

Chapter II

EUROPEANS WHO VISITED OUR SHORES PRIOR TO THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIMS. THE INDIANS AND THEIR TRIBAL STRUCTURE IN THESE EARLY TIMES

European Visitors from 1497 to 1620

While these three major expeditions into Narragansett Bay had a substantial influence on the physical life of the natives, a great many other explorers who passed along our shores had a greater influence on the attitude of the natives toward the white men. John and Sebastian Cabot passed along these same shores in 1497, Gaspar Cortereal in 1501, and Stephen Gomez in 1525. In 1602 Bartholomew Gosnold, under patent of Sir Walter Raleigh, was here and gave the present names to Cape Cod and to Cuttyhunk. It was because of threatened Indian hostilities (see Goodwin p. 144) that he returned home. On the next year came Martin Pring. He went six miles inland from the shore probably at Plymouth (see Goodwin p. 146) and in order to urge his departure the natives, who had become hostile, set the woods on fire causing a great conflagration. Capt. George Weymouth came in 1605. He landed at Nantucket and explored one of the Maine rivers. He kidnapped five natives and took them to England. Also in 1605 a French expedition came with Samuel Champlain, who had already explored Nova Scotia and the St. Lawrence. He entered Boston Harbor in 1605 and visited Plymouth, making a very fair map of its harbor. He also took home with him five of the natives, probably as slaves, though he claimed only for the purpose of educating them to act as future interpreters. In 1501 Gaspar Cortereal had taken with him to Lisbon, fifty Indian slaves (see Morison p. 71).

In 1607 Capt. John Smith settled his Jamestown Virginia colony, and in 1614 he came to Monhegan in Maine and gave our shores the name of New England. In 1615 and again in 1619 Smith came on the last trip with

the renowned Capt. Thomas Dermer. Capt. Thomas Hunt came in 1614 and kidnapped seven natives from the Cape and twenty others from the mainland, all of whom he carried to Europe as slaves.

In 1616 a French fishing ship was wrecked on Cape Cod, and when the crew landed all but three of them were slain by the natives. These three were captured, and (as exhibits) were tortured in many Indian settlements, till one was finally allowed to marry into the tribe and the other two escaped, to be later located in 1619 by Capt. Dermer upon his return voyage. Meanwhile there was the voyage of Dr. M. Richard Vines in 1616-17. He passed the winter with the victims of the Indian plague of that year, he and his men mingling with the natives and even sleeping in the cabins of the sick. No white man was affected, but the plague killed every resident native of the Patuxet tribe (which occupied the area around Plymouth) and the Penacook (Maine) tribe were reduced from ninety to only five. The disease, now known not to have been yellow fever or small-pox, was probably a virulent type often called "quick" tuberculosis.

In the spring of 1620 (n. s.) Dermer, accompanied by Tisquantum, travelled inland from Plymouth (a day's journey) to Nemasket (Middleborough) from whence he sent a message to Massasoit at Pokonoket and the "two kings" (Massasoit and his brother Quadequina) accompanied by fifty armed men came to see him. One of the Indians who came with Dermer was "Samoset", who had been a sachem at Monhegan Island, a place much frequented by English fishermen, and from them he had learned a scattering of English words and their meaning.

Although the Indians were much prejudiced against the English on account of the matters just cited, and had intended to kill the Captain, Massasoit finally spared him upon Tisquantum's earnest entreaty. This was the occasion upon which one of the men who were captured from the French trading ship, was released in Captain Dermer's custody.

At a later time Dermer had considerable trouble with other Indians and at Martha's Vineyard many of his men were killed. He, while escaping, received fourteen wounds which subsequently proved fatal.

Indian Tribes

The race of Indians who occupied that part of North America which lies east of the Rocky Mountains were called "Algonquins". We are concerned only with this tribe which came to New England. Our best authority with reference to them is Professor Daniel Gookin. In 1674 he was appointed by King Charles to make a historical collection of facts

relating to the Indians in New England. Other historians have regarded him as a friend of the Indian tribes and when he is criticized as to the accuracy of his statements, that criticism is always directed toward his friendliness to the Indians and his advocacy of their cause.

