

"God gave this country to our ancestors. We have never been in bondage to any man. Though we have sold much land to our white neighbors, we have never bought any from them. We own the land which we now occupy, by the right of the original possessors; a right which is allowed in all countries to be of incontestible validity. We assert, therefore, that no human power can lawfully compel us to leave our lands."

If the Cherokees are correct in their statement of facts; who can resist their conclusion? We might as well ask the Chinese, what right *they* have to the territory which they occupy. To such a question they would answer, "God gave this land to our ancestors. Our nation has *always* been in possession of it, so far as history and tradition go back. The nations of Europe are comparatively of recent origin; the commencement of ours is lost in remote antiquity."

What can be said to such a statement as this? Who can argue so plain a case?

It has been alleged, that the savage of the wilderness can acquire no title to the forests, through which he pursues his game. Without admitting this doctrine, it is sufficient to reply here, that it has no application to the case of the Cherokees. They are at present neither savages nor hunters. It does not appear that they ever were mere wanderers, without a stationary residence. At the earliest period of our becoming acquainted with their condition, they had fixed habitations, and were in undisputed possession of a widely extended country. They were then in the habit of cultivating some land near their houses, where they planted Indian corn, and other vegetables. From about the commencement of the present century, they have addicted themselves more and more to agriculture, till they now derive their support from the soil, as truly and entirely as do the inhabitants of Pennsylvania or Virginia. For many years they have had their herds, and their large cultivated fields. They now have, in addition, their schools, a regular civil government, and places of regular Christian worship. They earn their bread by the labor of their own hands, applied to the tillage of their own farms; and they clothe themselves with fabrics made at their own looms, from cotton grown in their own fields.

The Cherokees did not show themselves unwilling to sell their lands, so long as an adequate motive was presented to their minds. During every administration of our national government, applications were made to them for the purpose of obtaining additional portions of their territory. These applications were urged, not only, nor principally, by the consideration of the money or presents which they were to receive in exchange, but often, and strongly, by the consideration that they would become an agricultural people, like the whites—that it was for their interest to have their limits circumscribed, so that their young men could not have a great extent of country to hunt in; and that, when they became attached to the soil, and engaged in its cultivation, the United States would not ask them to sell any more land. Yielding to these arguments, and to the importunities of the whites, the Cherokees sold, at different times, between the close of the revolutionary war and the year 1820, more than three quarters of their original inheritance. That