

COMMUNICATIONS.

CHEROKEE LANGUAGE.

ANSWERS TO PROFESSOR RAFINESQUE'S QUESTIONS.

Mr. BODDINOTT: I have read in the 22d number of your paper a communication from Professor Rafinesque of Philadelphia, containing a series of questions on the language and history of the Cherokees. To those which relate to the language I will attempt an answer.

Question 1. "Why is there such a difference between the Alphabet published by the United States in Indian treaties, and that given in No. 1 of your Journal, or Guess and W. alphabets? I do not mean in the order or pronunciation, but in the forms, terms and notations?" [notations?—mutations?]

Ans. In regard to the forms of the letters, it is to be expected that the handwriting of different persons will vary; and especially that there will be a difference between ordinary handwriting, and a copy prepared as a pattern for types, or the printed characters. The printed letter is sufficiently like the original to be at once recognized, I believe, by every Cherokee reader.

As to the manner of expressing the sounds by English characters, Professor R. is doubtless aware, that English letters have each so many sounds, that any syllable may be spelt in several different ways. This accounts in part for the circumstance of the same sounds being expressed in different ways in my communications and in the Alphabet published at Washington. Besides this, I suppose that whoever communicated the Alphabet to the War Department at Washington, was not perhaps entirely familiar with it, and may have made two or three mistakes.

Question 2. "What mean the three letters all three pronounced un (French) u & i of Guess, and what is become of them? What is become also of Clough r, Clech e, Clah z, Clegh L, Cloh s, and the nasal Gnaugh z?"

Ans. Only one of the three letters in question, viz. i, has simply the sound of un French. The other two are aspirated, and differ from each other only in that the sound of u is more open than that of i. This distinction has been regarded as of so little consequence, particularly by Maj. Lowrey, who has been the oracle on this subject, that the character u has been omitted, and, as no type has been cast for it, your printers can only represent it, as I perceive they have done, by breaking the English capital G.

In regard to the syllable Clough there must have been an error. The character r has the sound of Tr, [the letter r, representing nearly the sound of un, French.] The character e has, through imperfect penmanship, taken the place of g, pronounced Ti, the sound represented in the United States document by Clegh. Clah, [t,] Clegh, [L,] and Cloh, [s,] are the sounds which I represent by Tla, Tle Tlo. The sound of z I represent no. It is often, perhaps more commonly, aspirated, as if written hno, and perhaps slightly nasal. I suppose gnaugh is used to represent precisely the same sound which I would write hno.

Question 3. "Why is the name of the nation ovy pronounced by Guess Tsah-lah-keeh, and by W. Tsa-la-gi? are the sounds G and K interchangeable? and also Cl and Ti?"

Ans. Guess never wrote the name of the nation either Tsah-lah-keeh or Tsa-la-gi, but ovy. The h at the end of each syllable of Tsah-lah-keeh, I suppose was intended to indicate that a has the short Italian sound, and ee that of short i. The sound represented by the character y is sometimes ki, but oftener gi, or between the sounds of k & g, but nearer that of g. G as pronounced by Germans represents it best. This is the case in the word ovy. The sounds G and K are not interchangeable in the same word, tho' they have the same representatives in the letters r, y, a, j, e. In each the sound of German G is most common. The sound of Cl or Kl, does not belong to the language. If, however, Professor R. will attempt to pronounce the syllables Cla and Tla, he will find that he makes but a slight difference; and as the combination Cl is familiar to the eye of an English scholar, and not Tl, he is more likely to use the former as a representative of the Cherokee sound.

Question 4. "Is really the Tsalagi language totally deficient of the sounds B, D, F, J, P, R, V, X, Z, Th, and all the nasal sounds An, En, In, On, Un? how would you write my name Rafinesque, for instance, perhaps Lahineska? how Washington, Jefferson, Europe, Phoenix, Boston, &c."

Ans. All the sounds in question are entirely wanting in Tsalagi except R in one dialect in which it is always used instead of L.—[See Question 6.]

Foreign words, except proper names, are seldom imitated by Cherokees. In proper names, B is sometimes changed to Q, as *o-ti* (Que-ti) for Betsey, (Betty.) Sometimes to W, as *er* (Wi-li) for Billy. D is represented by t, s, i, l, s, o, the consonat sound of the three first of which is always, and that of the three latter often, better represented by D than by T. F is sometimes, perhaps always changed to W aspirated, as in *to-hi* (Tse-hwi-si-ni) for Jefferson. J is changed to Ts, as also Ch & G soft; as *nu* (Tsi-sa) Jesus, *ku-sa* (Tsi-ku-sa) Chickasaw, *tsi* (Tsa-tsi) George. P is sometimes changed to Q, as *tu* (Qui-da) Peter, and sometimes to W, as *er* (Wa-li) Polly. V is changed to W, as *ro* (De-wi) David. Of X I recollect no example.* In the name Jackson *cks* may be considered as equivalent to x. This name is written *tu-hi* (Tse-ki-si-ni,) the vowel of the second syllable having but a slight sound. Z would become Ts. Th would assume the sound of D nearly. Of the changes of the nasal sounds in question I know no examples.

The name Rafinesque might be written *wo-lay* (La-hwi-nt-ski.) † Washington has been written *er-to* (Wa-ser-ta-er.) Jefferson *to-hi* (Tse-hwi-si-ni.) Boston I believe *er-tu* (Wo-sda-ni.) Europe might be *er-wy* (Lu-la-qui.) Phoenix is a hard word. The greatest approximation would be *er-hi* (Hwi-ni-ki-si,) or *er-hi* (Qui-ni-ki-si.) The Cherokee name of the Newspaper signifies *That which has risen again*, in allusion to the fable of the Phoenix rising from its own ashes.

Question 5. "Has not every syllable of the Tsalagi a proper meaning or import when standing alone? if they have, give the meaning of each."

Ans. Far from it. The number of monosyllables is very small. I can learn only the following which are ever used separately.

- o an adverb of place.
- o an interjection of admiration or surprise, used only by women.
- o commonly doubled, oo, signifying yes.
- o an interjection, calling for attention.
- o an adverb, yonder at a distance.
- o interjection, what? also an exclamation of pain.
- o adverb, very.
- o an interjection denoting disgust at any offensive smell,
- o pronoun, that; adverb there.
- o an interjection, used in conversation, denoting assent to what another has just said.
- o no, not.
- o the same with o, but belonging to a different dialect.
- o (hwo) the amen of an assembly of Cherokees, uttered on a low key with a protracted sound, by the assembly, at the close of a speech which is approved. If only here and there an individual utters this sound, the speaker infers that his address is not well received. This is used also, I am told, by other Indian tribes.

The following may be considered as distinct words, but are always attached to the termination of other words, like the conjunction que in Latin.

- y Did you say? as ss bread, ssy Bread did you say?
- z and.
- o an adverb of frequent use, but difficult to define; truly, indeed, even, only.
- s an adverb which asks a question. s or sz for, because.
- h an adverb of exhortation.
- oa an adverb of interrogation, equivalent to s.

There are also several significant syllables prefixed to nouns and verbs, some of them having the force of pronouns, but they are no more distinct words, than ed or ness in English.

* Mr. Pickering speaks of the combination ks as occurring in Cherokee; a mistake probably arising from having heard some words pronounced, in which the vowel sound of a syllable beginning with k and followed by the sound of s is scarcely articulated; as *ku-sa-nv*, (da-ku-sa-nv,) a turnip, where the vowel u is not distinctly heard.