He says that the five principal nations of Indians in New England were (1) Pequots, (2) Narragansetts, (3) Pokonokets, (4) Massachusetts and (5) Pawtuckets.

The Pequots dwelt in the southern part of New England, west of Narragansett Bay, including a large part of Connecticut and along the Connecticut River.

The Narragansetts occupied the territory which included that part of Rhode Island west of Narragansett Bay and also included some islands in that bay. Their sachem held dominion over Long Island, Block Island and over some of the Nipmuck Indians who lived remote from the sea.

The Pokonokets lived to the east and northeast of the Narragansetts. The dominion of their sachem included Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and some of the Nipmucks.

The Massachusetts tribe occupied territory north of the Pokonokets, including the coast of Scituate and north of it and the territory around Blue Hill and Massachusetts Bay.

The Pawtuckets occupied territory north and northeast of the Massachusetts extending west nearly to Concord and northeasterly to Saco, Maine.

As a matter of fact there was also a sixth tribe, the Nipmucks, who occupied the land north of what is now Pawtucket, R. I. as far as the Concord River. Goodwin says (page 131) that there were about a thousand Nipmucks in central Massachusetts, living in disconnected groups and having little in common.

The Mohawks occupied territory in the upper Hudson River valley and northeast from that to and into Canada. They were a very fierce and warlike nation of Algonquins, making inroads into New England, sacking the villages of local Indians and carrying away captives and plunder. These Mohawks not only came into New England through the Mohawk trail for a long time after the whites had settled here but they continued their raids until restrained at Fort Massachusetts, which was erected and fortified between North Adams and Williamstown. They received tribute from some of the New England tribes, including the Nipmucks (see Goodwin, page 131). They also came into the eastern states through the head waters of the St. John River. The Marisites, an Indian tribe living in the vicinity of what is now Edmundston, N. B., were in as mortal fear of them as were

our local Indians. Many traditions of raids in the St. John valley have been told to me by my Indian guide from Edmundston. The Mohawks were not successful, however, in their raids into the Pequot, Narragansett and Pokonoket territory because the Indians living there were also warriors of distinction and could defend their homes. These local Indian tribes did not dwell in peace amongst themselves and the territory which presented the best fishing or the best hunting was occupied and defended by the strongest tribes; hence the Pequots were the strongest of the New England tribes and their strength was closely approximated by the Narragansetts and the Pokonokets who were engaged in an almost continuous warfare with each other until about 1617, when a pestilence so overcame the tribes affiliated with the Pokonoket nation that the Narragansetts wrested from them a part of the Nipmuck territory, also the territory around Warwick, and Aquidneck Island in Narraganset Bay.

Massasoit and his father (rulers of the Pokonoket nation) defended their territory heroically but in the end they were obliged to submit to and pay tribute to the Narragansetts. Roger Williams notes a talk with Massasoit, in which, while admitting his inability to defend in this war in which his father was probably slain, he would not admit ultimate defeat, claiming that it was the fatal sickness among all of his associates which prevented him from then assembling his full strength of fighting men.

We have to do only with the Pokonoket nation of Indians. The lands which they occupied correspond almost exactly with the area of Plymouth Colony. The Pokonoket nation was composed of twelve Indian tribes; and of these the ruling tribe was the Wampanoags, and their chieftain Massasoit (properly called Ousamequin) was the sachem of that tribe and ruler of the nation. The lands occupied by the Wampanoags included the present town of Bristol, R. I., the east shore of the Providence River up to and including Rehoboth, Mass., also Warren, and the territory east of Warren to Gardner's Neck. The Pocassets were also a very powerful Pokonoket tribe. Their territory included Gardner's Neck, and was bounded easterly by the present Westport line, bounded northerly by the southerly line of Berkley, and southerly by the southerly line of Tiverton. It included a long stretch of hinter-land which extended northerly back of Freetown to the Middleborough line. Their sachem was Corbitant, second in power in the nation and always seeking to overthrow Massasoit. He was the father of Weetamoe and of Wootonekanuske. At later times Weetamoe was the wife of Massasoit's son Wamsutta, also called Alexander.

while Wootonekanuske became the wife of another of his sons, Metacomet, otherwise known as King Philip.

