

Chapter VII

RESULTS OF THE INDIAN WAR
IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE COLONIES
APPRENTICESHIP AND SLAVERY OF INDIANS

Results of the Indian War

The Indian war left all of the colonies in an extremely impoverished condition, but Plymouth was the most devastated and pecuniarily the weakest of all. The soil around the town of Plymouth had proved to be the least productive in the colony, and before the war many, if not most, of its prominent and forceful men had moved to other towns within the colony where the returns of their labor were more abundant. These outposts were completely destroyed and the expenses of the war had been so large that Plymouth's share of it equalled and perhaps exceeded the total value of all the remaining personal property owned by its settlers.

There was no financial aid offered from the home country and except for some contributions from Ireland, the colonies were left to accomplish their own reconstruction. There were many bereaved families and many crippled soldiers to aid or support, and there was no public money in the treasury, yet Plymouth never shrank from its duties or obligations and never compromised its indebtedness.

There were some public lands previously reserved for Indian habitation upon which no previous encroachment had been made. In the generation which had elapsed since the landing of the forefathers, the Indian tribes had divided into two classes, viz: those who had accepted and those who had partially rejected the advanced civilization. Those who had in the main adopted the European culture had formed permanent settlements and were called "praying Indians" by their fellow tribesmen. They lived in segregated towns, some had permanent places of residence and permanent fields for tillage, and many acted as servants for the settlers. They were

heartily disliked by the roving Indian element composed of some of the older generation and the younger, socialistic, element, and although they had adopted many of the foreign cultural benefits, — such as the use of firearms, the use of more modern field implements and the raising of cattle and swine as a winter food reserve, these roving bands still shrank from domestic and farm work, rejected the Christian religion and made themselves generally offensive. A careful analysis of the figures relating to the ratio of settled and unsettled Indians with the territory formerly occupied by the same tribes, would indicate that the roving bands had as much unoccupied territory per capita available for their habitation and for hunting and fishing as had their ancestors before them, and they had immeasurably superior means for securing their wild subsistence.

After the Indian war and the decimation of the Indian tribes, the exportation of the irreconcilables and after the resettlement of the friendly Indians, the unoccupied lands were available for general colonial use, and they were offered for sale by the colony to meet a portion of the immediate public needs. Some were ordered sold, the proceeds to be used for the support of the widows and orphans of the war, and others were offered for sale to reduce the colony debt. Of the latter class are the two sales then accomplished on Narragansett Bay, first in 1680 the sale of Pocasset to Edward Gray and his seven associates, and secondly the sale of Mt. Hope and Bristol to John Walley and his three associates from Boston. I have incorporated as an appendix an abstract of this last and very unusual deed, which — in effect — almost created a new Commonwealth.

The Lesson

I have drawn certain conclusions from the facts outlined, because there is a tendency on the part of many modern writers to criticize our forefathers for the events which preceded the "inevitable conflict," in effect censuring their memory because the conflict of civilizations resulted in an Indian war.

This tendency is well evidenced by the unfair statements in "The Founding of New England", edited by James T. Adams, and published in 1926, which at page 344 refer to Philip as follows:

"No individual with the instinct of self respect and self preservation could fail to see that his eventual choice would lie between resistance and virtual slavery",

and at page 341:

"The parchments which the savage signed with his mark were as ethically invalid as a child's sale of his inheritance

for a stick of candy. * * * They could not foresee — what was reasonably clear to the colonists — that the result of their having 'welcomed' the stranger would eventually be their own annihilation".

Human nature is much the same today as it was three hundred years ago. Human emotions of greed, rancor, revenge, love and hatred have existed since the dawn of history.

Your and my Pilgrim and Puritan ancestors had certain traits, certain characteristics: a spirit of aggressiveness, an unconquerable persistence and stamina, which are basic qualities of good citizenship, they were courageous, fearless and godly, and were determined to live as patriotic subjects of a great power, and to fight injustice and bigotry without compromise. To carry out this determination they ostracized themselves and founded a great nation that we and they might truly live.

We as their descendants have, because of our heritage, the duty to keep our race from deteriorating, to hold our character up to the standard they have set. We should not be proud of our ancestry, rather should we be fearful lest it can be said that having a noble heritage, we have hidden the inherited talents and become debased.

