

Speech of L'Epervier, or Sparrow Hawk, better known as Black Hawk, principal war-chief of the Sauks, delivered before peace was known, at Prairie du Chien, April 18th, 1815, and taken down by Capt. T. G. Anderson:

MY FATHER!—I am pleased to hear you speak as you have done. I have been sent by our chiefs to ask for a large gun (cannon), to place in our village. The Big Knives are so treacherous, we are afraid that they may come up to deceive us. By having one of your large guns in our village, we will live in safety; our women will then be able to plant corn, and hoe the ground unmolested, and our young men will be able to hunt for their families without dread of the Big Knives.

Taking the war-belt in his hand, and advancing a little, he continued:

My Father!—You see this belt. When my Great Father at Quebec gave it to me to be on terms of friendship with all his Red Children, to form but one body, to preserve our lands, and to make war against the Big Knives, who want to destroy us all. My Great Father said: 'Take courage, my children, hold tight your war-club, and destroy the Big Knives as much as you can. If the Master of Life favors us, you shall again find your lands as they formerly were. Your lands shall again become green—the trees green—the water green, and the sky blue. When your lands change color, you shall also change.' This, my Father, is the reason why we Sauks hold the war-club tight in our hands, and will not let it go.

My Father!—I now see the time is drawing near when we shall all change color; but, my Father, our lands have not yet changed color—they are red—the water is red with our blood, and the sky is cloudy. I have fought the Big Knives, and will continue to fight them until they retire from our lands. Till then, my Father, your Red Children, cannot be happy."

Then laying his tomahawk down before him, he continued:

My Father!—I show you this war-club to convince you that we Sauks have not forgotten the words of our Great Father at Quebec. You see, my Father, that the club which you gave me is still red and that we continue to hold it fast. For what did you put it in my hands?

My Father!—When I lately came from war, and killed six of the enemy, I promised my warriors that I would get something for them from my Father, the Red Head; but as he is not here, and you fill his place, I beg of you, my Father, to let me have something to take back to them.

My Father!—I hope you will agree to what I ask, and not allow me to return to my warriors empty-handed, ashamed, and with a heavy heart.