Another powerful tribe were the Sakonets. Tolony was the sachem of that tribe, but he was apparently killed in battle and his wife Awashonks succeeded him as squa-sachem. It is said by Drake that she was a very close relative of King Philip. As Indians kept little track of their relatives, she was undoubtedly either his oldest sister or his aunt, very likely a sister of Massasoit. Another tribe, the Patuxets, occupied the land around Plymouth. That whole tribe was wiped out by the plague; the Nemasket tribe occupied the section around Middleboro and Bridgewater; the Agawams at Wareham; the Manomets at Sandwich; the Satuckets at Mashpee; the Mattakees at Barnstable; the Nobscots at Yarmouth; the Monamoys at Chatham and the Nausets at Eastham. Gookin says that the tribes on the islands of Nantucket and "Nope" (Martha's Vineyard), and some of the Nipmucks were also Pokonokets.

The only survivor of the Patuxet tribe was the Indian interpreter Tisquantum, who was carried to England in 1614 by Captain Thomas Hunt when he kidnapped seven Indians from Cape Cod and twelve from the mainland. Tisquantum had lived in England three years and had then become versed in English after which he was sent to Newfoundland; thence again taken back to England by Captain Dermer (see Goodwin p. 122) he was brought by Dermer back again in 1619 to Plymouth where he found himself alone in the world because ninety-five per cent of all the natives from the Kennebec to Narragansett Bay, and his entire Patuxet tribe, had been annihilated in the great plague of 1617.

Indian Life and Character

Except for a very few Sachems and Indians of special rank, there is little praise to be accorded to the race which occupied the Narragansett Bay territory before the Pilgrims landed on our shores. Lest we conclude that they were as a rule unjustly treated, lest we attribute to them qualities of a heroic nature or glorify their status, I call attention to some records and to the writings of some prominent and competent observers of that time. I am referring to the attitude of the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony and not to the policies of Massachusetts Bay or of Weston's colony or even of Warwick or the south country. In 1641 the Plymouth Court compelled one Hallet to pay an Indian for a deer, and later the same year compelled one DeVille (Davol) to pay an Indian for shooting a hole in his kettle. In 1645 Governor

Bradford raised an inter-colonial issue with Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay, because a Boston man had not paid proper wages to a Cape Cod Indian. In the same year (in October) a colonist was ordered to pay a certain amount of corn to an Indian in restitution for venison improperly taken. The next spring one Chesboro was sent to jail, and one Hitt was fined for "raising an affair" with Sachem Massasoit, and at another time an Indian was reimbursed for damage done his corn. When one Woodcock took property from an Indian's house in lieu of a debt, he was fined fifty shillings, and was put in the stocks at Rehoboth. In August of 1655 one Jones was tried because an Indian complained of him about his gun. During the following year after a pound had been established in Rehoboth and the Indians had been authorized to drive and put in the pound all cattle which damaged their corn, it appearing that the Inhabitants of Rehoboth were remiss in completing the Indian pound, a fine was imposed, to be payable if the pound was not completed within thirty days. One John Williams was fined five pounds for pulling down an Indian wigwam. Captain Dermer, who was in Plymouth a few months before the Pilgrims landed and travelled inland through Indian villages, reported that the Indians bore an inveterate malice towards the English and were of more strength than all the savages from thence to Penobscot.

In 1636 Roger Williams spent twelve weeks in Massasoit's wigwam at Sowams (Bicknell 147). He says "God was pleased to give me a painful patient spirit to lodge with them in their filthy smoke-holes, in order that I might gain their tongue".

William Morrell, an Episcopal clergyman, was in Plymouth in 1624. He reported to the Ecclesiastical Court that the Indians "Conceal their designs and never display their intents till they conclude their end by might or fraud"; when offended once they are

"wondrous cruel, strangely base and vile,
quickly displeased and hardly reconciled".

