: that at a feast a chief took the feet of the animal for his portion who was not entitled to them (which were esteemed the greatest luxury) & that a quarrel ensued, in consequence of which he & his band withdrew & have ever since been called the Shawnee nation.

They acknowledged that the Sauks, Foxes, Kickapoo & Iowa are in close alliance, but observed that the reason for being in alliance with the Iowas, was, because they were a bad people, & therefore, it was better to have their friendship than enmity.

Question. With what tribes can you converse, and what is the common language in which you converse with them?

Answer. There are only three nations with which we can
the Sauk, Fox & Kickapoo nations; by being with an
other nation we might learn their language, but if we
see them, how can we speak to them or they to us? Is
not the same with you white people?

Question. - What tribe do you call Grandfather?

Answer. The Delawares call us & all other Indians
Grandchildren, & we in return call them Grandfather,
but we know of ^{no} relationships subsisting between them
& us.

Question. What tribes are grandchildren?

Answer. There are no tribes or nations we call grandchildren.

Question. Where is the great council fire for all the tribes
connected with your own tribes?

Answer. We have no particular place, when we have any
business to transact it is done at some one of our Villages.

Question. - Do you believe that the soul lives after the
body is dead?

Answer. How should we know; none of our people who
have died, have ever returned to inform us.

No more questions were put to the Chaps as they appeared
to be determined to give no further information. In
conversation with one of them afterwards upon the
Subject, they give as a reason for declining to answer
the remainder of the Questions, that Gov. Clark had
not treated them with that attention they were entitled
to when last at St. Louis. This plea however, was
probably without foundation. - It is the Character
of these people to conceal as much as possible their
history, religion & Customs from the Whites, it is only
when they are off their Guard that any thing upon these
Subjects can be obtained from them.

I have since been informed by some of the old men of the two nations that the Sauk & Fox nations emigrated from a Great distance below Detroit & established themselves at a place called Saganaw⁺ in Michigan Territory, that they have since built Villages & lived on the Fox River of the Illinois, at Mil-wah-kee near Lake Michigan, on the Fox River of Green Bay, & on the Ousecondon; that about fifty years since they removed to this vicinity, where they lived for some time, & then went down to the Iowa River & built large Villages; that the principal part of both nations remained on this River until about sixteen years ago when they returned to their present situation. - This is all the information ~~that~~ I have been able to collect from themselves relating to the rise & progress of their two nations. At present their Villages are situated on a point of land formed by the junction of the Rock & Mississippi Rivers, which they call Sen-i-Si-po-ke-be-sau-kee (Rock River Peninsula) this land as well as all they ever claimed on the east side of the Mississippi was sold by them to our government in 1805. - The agents of government have been very desirous for some time since to effect their removal, but they appear unwilling to leave it.

I recently spoke to one of the principal Fox chiefs upon this subject & he replied that their people were not willing to leave Ke-be-sau-kee in consequence of a great number of their chiefs & friends being buried there, but that he wished them to remove, as they would do much better to be farther from the Mississippi where they would have less intercourse with the whites. -

92 They claim a large tract of Country on the west of Saganaw⁺ probably derived from Sau-ku-nook (Sankin town) Mil-wah-kee is said to be derived from Man-na-wah-kee (good land)

of the Mississippi: it commences at the mouth of the upper Iowa River, which is above Prairie du Chien & follows the Mississippi down as far as Des Moines River & extending back towards the Missouri as far as the dividing ridge, & some of them say quite to that River - A large proportion of this tract is said to be high prairie; that part of it which lies in the vicinity of the Iowa & Des Moines Rivers is said to be valuable; their hunting grounds are on the head waters of these Rivers, & are considered the best in any part of the Mississippi country. I have not been able to ascertain the extent of Territory claimed by any other nations.

The Sauk village is situated on the bank of the Rock River & about two miles from its mouth, & contains Lodges, the principal Fox village is on the bank of the Mississippi opposite Fort Armstrong, it contains thirty five permanent lodges. There is also a small Sauk village of five or six lodges on the left bank of the Mississippi near the mouth of des Moines ^{below} & Fort Edwards, & a Fox village near the lead mines (about Hundred miles above this place,) of about twenty lodges, & another near the mouth of the Wapissipineca of about ten lodges. The Sauk & Fox nations according to their own account, which I believe to be nearly correct, can muster eight Hundred Warriors, & including their old men women & children, I think they do not fall short of five thousand souls; of this number about two fifths are Foxes, but they are so much mixed by intermarriage & living at each others villages, it would be difficult to ascertain the proportion of each with any great precision. These two nations have the reputation of being better hunters than any others that are to be found inhabiting the borders of either the Missouri or Mississippi.

