



FROM A LITHOGRAPH COPY OF A PAINTING BY C. S. KING

**BLACK HAWK'S NARRATIVE  
OF THE  
YEARLY CYCLE OF THE SAC AND FOX TRIBES**

BLACK HAWK'S NARRATIVE  
OF THE  
YEARLY CYCLE OF THE SAC AND FOX TRIBES

NE-KA-NA-WEN

MA-NE-SE-NO OKE-MAUT WAP-PI MA-QUAI

WA-TA-SAI WE-YEU,

Ai nan-ni ta co-si-ya-quai, na-katch ai she-ke she-he-nack, hai-me-ka-ti ya-quai ke-she-he-nack, ken-e-cha we-he-ke kai-pec-kien a-cob, ai we-ne-she we-he-yen; ne-wai-ta-sa-mak ke-kosh-pe kai-a-poi qui-wat. No-ta-wach-pai pai-ke se-na-mon nan-ni-yoo, ai-ke-kai na-o-pen. Ni-me-to sai-ne-ni-wen, ne-ta-to-ta ken ai mo-he-man ta-ta-que, ne-me-to-sai-ne-ne-wen.

Nin-a-kai-ka poi-pon-ni chi-cha-yen, kai-ka-ya ha-ma-we pa-she-to-he-yen. Kai-na-ya kai-nen-ne-naip, he-nok ki-nok ke-cha-kai-ya, pai-no-yen ne-ket-te-sim-mak o-ke-te-wak ke-o-che, me-ka ti-ya-quois na-kach mai-quoi, a-que-qui pa-che-qui ke-kan-ni ta-men-nin. Ke-to-ta we-yen, a-que-ka-ni-co-te she-tai-hai yen-nen, chai-cha-me-co kai-ke-me-se ai we-ke ken-ne-ta-mo-wat, ken-na-wa-ha-o ma-co-qua-yeai-quoi. Ken-wan-na ak-che-man wen-ne-ta-hai ke-men-ne to-ta-we-yeu, ke-kog-hai ke-ta-shi ke-kai na-we-yen, he-na-cha wai-che-we to-mo-nan, ai pe-che-qua-chi mo-pen ma-me-co, mai-che-we-ta na-mo-nan, ne-ya-we-nan qui-a-ha-wa pe-ta-kek, a-que-year tak-pa-she-qui a-to-ta-mo-wat, chi-ye-tuk he-ne cha-wai-chi he-ni-nan ke-o-chi-ta mow-ta-swee-pai che-qua-que.

He-ni-cha-hai poi-kai-nen na-na-so-si-yen, ai o-sa-ke-we-yen, ke-pe-me-kai-mi-kat hai-nen hac-yai na-na-co-si-peu, nen-a-kai-ne-co-ten ne-co-ten ne-ka chi-a-quoi ne-me-cok me-to-sai ne-ne wak-kai ne-we-yen-nen, kai-shai ma-ni-to-ke ka-to-menak ke-wa-sai he-co-wai mi-a-me ka-chi pai-ko-tai-hear-pe kai-cee wa-wa-kia he-pe ha-pe-nach-he-cha, na-na,ke, na-way ni-taain ai we-pa-he-wea to-to-na ca, ke-to-ta-we-yeak, he-nok mia-ni ai she-ke-ta ma-ke-si-yen, nen-a-kai na-co-ten ne-ka-he-nen e-ta-quois, wa-toi-na-ka che-ma-ke-keu na-ta-che tai-hai-ken ai mo-co-man ye-we-yeu ke-to-towe. E-nok ma-ni-hai she-ka-ta-ma ka-si-yen, wen-e-cha-hai nai-ne-mak, mai-ko-ten ke-ka-cha ma-men-na-tuk we-yowe, keu-ke-nok ai she-me ma-na-ni ta-men ke-yowe.

(TRANSLATION)

DEDICATION

## TO BRIGADIER GEN'L. H. ATKINSON

Sir,—The changes of fortune, and vicissitudes of war, made you my conqueror. When my last resources were exhausted, my warriors worn down with long and toilsome marches, we yielded, and I became your prisoner.

The story of my life is told in the following pages; it is intimately connected, and in some measure, identified with a part of the history of your own: I have, therefore, dedicated it to you.

The changes of many summers, have brought old age upon me,—and I cannot expect to survive many moons. Before I set out on my journey to the land of my fathers, I have determined to give my motives and reasons for my former hostilities to the whites, and to vindicate my character from misrepresentation. The kindness I received from you whilst a prisoner of war, assures me that you will vouch for the facts contained in my narrative, so far as they came under your observation.

I am now an obscure member of a nation, that formerly honored and respected my opinions. The path to glory is rough, and many gloomy hours obscure it. May the Great Spirit shed light on your's—and that you may never experience the humility that the power of the American government has reduced me to, is the wish of him, who, in his native forests, was once as proud and bold as yourself.

