

John Pickering an Wilhelm von Humboldt, 29.03.1830

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|51r| Sir,

It is a great while since I have had the pleasure to hear from you; your last letter being that of **Nov.^r 15, 1828**, which I received ten months ago. During this interval I have addressed two letters to you; one, dated **March 17.th[a]** and the other, **July 23, 1829**. With the former of these letters I sent you some N.^{os} of the **Missionary^[b] Herald** containing remarks on the Cherokee language &^c and on the Polynesian languages. To these I added a Review of mine upon our English Lexicography. With my letter of the **23.^d July** I forwarded a reprint of **Roger Williams's** **Key to the Language of the Naragansett Indians**, a tribe, which inhabited the territory & neighbourhood of the State which we call Rhode-Island. **This work was originally published in London in the year 1643**; & extracts from it were published many years ago, & very badly too, by our **Massachusetts Historical Society** in their Collections. The copy I sent you was a present |51v|[c] from the **Historical Society of Rhode-Island**, of whom I requested it. I forwarded to you by the same conveyance thirteen **Cherokee newspapers**; and a little **Review of mine upon the Study of the Civil Law**. I hope these articles have all reached you long before this time.

I wrote to you, that my time was much occupied with professional business in this place. I have, however, stolen from my hours of sleep [d] & from society time enough to print the **Vocabulary of Cotton**, which I have often mentioned to you. I could not find leisure enough to prefix to it any thing more than a short introduction, the object of which was to render some aid in ascertaining the pronunciation & thus obtaining, at least, an approximated value of the orthography used by **Eliot**

a) |Editor| Der Brief datiert vom 19. März 1829.

b) |Editor| Textabschnitt von "Herald containing remarks ..." bis "... Society in their" am linken Rand mit Bleistift angestrichen.

c) |Editor| Textabschnitt von "from the Historical Society ..." bis zum Absatzende ("... before this time.") am linken Rand mit Bleistift angestrichen.

d) |Editor| Textabschnitt von "& from society ..." bis "... any thing more than" am linken Rand mit Bleistift angestrichen.

& others of that day. With the same view I have ^[e] added an [Appendix \(p. 100\)](#) containing Extracts from an [Indian Primer in the Massachusetts Language](#); by means of the syllabic divisions of words in this primer, we are materially aided in this investigation. You will also find, [p. 104](#), the [Decalogue](#), in question & answer; and, at [p. 105](#), and [110](#), two [Sermons in English and Indian, preached by Cotton](#), and now published from his MSS. [The Dialogues](#), at [pp. 81, 94](#) |52r| and [98](#), will amuse you; in one of them you will notice a curious remark of an Indian, [p. 98](#), upon some dialectical differences then existing between the natives of the continent & of the island called Martha's Vineyard, which is only a few miles from our Massachusetts coast. In one of my former letters I mentioned this circumstance to you, which I had then observed on reading the MS.

I send you, with the present letter, five copies of [Cotton's Vocabulary](#); of which I will thank you to present one to the [King's Library](#), if, in your judgment, that will be a proper disposition of it; one to the [Berlin Academy of Sciences](#), & one to the [Berlin University Library](#); and, reserving a copy for yourself, you will be pleased to dispose of the other ~~to~~ as you may think proper. I also forward the remainder of your [Cherokee Newspapers](#), from N.º 14 to N.º 46; in the latter numbers you will find many interesting remarks on the singularly varied forms of the Cherokee Verbs, which present a truly wonderful specimen of the mechanism of language. But these analyses must be received, at present, as approximations |52v| only, because there has not yet been sufficient opportunity to make thorough investigations.

It gives me much pain to be obliged to add, that the poor Cherokees are now in a posture of great difficulty in relation to the United States & the State of Georgia. That State (within whose territorial limits they reside) claims the right of governing them & refuses to permit them to enjoy their own little government, which they have taken so much pains to establish. Georgia contends, that as a sovereign state, she has a right to govern all the people within her territory. On the other hand, the Cherokees maintain, that their independence has been guaranteed to them by Treaties made with the U. States, which treaties are binding upon the State of Georgia, as the Government of the U. States has the exclusive power to make treaties; & they contend also, that although they dwell within certain limits which have been agreed upon, by the States composing the American Union, to be the limits of Georgia, yet that they, the Cherokees, are not at all bound by such an

e) |Editor| Textabschnitt von "added an Appendix ..." bis "... You will also" am linken Rand mit Bleistift angestrichen.

arrangement among the States – that their nation now occupies the same territory |53r| (except parts which they have sold to the U. States) which they did when the Europeans first came to America, & that their present limits have been recognized by the U. States in several treaties. The Government of the U. States offers to them, if they will remove west of the Mississippi, a portion of the National lands in that quarter, where they may make a new settlement. But the Cherokees reply, with much force, Why do not the white people remove to that distant country & leave the Indians to enjoy the territory of which they have had the possession from time immemorial, &c &c?

Thus, you perceive, important questions of public law arise, very unexpectedly, out of the peculiar relations existing between this nation & the United States. And the case is rendered the more embarrassing, because we have ourselves for forty years past been encouraging them to abandon hunting & to become agriculturalists & manufacturers, and thus adopt the condition of civilized people. They consider it peculiarly grievous & unjust in us, under all these circumstances, to |53v| oblige them to abandon their country; and, I confess, I think they have much reason on their side. What the result will be, I dare not predict; but passions, interest & physical force, when united, are too apt to overpower the weaker party, if his cause is ever so just. I hope the Government of my country will not stain its character by any act which shall be condemned by the more impartial judgment of the statesmen & jurists of your Continent.

I have lately procured from Germany the volumes of the Byzantine Historians published by M.^r Niebuhr; and, as I suppose ^[f] you have some correspondence with him, it may be interesting to him to know, that we have in our University Library, a fine vellum MS. of the historian Glycas, which appears to be of as early a date as the 13.th century. Perhaps he might like to have a collation made of it. I have looked at some parts, & find it furnishes good readings of the text; but I have not yet examined it very particularly. It was bought in Constantinople, in the |54r| year 1819, by M.^r Everett^[g], whom you may have seen in Europe.

I send your Cherokee newspapers and ^[h] Cotton's Vocab.^s in two different packets, marked N.^o 1 & 2. They will be delivered to you by M.^r George Haven, a young

f) |Editor| Textabschnitt von "you have some ..." bis "... made of it. I have" am linken Rand mit Bleistift angestrichen.

g) |Editor| Edward Everett (1794–1865). s. Harvard Square Library

h) |Editor| Textabschnitt von "Cotton's Vocab.^s ..." bis "... you will pardon" am linken Rand mit Bleistift angestrichen.

friend, to whom I have given a letter of introduction to you – which, I hope, was not taking too great a liberty. My young countrymen are so ambitious of seeing a person of so much distinction in the world as yourself, and one whose name is so well known among us, that I trust you will pardon them & myself in this case.

I hope soon to have the pleasure of hearing from you & receiving some portion of your great American work.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

with the highest respect

your very obedient

& humble servant

Jn^oPickering

Boston, U. States,

Mar. 29, 1830.

[54v vacat]