Wap-si-pin-e-ca. So called from a root of that name which is found in great plenty on its shores & which they use as a substitute for bread.

They leave their villages as soon as their corn crops
is ripe & taken care of, & their traders arrive & give out
their Credits, & go to their wintering grounds; it being
previously determined on in Council what particular
ground each party shall hunt on. The old men, women,
& children embark in canoes, the young men go by land
with their horses; on their arrival they immediately com-
mence their winter hunt, which lasts about three months.
Their traders follow them & establish themselves at
convenient places in order to collect their dues and
supply them with such goods as they need. In a
favorable season most of these Indians are able not
only to pay their traders, & will supply themselves & families
with blankets, clothing, ammunition &c. during the winter,
but to have considerable of the proceeds of their hunt
on hand; the surplus which generally consists of the
most valuable peltries, such as beaver, otter, &c.
they take home with them to their villages, & dispose
of for such articles as they may find necessary.
In the winter of 1819-20. these two nations
had five traders this number of traders employed
nine clerks & interpreters, with annual salaries of
from Ten Hundred to Twelve hundred Dollars
each, (the average about Ten Hundred Dollars)
& forty three labourers whose pay was from ^{one} hundred
to two hundred Dollars each ^{per} annum. These
traders including the ^{received} Peltries at the United States
Factory near Fort Edwards, collected of the Seneca
& Fox Indians during this season some hundred
& eighty packs.

They consisted of 2760 beaver skins

922 Otter

12900 Musk Rat. Skins
 500 Mink
 200 Wild cat
 680 Bear Skins
 28680 Deer.

Whole number. -- 60,082..

The estimated value of which is fifty eight thousand & eight hundred Dollars..

The quantity of tallow presumed to be collected from the Deer is 286800. pounds. The traders also collected during the same time from these Savages at least.

3000 ^{lb} of feathers
 1000 lb of Bees wax.

They return to their villages in the month of April & after putting their lodges in order, commence preparing the grounds to receive the seeds. The number of acres cultivated by that part of the two nations who reside at their villages in this vicinity is supposed to be upwards of three hundred. - They usually raise from seven to eight thousand bushels of Corn, besides beans, pumpkins, mellons &c. &c. - About ^{one} thousand bushels of the Corn they annually sell to traders & others. The remainder (except about five bushels for each family which is taken along with them) they put into bags, & bury in holes dug in the ground for their use in the Spring & Summer.. -

The labor of Agriculture is confined principally to the women; & this is done altogether with the hoe.

In June the greatest part of the young men go out on a Summer hunt, & return in August. While they are absent the old men & women are collecting rushes for mats, & bark to make into bags for their Corn &c. &c.

long been in expectation of receiving from Mr. Blondiau
late a Sub. T. Agent & a man of intelligence in the religion,
manners, & Customs of the Sauk & Fox nations, he was
born with ^{the} Sauks, his mother being a woman of that nation,
& is probably more competent to give a correct account
of them than any other man; this however, I have been
disappointed as not in receiving the expectation of receiving
this document has been the principal cause ^{of the delay in answering your communications}.

Among your queries are the following. What
are your terms for father, Mother, Heaven, Earth. the
pronouns I, thou, he? In what manner do you form
the genitive case & plural number? How do you
distinguish present past & future time? In the Sauk
tongue.

Nee-sah, is my father

Co-sah, your father

Oz-sah, his father

you (in the plural) Keen-a-wa

Na-ke-ah is my mother

Ke-ke-ah your mother

O-cha-cha-e, his mother

Heaven is che-pah-nock Earth Ar-kee

I is Keen, thou, Keen, he Ne-nah, Wen,
^{as we = now}

They We-ne-wa

I have not been able to ascertain the manner they
form the genitive case. - The plural number of most
nouns is formed by the addition of the syllable uck
as Sau-kie, Sau-kie-uck. The plural of personal
pronouns is generally formed by the addition of the
syllable wah.