Our village was situated on the north side of Rock river, at the foot of its rapids, and on the point of land between Rock river and the Mississippi. In its front, a prairie extended to the bank of the Mississippi; and in our rear, a continued bluff, gently ascending from the prairie. On the side of this bluff we had our cornfields, extending about two miles up, running parallel with the Mississippi; where we joined those of the Foxes, whose village was on the bank of the Mississippi, opposite the lower end of Rock island, and three miles distant from ours. We had about eight hundred acres in cultivation, including what we had on the islands of Rock river. The land around our village, uncultivated, was covered with blue-grass, which made excellent pasture for our horses. Several fine springs broke out of the bluff, near by, from which we were supplied with good water. The rapids of Rock river furnished us with an abundance of excellent fish, and the land, being good, never failed to produce good crops of corn, beans, pumpkins, and squashes. We always had plenty—our children never cried with hunger, nor our people were never in want. Here our village had stood for more than a hundred years, during all which time we were the undisputed possessors of the valley of the Mississippi, from the Ouisconsin to the Portage des Sioux, near the mouth of the Missouri, being about seven hundred miles in length.

When we returned to our village in the spring, from our wintering grounds, we would finish trading with our traders, who always followed us to our village. We purposely kept some of our fine furs for this trade; and, as there was great opposition among them, who should get these skins we always got our goods cheap. After this trade was over, the traders would give us a few kegs of rum, which was generally promised in the fall, to encourage us to make a good hunt, and not go to war. They would then start with their furs and peltries for their

homes. Our old men would take a frolic, (at this time our young men never drank.) When this was ended, the next thing to be done was to bury our dead, (such that had died during the year.) This is a great medicine feast. The relations of those who have died, give all the goods they have purchased as presents to their friends--thereby reducing themselves to poverty, to show the Great Spirit that they are humble, so that he will take pity on them. We would next open the caches, and take out corn and other provisions, which had been put up in the fall,--and then commence repairing our lodges. As soon as this is accomplished, we repair the fences around our fields, and clean them off, ready for planting corn. This work is done by our women. The men, during this time, are feasting on dried venison, bear's meat, wild fowl, and corn, prepared in different ways; and recounting to each other what took place during the winter.

Our women plant the corn, and as soon as they get done, we make a feast, and dance the crane dance, in which they join us, dressed in their best, and decorated with feathers. At this feast our young braves select the young woman they wish to have for a wife. He then informs his mother, who calls on the mother of the girl. When the arrangement is made, and the time appointed for him to come, he goes to the lodge when all are asleep, (or pretend to be,) lights his matches, which have been provided for the purpose, and soon finds where his intended sleeps. He then awakens her, and holds the light to his face that she may know him--after which he places the light close to her. If she blows it out, the ceremony is ended, and he appears in the lodge the next morning, as one of the family. If she does not blow out the light, but leaves it burn out, he retires from the lodge. The next day he places himself in full view of it, and plays his flute. The young women go out, one by one, to see who he is playing for. The tune changes, to let them know that he is not playing for them. When his intended makes her appearance at the door, he continues his courting tune, until she returns to the lodge. He then gives over playing, and makes another trial at night, which generally turns out favorable. During the first year they ascertain whether they can agree with each other, and can be happy--if not, they part and each looks out again. If we were to live together and disagree, we should be foolish as the whites! No indiscretion can banish a woman from her parental lodge--no difference how many children she may bring home, she is always welcome--the kettle is over the fire to feed them.

The crane dance often lasts two or three days. When this is over, we feast again, and have our national dance. The large square in the village is swept and prepared for the purpose. The chiefs and old warriors, take seats on mats which have been spread at the upper end of the square--the drummers and singer come next, and the braves and women form the sides, leaving a large space in the middle. The drums beat, and the singers commence. A warrior enters the square, keeping time with the music. He shows the manner he started on a war party--how he approached the enemy--he strikes, and describes the way he killed him. All join in applause. He then leaves the square, and other enters and takes his place. Such of our young men have not been out in war parties, and killed an enemy, stand back ashamed--not being able to enter the square. I remember that I

was ashamed to look where our young women stood, before I could take my stand in the square as a warrior.

What pleasure it is to an old warrior, to see his son come forward and relate his exploits—it makes him feel young, and induces him to enter the square, and "fight his battles o'er again."

This national dance makes our warriors. When I was travelling last summer, on a steam-boat, on a large river, going from New York to Albany, I was shown the place where the American dance their national dance [West Point]; where the old warriors recount to their young men, what they have done, to stimulate them to go and do likewise. This surprised me, as I did not think the whites understood our way of making braves.