Inasmuch as neither you nor I would reduce a nation to slavery, or purchase an inheritance for a pottage, we know that our ancestors never did and never could or would do any such thing; the building of churches, schools, colleges and homes for an ignorant people, and surrounding them with rules and laws which required chastity and morality do not constitute moral obliquity. If justice was not always tempered with mercy, can we say that it is otherwise today, or that they handled the conflict of races less properly than we would have handled it in their times and with their surroundings?

To claim so is mere braggadocia, — we are not more righteous, nor are we actuated by broader or more conscientious principles than were they. They had their communists, their unemployed, their loafers, their inane chieftains just as we have them now. Such lived then as they do now for no useful purpose except to indicate how worthless to the world some human lives can be. We know the causes and results of the Indian war, and we know how the socialists of today threaten our government, rob our homes, organize gang raids and make private reprisals, till we fear for the survival of our civilization.

When our standard of morality is compared with that of our ancestors, many writers forget that identical surrounding conditions must be assumed.

When it was believed that the Bible must be interpreted literally — that the words “thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” meant that anyone convicted of witchery in a Court of Justice should be sentenced to death — the cruelties of the “Salem witchcraft” follow. When it was believed by Christians that the command to carry the Gospel into all lands meant that it should be forcibly injected into the lives of ignorant natives irrespective of their willingness or ability to understand and receive it, a natural resentment against Christianity followed.

We who interpret these commands in the light of the “historical” or liberal “situations”, or from the viewpoint of the best scholarship of the modern school, must not minimize the standard of our ancestors who enforced their beliefs according to their own interpretations of the Holy Word. They probably did so more energetically and fearlessly than we now do, but such stamina as they exhibited, shows strength of character and does not indicate moral weakness.

The Indian war placed Plymouth colony in debt to an amount which equalled the total value of all the personal property in the colony but the Pilgrims met their obligation. Let us then praise our ancestors because they did not compromise with evil, and because, although endowed with all the passions of life, they ever kept before them “the ultimate good”. Almost always their introspect was equal in all particulars to our retrospect.

In this generation, at this moment, there is need of men of their caliber, and if we shall equal their purposes and accomplishments, this world will be the better because we have lived.

*Service, as a Punishment, as Distinguished
from Apprenticeship and Slavery*

Service is comparative to a “sentence to hard labor”. In Colonial times an Indian tribe (that is each individual) was punishable for the default of any one of the tribe as well as for a general tribal default, so that at the end of the Indian war which placed the colonists in debt to an amount in excess of the total value of all their assets, all Indians were doomed to work for the colonists for certain periods, if not in perpetuity,— to bring about a rebuilding of the homes and to restore the farm damage which had been done during the war period.

The Council of Rhode Island on July 4, 1676, accordingly empowered a committee to sell all the Indian men and women who were able for service, and this power was confirmed by the General Assembly on the following August 6th. This condemnation for service was for a period of nine years.

In June, at the request of Plymouth Colony and upon the ground that the Indians in Providence were hostages to the English forces, Rhode Island voted to return certain Indians to Plymouth. Philip was captured on August 12th and on the following Monday, August 14, all Indian captives, innocent or guilty, were condemned to terms of servitude, — those under five years to serve until they were thirty; those over five and under ten to serve until they were twenty-eight; those over ten and under fifteen to serve until they were twenty-seven; those over fifteen and less than twenty to serve until they were twenty-six; those over twenty and less than thirty were to serve eight years, and all others to serve for seven years. This differentiation was due to the cost of support of the servants who were not old enough to earn a full wage. The Indians were apparently turned over to the individual colonists without other consideration, except that each person to whom any one was allotted was required to pay 16 shillings, 4½ pence toward the reduction of the public debt.

This method of dealing with the Indians did not apply to those who were active participants in the war. A court martial was held in Newport August 24, 1676 to try those who had been in open rebellion against the colonists. Quanopin and two of his brothers admitted their guilt, and were ordered to be shot on August 26th. It is presumed that the execution was carried out, though no record of it appears. In Plymouth Indian warriors were sold and disposed of either for life or for a shorter time "as there may be reasons". After trial three Indians were ordered to be delivered to Captain Church and seven more to Captain Low, with an order to transport them out of the colony. One Indian was given to Henry Lilly for his services as "marshall" and crier of the Court.

The Rhode Island Court declared that no Indian should thereafter be landed in any part of Rhode Island or on any island in Narragansett Bay.