The name of the principal Chief of the Sauks is
Nan-nah-gue; he is about forty years of age, rather
small in stature, unassuming in his deportment, & disposed
to cultivate the friendship of the whites; but he does not
appear to possess any extraordinary capacity. The two

next chiefs in rank are, Mus-ke-la-bah (old head), & Has-co; the latter is a man of considerable intelligence, but rather old, & too fond of Whiskey to have much influence with his nation. These chiefs are all decidedly opposed to a change of their condition. About a year since this nation met with a heavy loss in the death of Me-m-to-mack, the greatest chief that they have had for many years. Among other things which he contemplated accomplishing for the good of his people, was to have their lands surveyed & laid off into tracts for each family or tribe. He had left a son, but as yet he is too young to assume any authority.

The principal chief of the Fox nation is Wah-bat-le, he appears to be about thirty. - He is a man of considerable capacity & very independent in his feelings, but rather ambitious & indolent. The second chief of this nation is Sy-co-ma, (Strawberry), he is about forty. This man appears to be more intelligent than any other to be found either among the Foxes or Sauks, but he is extremely unwilling to communicate any thing relative to the history, manners & customs of his people. He has a variety of maps of different parts of the world, & appears to be desirous of gaining geographical information; but is greatly attached to the Savage State. I have frequently endeavored to draw from him his opinion with regards to a change of their condition from the Savage to the Civilized State. He one day informed me when conversing upon this subject, that the Great Spirit had put Indians on the earth to hunt & gain a living in the wilderness; that he always found that when one of their people departed from this mode

of life, by attempting to learn to read, write, & love as white people do, the Great Spirit was displeased, & they soon died; he concluded by observing that when the Great Spirit made them he gave them their medicine bag & they intended to keep it. -

I have not had an opportunity of becoming much acquainted with that part of the Kickapoo nation living in this vicinity. There are two principal chiefs among them, Pah-moi-tah-mah (the Iron that Cries) & Pe-can (the Tent); the former is an old man; the latter appears to be about forty; this nation has had considerable intercourse with the whites, but they do not appear to have profited much from it. - They appear to be more apt to learn & practice their vices, than their virtues.

The males of each nation of the Sauks & Foxes are divided into two grand divisions, called Kishk-quah & oshkosh: - to each there is a head called, War Chief. As soon as the first male child of a family is born he is arranged to the first band, & when a second is born to the second band, & so on.

The name of the Chief of the first band of Sauks, is Re-e-kuck; when they go to war & on all public occasions, his band is always painted white, with pipe clay; the name of the second War Chief is Na Cal-a-quoik; his band is painted black. Each of these chiefs is entitled to one or two Aid-de-Camp, selected by themselves from among the Graves of their nation, who generally accompany them on all public occasions, & whenever they go abroad. - These two chiefs were raised to their present rank in consequence of their success in opposing the wishes of a majority of the nation to flee from their villages on the approach of a body of American troops during the late war; they ~~were~~ finally

4
persuaded their nation to remain, on the condition of
their engaging to take the command & sustain their
position. Our troops from some cause or other did not
attack them, & they of course remained unmolested. In
addition to these, there are a great number of petty warchiefs
or partizans, who frequently head small parties of volunteers
& go against their enemies; they are generally those who
have lost some near relation by the enemy. An Indian
will commence by blacking his face, permitting his hair to
grow long, & neglecting his personal appearance, and also,
by frequent fastings, some times for two or three days together,
& refraining from all intercourse with the other sex; if
his dreams are favorable he thinks that the Great Spirit
will give him success; he then makes a feast, generally of
dog's meat, (it being the greatest sacrifice that he can make
to part with a favorite dog); when all those who feel
inclined to join him will attend the feast; after this
is concluded they immediately set off on their expedi-
tion. It frequently happens that in consequence of
unfavorable dreams or some trifling accident the whole
party will return without meeting with the enemy.
When they are successful in taking prisoners or scalps,
they return to their villages with great pomp & ceremony.
The party will halt several miles from the village &
send a messenger to inform the nation of their success,
& of the time that they intend to enter the village; when
all the female friends of the party will dress themselves
in their best attire & go out to meet them; On their arrival
it is the privilege of these women to take from them
all their blankets, trinkets &c. that they may possess;
the whole party then paint themselves & approach the
village with the scalps stretched on small hoops
& suspended to long poles or sticks, dancing, singing,
& beating drums as they enter the