When our national dance is over—our corn-fields hoed, and every weed dug up, and our corn about knee-high, all our young men would start in a direction toward sun-down, to hunt deer and buffalo—being prepared, also to kill Sioux, if any are found on our hunting grounds—a part of our old men and women to the lead mines to make lead—and the remainder of our people start to fish, and get mat stuff. Every one leaves the village, and remains about forty days. They then return: the hunting party bringing in dried buffalo and deer meat, and sometimes Sioux scalps, when they are found trespassing on our hunting grounds. At other times they are met by a party of Sioux too strong for them, and are driven in. If the Sioux have killed the Sacs last, they expect to be retaliated upon, will fly before them, and vice versa. Each party knows that the other has a right to retaliate, which induces those who have killed last, to give way before their enemy—as neither wish to strike, except to avenge the death of their relatives. All our wars are predicated by relatives of those killed; or by aggressions upon our hunting grounds.

The party from the lead mines bring lead, and the others dried fish, and mats for our winter lodges. Presents are now made by each party; the first, giving to the others dried buffalo and deer, and they, in exchange, presenting them with lead, dried fish and mats. This is a happy season of the year—having plenty of provisions, such as beans, squashes, and other produce, with our dried meat and fish, we continue to make feasts and visit each other, until our corn is ripe. Some lodge in the village makes a feast daily, to the Great Spirit. I cannot explain this so that the white people would comprehend me, as we have no regular standard among us. Every one makes his feast as he thinks best, to please the Great Spirit, who has the care of all beings created. Others believe in two Spirits; one good and one bad, and make feasts for the Bad Spirit, to keep him quiet! If they can make peace with him, the Good Spirit will not hurt them. For my part, I am of opinion, that so far as we have reason, we have a right to use it, in determining what is right or wrong; and should pursue that path which we believe to be right—believing that, "whatever is, is right." If the Great and Good Spirit wished us to believe and do as the whites, he could easily change our opinions, so that we would see, and think, an act as they do. We are nothing compared to His power, and we feel and know it. We have men among us, like the whites, who pretend to know the right path, but will not consent to show it without pay! I have no faith in their paths—but believe that every man must make his own path!

When our corn is getting ripe, our young people watch with anxiety for the first signal to pull roasting ears—as none dare touch them until the proper time. When the corn is fit to use, another great ceremony takes place, with feasting, and returning thanks to the Great Spirit for giving us corn.

I will here relate the manner in which corn first came. According to tradition, handed down to our people, a beautiful woman was seen to descend from the clouds, and alight upon the earth, by two of our ancestors, who had killed a deer, and were sitting by a fire, roasting apart of it to eat. They were astonished at seeing her, and concluded that she must be hungry, and had smelt the meat—and immediately went to her, taking with them a piece of the roasted venison. They presented it to her, and she eat—and told them to return to the spot where she was sitting, at the end of one year, and they would find a reward for their kindness and generosity. She then ascended to the clouds, and disappeared. The two men returned to their village, and explained to the nation what they had seen, don, and heard—but were laughed at by their people. When the period arrived, for them to visit this consecrated ground, where they were to find a reward for their attention to the beautiful woman of the clouds, they went with a large party, and found, where her right hand had rested on the ground, corn growing—and where the left hand had rested, beans—and immediately where she had been seated, tobacco.

The two first have, ever since, been cultivated by our people, as our principal provisions—and the last used for smoking. The white people have since found out the latter, and seem to relish it as much as we do—as they use it in different ways, viz. smoking, snuffing and eating!

We thank the Great Spirit for all the benefits he has conferred upon us. For myself, I never take a drink of water from a spring, without being mindful of his goodness.

We next have our great ball play—from three to five hundred on a side, play this game. We play for horses, guns, blankets, or any other kind of property we have. The successful party take the stakes, and all retire to our lodges in peace and friendship.

We next commence horse-racing, and continue our sport and feasting, until the corn is all secured. We then prepare to leave our village for our hunting grounds. The traders arrive, and give us credit for such articles as we want to clothe our families, and enable us to hunt. We first, however, hold a council with them, to ascertain the price they will give us for our skins, and what they will charge us for goods. We inform them where we intend hunting—and tell them where to build their houses. At this place, we deposit part of our corn, and leave our old people. The traders have always been kind to them, and relieved them when in want. They were always much respected by our people—and never since we have been, has one of them been killed by any of our people.

We disperse, in small parties, to make our hunt, and as soon as it is over, we return to our traders' establishment, with our skins, and remain feasting, playing cards and other pastimes, until near the close of the winter. Our young men then start on the beaver hunt; others to hunt raccoons and muskrats—and the remainder of our people go to the sugar camps to make sugar. All leave our encampment, and appoint a place to meet on the Mississippi, so that we may

return to our village together, in the spring. We always spent our time pleasantly at the sugar camp. It being the season for wild fowl, we lived well, and always had plenty, when the hunters came in, that we might make a feast for them. After this is over, we return to our village, accompanied, sometimes, by our traders. In this way, the year rolled round happily. But these are times that were!