Steven Hopkins and Edward Winslow, who made the first call upon Massasoit at Sowams in 1621, spent two nights in his wigwam and then felt forced to return, fearing that if they stayed longer they would not be able to reach home for want of strength because with "bad lodging, barbarous singing, lice and fleas within doors and mosquitos without, we could hardly sleep".

When Mrs. Rowlandson (wife of Rev. Jos. Rowlandson, of Lancaster, Mass.) was an Indian captive early in the Indian war, she came across her

son who had shortly before been taken captive. She found him "almost overcome with lice". Her description of the food which they ate is too revolting to repeat. "The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," first published in 1682, has had over 35 editions.

Trumbull in his *History of Indian Wars* (page 23) says that in 1636 while the Pequots had a treaty of friendship with the English, they captured two daughters of a Mr. Gibson, in Hartford, and that after gashing their flesh, they filled the wounds with hot embers and mimicked their dying groans. The following January they ripped the bodies of a boat crew, split their backs and hung them on trees.

Roger Williams wrote the Massachusetts rulers on October 8th, 1654 that all Indians were "treacherous, inconsiderable pagans and beasts, wallowing in idleness, stealing, lying and whoring", and in a letter in the following year added (see Drake III, 71) "Your Wisdoms know the inhuman insultations of these wild creatures".

Goodwin says (page 547) that Williams was always most true to the Indians, but that (see Plymouth Records X, 442) Sachem Philip broke all laws against the Plymouth men, who were the ancient friends and protectors of his tribe. Williams also said (5 Mass. Hist. Coll. 428) "all Indians are extremely treacherous".

While the Indians were in the Pocasset swamp, besieged there by English troops, they killed several of their own children whose crying might betray their whereabouts, and whose presence might become an encumbrance. (See Hubbards Indian Wars Vol. II, page 276).

When the Pocasset Indians were in retreat and Captain Church and his Indians were in pursuit, they came upon an Indian camp. One Indian pointed out his father's wigwam and asked whether "he must now go and kill his own father". Captain Church answered in the negative and told the Indian to point out the father to him and said that he would deal with the father while the Indian fell on others, to which Captain Church's Indian replied "That very good speak".

Robert Cushman, a man of marked ability and integrity, came to Plymouth from England early in 1621, and returned on the following December. He was sent in the interests of those who had financed the colony. In later years his son Thomas Cushman was elder of the Plymouth Church (succeeding Brewster). Both he and his wife Mary Allerton are ancestors of mine.

Upon the return of Robert to England, he delivered a discourse on the "reasons" of the settlement, — of the land and the natives he said "Their

land is spacious and void, and they are few, and do but *run* over the land as do foxes and wild beasts; they are not industrious, neither have they art, science, skill or faculty to use either the land or its commodities, and we have it by common consent. Our faculty is small and our strength less and we live with them on friendly usage, love, peace, honest and just carriage and good counsel, so that they may live in peace forever”.

Daniel Gookin was Indian Commissioner in the colony of Massachusetts Bay. As late as 1742 he described his wards to King Charles saying “their customs and manner are very brutish and barbarous, like unto savages. They take many wives, yet one of them holds their chief esteem and affection; and also they put away their wives and the wives in turn leave them when displeased; and they are very revengeful and take vengeance, even after a long time, upon such as injure them or their kindred. Also the payment of wampum was a customary satisfaction for all wrongs, even for life taken. The men are very idle, disposed chiefly to hunt, fish or make war. The tillage and planting is done by the women. If they remove to a new location, as they often do, the women carry the greatest burdens and prepare all the diet; they are much addicted to lying and speaking untruth and unto stealing, especially from the English. They are very indulgent and loving to their children; and are usually civil to women, even if they are captives; they make cider and are great lovers of strong drink, and when drunk are very outrageous and mad, even killing one another; they are addicted to gaming and will play away all they have, taking much delight in their dancings (they dance singly) and in revellings which sometimes last for a week, the men succeed each other in the dance, one after another, night after night.”