village. The Chiefs in Council will then determine whether they shall dance the Scalps (as they term it,) or not, if this is permitted, the time is fixed by them, when the Ceremony shall commence, & when it shall end. In these dances the women join the Successful warriors. I have seen myself more than a hundred of them dancing at once, all painted, & clad in their most Gaudy attire. The foregoing manner of raising a war party &c. is peculiar to the Sauks, Foxes & Kickapoos; with the Chippewas, Ottawas, & Pottawattamies it is some what different. A warrior of these nations wishing to go against his Enemies, after blacking his face fasting & ^{or} preparing a temporary lodge out of the village, in which he seats himself & smokes his pipe; in the middle of his lodge hangs a belt of Wampum or piece of scarlet cloth, ornamented; a young Indian wishing to accompany him goes into the lodge & draws the belt of Wampum or piece of cloth thro' his left hand & sits down & smokes of the tobacco already prepared by the partizan. After a sufficient number is collected in this manner, the whole begin to ~~prayer~~ compare their dreams daily together; if their dreams are favorable, they are anxious to march immediately; otherwise they will give up the expedition for the present, saying, that it will not please the Great Spirit for them to go, or that their medicine is not good or, that their partizan has cohabited with his wife. If every thing goes right the whole will meet at their leaders lodge, where they will beat the drum & pray the Great Spirit to make them Successful over their Enemies. When the party consist of twenty or upwards, its leader will appoint a Confidential man, to carry the Great Medicine bag. After they are assembled at the place of rendezvous

and in readiness to march, the partizan will make a speech in which he will inform them that they are now about to go to war; that when they meet their enemies he hopes they will behave like men, & not fear death; that the Great Spirit will deliver their enemies into their hands, & that they shall have liberty to do as they please with them; but at the same time if there are any among them who are fearful of any thing whatever, such had better remain at home & not set out on such a hazardous expedition.

Among the Ottawas the partizan leads when they march, ^{out} but the warrior who first delivers him a Scalp or prisoner leads the party homewards & receives the Belt of Wampum. On the arrival of the party at the Village, they distribute the prisoners to those who have lost relations by the Enemy; or if the prisoners are to be killed, their spirits are delivered over to some particular person's relations who have died and are now in the other world.

Among the Pottawatamies it is different; all prisoners or Scalps belong to the partizan, & he disposes of them as he may think proper: he will sometimes give a prisoner to a family who has lost a son, & the prisoner will be adopted by the family & considered the same as though he was actually the person whose place he fills. This latter practice is also observed among the Sauks & Foxes.

In Addition to the Grand Divisions of the males, ⁹⁷ each nation is subdivided into a great number of families or tribes. Among the Sauks there are no less than ¹⁴ fourteen tribes; each of them being distinguished

by a particular name (generally by the name of some animal) Some of which are as follows. — The Bear tribe, Wolf tribe, Dog tribe, Elk tribe, Eagle tribe, Partridge tribe, Surgeon tribe, Sucker tribe & the Thunder tribe. Except in particular cases all the Indian nations mentioned in the foregoing are governed almost altogether by the advice of their Chiefs, & the fear of punishment from the evil Spirit, not only in this, but in the other world. The only instances where in I have ever known any laws enforced, or penalties exacted for a disobedience of them, by the Sakers & Foxes, are when they are returning in the spring from their hunting grounds to their villages. The Village Chiefs then advise the war chiefs to declare the Martial law to be in force, which is soon proclaimed, and the whole authority placed in the hands of the War Chiefs. Their principal object in so doing appears to be to prevent one family from returning before another, whereby it might be exposed to an enemy; or by arriving at the village before the others, dig up its neighbours corn. It is the business of the War Chiefs in these cases to keep all the canoes together, & on land to regulate the march of those who are mounted or on foot. One of the Chiefs goes ahead to pitch upon the Encamping Ground for each night, where he will set up a painted pole or stake; ^{as a signal for them to halt,} any Indians going beyond this is punished, by having his canoe, & whatever else he may have along with him, destroyed. On their arrival at their respective villages, sentinels are posted, & no one is allowed to leave his village until every thing is put in order; when this is accomplished the martial Law ceases to be in force.

A great deal of pains appears to be taken by the
Chiefs & principal men to impress ^{on} the minds of the
younger part of their ^{respective} nations, what they conceive to be
their duty, to themselves & to each other. As soon as day
light appears, it is a practice among the Sauks & Foxes,
for a Chief or principal man to go through their ^{respective}
villages, exhorting & advising them, in a very loud voice,
what to do, & how to conduct themselves. Their families
in general appear to be well regulated, all the laborious
duties of the lodge, & of the field, however, are put upon
the women, except what little assistance the old men
are able to afford. The children appear to be particu-
larly under the charge of their mothers, ^{the boys} until they are
of a suitable age to handle the bow or gun. Corporal
punishment is seldom resorted to for their correction; if
they commit any fault, it is common for their mother
to black their faces, & send them out of the lodge; when
this is done they are not allowed to eat until it is
washed off; Some times they are kept a whole day
in this situation as a punishment for their misconduct.

When the boys are six or seven years of age, a
small bow is put into their hands & they are sent out
to hunt birds about the lodge or village; but they
continue to do so for five or six years, when their father
purchases them shot guns, & they begin to hunt
ducks, geese &c. Their father (particularly in winter
evenings) will relate to them the manner of approaching
a Deer, Elk, or Buffalo, also the manner of setting
a trap, & when able, he will take them a hunting with
him, & show them the tracks of different animals;
all of which the boy pays the greatest attention to.
The girls as a matter of course are under the

direction of their mother, & she will show them how to make
Moccasins, leggings, moccasins &c. &c. she is very particular
to keep them continually employed, so that they may have
the reputation of being industrious girls, & therefore the
more acceptable or more sought after by the young men.

Most of the Indians marry early in life, the men
from sixteen to twenty generally, & the girls from fourteen
to eighteen. There appears to be but little difficulty in a
young Indian procuring himself a wife, particularly if
he is a good hunter, or has distinguished himself in battle.
There are several ways for a young Indian to get himself a
wife; Sometimes the match is made by the parents of
the young man & girl without his knowledge, but the
most common mode of procuring a wife is as follows.

A young man will see a young woman that he takes
a fancy to; he will commence by making a friend of
some young man, a relation of hers, (perhaps her brother),
after this is done he will disclose his intentions to his
friends, saying, that he is a good hunter, & has been several
times to war &c. &c., appealing to him for the truth of his
assertions; & conclude by saying, if your parents will let
me have your sister for a wife I will serve them faithfully,
that is to say, according to custom, which is what she
has a child; after which he can take her away to his
own relations or live with his wife. During the
servitude of a young Indian neither he nor his wife
has any thing at their disposal; he is to hunt, & that
in the most industrious manner; his wife is continually
at work, dressing skins, making mats, planting
corn, &c. &c. The foregoing modes of procuring a
wife apply particularly to ^{the} Sauk, Fox, & Kickapoo
nations; with the Chippewas, Ottawaes, & Pottawatamies

a wife is sometimes purchased by the parents of the young man, when she becomes at once his own property; but the most common mode of procuring a wife in all these nations is by servitude. It frequently happens that when an Indian servitude for one wife has expired he will take another (his wife's sister perhaps), & again send her parents according to custom. Many of these Indians have two or three wives, the greatest number that I have known any man to have at one time was five. When an Indian wants more than one wife, he generally prefers that they should be sisters, as they are more likely to agree & live together peaceably. An old man of fifty or sixty will frequently marry a girl of sixteen & who already had two or three wives. It but seldom happens that a man separates from his wife, it sometimes does however happen, & then she is at liberty to marry again.

The crime of adultery is generally punished by the Pottawattamies, by the husband's biting off the woman's nose & afterwards separating from her.

There appears to be no marriage ceremony among these Indians at the present day.

The Pottawattamies have a ceremony in naming their children; which is generally performed when they are about a month old; it is as follows. The parents of the child invite some old & respectable man to their lodge in the evening, & inform him, that they wish him to name their child the day following. The old man then engages two or more young men, to come to the lodge early in the ^{next} morning following to cook a feast; this feast must be cooked by young men in a lodge by themselves, no other person is permitted to enter until it is ready for the guests who are.

then & not before invited. After the feast is over the old man then rises & informs the Company the object of their being together, & gives the Child its name, & then goes on to make a long Speech, by saying, that he hopes the Great Spirit will preserve the life of the Child, make him a good hunter & a Successful warrior &c &c. With the Saukel Foxes & Kickapoo this ceremony is not always attended to, they however, in common with the Chippewas, Ottawas & Pottawattamies, have a great number of feasts. They all make a feast of the first Deer, Bear, Elk, Buffalo &c. ^{a young man} kills; even the first Small bird that a boy kills, is preserved & makes a part of the next feast. There appears to be a great deal of Secrecy & Ceremony in preparing these feasts.

Other feasts to the Great Spirit are frequently made by these Indians, Some times by one person alone; but it is often the Case, that several join in making them. They repair to the lodge where the feast is to be made, shut themselves up, & commence beating the drum, shaking the che-che-guon (A Gourd shell with a handful of Corn in it) ^{singing & making} this is alternately continued during the whole time that the feast is preparing, which generally continues from twelve to eighteen hours. When every thing is ready the guests are invited by sending to each a Small Stick or twig; as soon as they arrive, they seat themselves in a circle on the ground in the middle of the lodge, when one of the guests places before each person a wooden Bowl, with his proportion of the feast, and they immediately commence eating. When each man's proportion is eaten, the bones are all collected & put into a Cawl & afterwards thrown into the River or burnt. The whole of the feast must be eaten; in case a man can not eat his part of it he passes his dish with a piece of tobacco to his neighbor and he eats it and

the guests then retire. These who make a feast never eat any part of it themselves, they say, they give their part of it to the Great Spirit, they always have some consecrated Tobacco, which they afterwards bury, & then the feast is concluded. — The women of these nations are very particular to remove from their lodges, to one erected for that particular purpose, when their menstrual term approaches; no article of furniture that is used in this lodge is ever used in any other, not even the steel & flint with which they strike fire. — No Indian ever approaches this lodge while a woman occupies it, & should a white man approach it & wish to light his pipe by the fire of a woman while in this situation, she will not allow him by any means to do so, saying, that it will make his nose bleed & his head ache; that it will make him sick. —

When an Indian dies, his relations put on him his best clothes, & either bury him in the ground or put him on a scaffold; but the former is the most common mode of disposing of the dead. As soon as an Indian dies his relations engage three or four persons to bury the body; they usually make a rough coffin of a piece of a canoe or some bark, the body is then taken to the grave in a blanket or Buffalo skin, & placed in the coffin, together with a Hatchet, Knife, &c. & then covered over with earth. Some of the near relations usually follow the corpse; the women on these occasions appear to be much affected. If the deceased was a warrior, a post is usually erected at his head, on which is painted red crosses of different sizes, to denote the number of men, women, & children he had killed of the enemy during

during his life time, & which they say he will claim as his slave now that he has gone to the other world. It is frequently the case that some one of his friends will strike a post, or two, & say I will speak; he then in a loud voice will say at such a place I killed an enemy, I give his spirit to our departed friends; & sometimes he may give a greater number in the same manner. The friends of the deceased will afterwards frequently take victuals, tobacco, &c &c. to his grave & there leave it, believing that whatever they present to him in this manner, he will have in the other world. —

An Indian always mourns for the loss of near relations from six to twelve months, by neglecting his personal appearance, blacking his face &c. A woman will mourn for the loss of a husband, at least twelve months, during which time she appears to be very solitary & sad, never speaking to any one unless necessary, & always wishing to be alone; at the expiration of their mourning she will paint & dress as formerly, & endeavor to get another husband. —

The belief of these Indians relative to their creation is not very dissimilar to our own. Masco. one of the chiefs of the Sauks informed me that they believed, that the Great Spirit in the first place created from the dirt of the earth two men; but finding that these alone would not answer his purpose, he took from each man a rib & made two women, from these four he says sprang all red men; that the place where they were created was Mo-ne-ac. (Montreal.) That they were all one nation until they behaved so badly that the Great Spirit came among them, & talked different languages to them, which caused them to

separate, & form different nations: he said that it was at this place that Indians first saw white men, that they then thought they were spirits. — I asked him how they supposed white men were made; he replied that Indians supposed the Great Spirit made them of the fine dust of the earth as they knew more than they did. — They appear to entertain a variety of opinions with regard to a future state; a Fox Indian told me that their people generally believe that as soon as an Indian left this world, he commenced his journey for the habitation provided for him by the Great Spirit in the other world; that those who had conducted themselves well in this life, met with but little difficulty in finding the road which lead to it; but that those who had behaved badly always got into the wrong road, which was very crooked & very difficult to travel in; that they frequently met with broad rivers which they had to ford or swim; & in this manner they were punished, until the Great Spirit thought proper to put them into the good road, & then they soon reached their friends, & the country of their future residence, where all kinds of game was plenty, & where they had but little to do, but to dance by night, & sleep by day. He further observed that when young children died they did not at first fare so well. That originally there were two Great Spirits who were brothers, & equally good, that one of them died & went to another world & has ever since been called ¹⁰¹ Hach-i-lan-i-to (the evil spirit) that this

Spirit has a son who makes prisoners of all the children that die too young to find the good path, & takes them to his own town, where they were formerly deprived by him of their brains, in order that when they grow up they might not have sense enough to leave him. That the good Spirit seeing this, sent an Eagle to peck a hole in the head of every young child as soon as it dies and makes its appearance in the other world, & to deprive it of its brain & conceal the same in the ground; that the child is always immediately after taken as a prisoner by the Evil Spirit & kept until of a suitable age to travel, when the Eagle returns its brain; & then, it having sense enough, immediately leaves the Evil Spirit & finds the good road.

Most of these Indians say that their deceased friends appear occasionally to them in the shape of birds & different kinds of beasts. — A Fox Indian observed one morning last summer that the spirit of a certain Indian (who was buried the day before) appeared last night near his grave in the shape of a Turkey, & that he heard the noise of him almost all night. — I inquired of another Indian (quite an old man) if any of their people had ever returned from the dead, he replied, that he had heard of only one or two instances of the kind; but that he believed they knew what they were about in this world. —

I do not at the present time think of anything further relative to the History, Manners, Religion & Customs of the Indians worthy of notice. No part of what I have written is taken from books, but almost every thing has been drawn from either the Indians themselves or from persons acquainted with their language, manners, Customs &c on this account. —

I presume that it will be the more acceptable.

I will now proceed agnally to your request to give you my ideas relative the Indian trade &c &c.

In the first place I have to observe, that the Factor System for supplying the Indians with such articles as they may need, does not appear to me to be productive of any great advantage, either to the Savages, themselves, or to the Government. But very few, if any of the Indians have sufficient forecast to save enough of the proceeds of their last hunt to equip themselves for the next; the consequence is, that when the hunting season approaches they must be dependant upon some one for a credit. An Indian family, generally consists of from five to ten persons, his wife, children, children in law, & grand children; all of whom look to its head for their supplies; & the whole of the proceeds of the hunt goes into one common stock, which is disposed of by him for the benefit of the whole.

When cold weather approaches they are generally destitute of many articles, which are necessary for their comfort & convenience; besides guns, traps, & ammunition; some kettles, Blankets, Standing &c &c are always wanting; for these articles they have no one to look to but the private trader; as it is well known, ^{that} the United States Factors give no credit, even if they did, the number of these establishments is too limited to accommodate any considerable number of Indians, as but few of them will travel far to get their supplies if it can be avoided; & farther, the Indians (who are good judges of the quality of the articles they are in want of) are of the

opinion that the Factor's goods are not so cheap, taking into consideration their quality, as their private traders; in this I feel pretty well convinced, from my own observation, & the acknowledgement of one of the most respectable Factors of our Government, Judge Johnson, of Prairie du Chien, that they are correct; this gentleman informed me but a few months ago that the goods received for his establishment were charged at least 25 per cent higher than their current prices, & that he had received many articles of an inferior & unsuitable quality for Indian trade.

If you speak to an Indian upon the subject of their Great father, the President, supplying them with goods from his factories, he will say at once you are a pash-i-pash-i-to (a fool) our Great father is certainly no trader, he has sent these goods to be given to us as presents, but his agents are endeavoring to cheat us by selling them for our prices.

The amount of goods actually disposed of by the United States Factors at Green Bay, Chicago, Prairie du Chien, & Fort Edwards, if I am rightly informed is very inconsiderable. The practice of selling goods to the whites, & of furnishing outfits to Indian traders, are the principal causes of their sales being so great as they actually are.

In my opinion the best plan of supplying the natives is by private American traders of good character, if they could be placed under proper restrictions.

In the first place it is for their interest to please the Indians & prevent their having whiskey

(particularly when they are on their hunting grounds)
& to give them good advice.

Secondly. They always give them a Credit sufficient
to enable them to commence hunting.

Thirdly. They winter near their hunting grounds
& generally to the suggestion of a late Secretary of
war, take to themselves "help mates" from the
daughters of the forest, & thereby do much to-
wards civilizing them.

Fourthly. They always have comfortable quarters
for the Indians when they visit them, & by the
frequent intercourse which subsists between them
become acquainted with us & imperceptibly imbibe
many of our ideas, manners, & customs.

Fifthly. From interested motives, if from no other,
Traders will always advise the Indians to keep at
peace among themselves & with the whites.

There are some changes which I think might
be made to advantage in the regulations for Indian
traders. — In the first place with a view to do
away the impression which almost universally
prevails in the minds of the Indians in this
part of the country, that the traders, Clerks,
Interpreters, Boatmen, & laborers, & also their goods
are almost all British (which unfortunately happens
to be nearly the truth, for there is scarcely a single
103
boatman or labour employed by the traders who is
not a British subject, their goods it is well known
are almost altogether of British manufacture,)
I would recommend, that no clerk, Interpreter,

Boatman or labourer be employed by them who is not a Citizen of the United States; & further, that every trader be obliged to display the American flag on his boat when travelling, & at his tent or hut when encamped.

The best & most successful means which could be employed by Government to civilize the Indians or render them less Savage than they now are, in my opinion would be for the agent of each nation to reside at or near one of their principal villages, there to have a comfortable habitation & a council room sufficiently large to accommodate all who might wish to attend his councils. To employ a blacksmith & a carpenter, & of course ^{have} shops & suitable tools for them; Every nation has a great deal for a blacksmith to do; there would probably be left for a carpenter to attend to, but he might be advantageously employed in making agricultural implements &c &c. For him to cultivate in the vicinity of the Village, with the consent of the nation a small farm & to keep a small stock of horses oxen & cows, - It should be understood among the Indians that the farming establishment is solely for the benefit of the agent, should it be known among them that the object was to learn them to cultivate the soil as the whites do, they would most certainly object to it; but if this is not known, they will soon see the advantages of employing the Plough, Harrow &c &c & be ^{induced} to imitate our examples, & thus get on the road which leads to civilization before they are aware of it.

If an agent of Government should go among them, as has sometimes ~~been~~ been the case, & inform them that he had been sent by their Great father, the President, to learn them how to cultivate the Soil, Spin, weave cloth & live like white people, they would be sure to set their faces against him & his advice, & say that he is a fool; that Indians are not like white people, the Great Spirit had not made them of the same color, neither has he made them for the same occupations.

The next step towards their civilization would probably be, that some of their old people would remain at their respective Villages, if they could be assured of their being secure from their Enemies, while the others are in their Hunting grounds: thus they would go on from Step to Step until they would become not only civilized beings, but Christians.

I consider it important that Government should exchange as soon as practicable all British flags & medals which the Indians may have in their possession for American ones. The Sauk & Fox Indians have no American flags at present & but few American medals; If you speak to them of the impropriety of their displaying British flag, & wearing British medals, they will reply, we have no others, give us American flags & medals & you then will see them only. The flags given to them ought to be made of silk, their British flags being made of that material, & besides they are more durable, as well as more portable than the worsted ones. One of each nation should be of a large size for them to display at their Villages on

public occasions: they have at present British flags considerably larger than the American Army Standards. The practice of painting these flags causes them to crack & soon wear out, they should be made in the same manner that navy flags are.

The annuities paid by Government to the Six & Fox nations appears to be a cause of dissatisfaction among them, in consequence of their not being able to divide & subdivide the articles received so as to give every one a part. I believe that powder, Flint, & tobacco would be much more acceptable to them than the Blankets & Standing Go. which they have been in the habit of receiving.

I enclose a list of ten nations of Indians who inhabit the upper Mississippi & the borders of the great Lakes, showing the names given them by Europeans & by each other. The latter information I have obtained principally from the Indians themselves.

I have the honor to remain

With great respect

Major M. Marston's communication
to the Rev. Dr. Jedediah Morse

Yours Oct 1st

M. Marston

Pl. Maj. & Capt.

Commanding

To the Rev Dr Morse

New Haven

Connecticut.