

KING PHILIP'S WAR; WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE ATTACK ON BROOKFIELD IN
AUGUST, 1675.

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THIS paper does not propose to give an account of King Philip's War, as a whole. To do that with any thoroughness would require a volume. It would rather confine itself to a statement of the reasons why the war happened to take place, and to a somewhat full sketch of a single event of that war.

The subject has for me what I may call a traditional attraction. My ancestor, Captain Nathaniel Reynolds, was one of the original settlers, who after the war took possession of Mount Hope, the home of the Wampanoags, and named it Bristol. My great-grandfather, Benjamin Reynolds, was the first boy christened in the new town; while my grandfather, John Reynolds, and my father, Grindall Reynolds, first saw the light and were reared to manhood amid the associations of the ancient hamlet.

No historian, as it seems to me, has pointed out with sufficient clearness the causes which made this war, not only probable, but inevitable. A little sketch of the First Church, Bristol, R. I., appeared in 1872. In that sketch you find this statement. It refers to the grant of the township in 1681.¹ "The whole of Plymouth County was then settled, except this territory, which was the only spot left uncovered in the western march of English population." This is literally true. When the *Mayflower* dropped anchor off Plymouth the Wampanoags held the whole region as

¹ Historical Sketch of the First Church, Bristol, R. I., by J. P. Lane, p. 8.

their hunting ground. Of this great tract all they retained in 1675 was a little strip, called then Mount Hope, scarcely six miles long and two miles wide. The southern line of English possession had been drawn right across Bristol Neck, enclosing, and almost imprisoning, the tribe in a little peninsula, washed on all sides, except the north, by the waters of Narragansett and Mt. Hope bays. As if to emphasize this fact, their neighbors, the people of Swanzev, "set up a very substantial fence quite across the great neck."¹ That some freedom to fish and hunt in the old territory was granted is probable. But in the nature of the case each year narrowed its scope. Governor Winslow says "Before these troubles broke out the English did not possess a single foot of land in the Colony, but was fairly obtained from the Indians."² No doubt this may have been true. No less true was it that the owners of the soil hardly comprehended the meaning of transactions by which they sold their birthright for a mess of pottage. Even what remained was coveted. To protect them in it, in 1668 it was necessary to order,³ "that noe person shall . . . on any pretence whatsoever buy or receive any of those lands that appertaine unto Mount Hope." Yet one year later the same court granted⁴ one John Gorham a hundred acres within the bounds of Bristol, provided it could be purchased of the Indians.

Another change had come just as hard to bear. To the men who landed at Plymouth Rock the Wampanoags seemed to be, and no doubt were, a dirty, half-naked and half-starved lot of barbarians.⁵ But these barbarians were independent, and exercised a controlling influence over the tribes of central Massachusetts. "Massasoit," says Drake, "was for an Indian a great King." As an equal he made a

¹ Hubbard's Indian Wars.

² Plymouth Records, x., 363.

³ Plymouth Laws, 221.

⁴ See Hist. of 1st Church, Bristol.

⁵ See Palfrey, i., 183.

treaty with the whites; and was assured that¹ "King James would esteem him his friend and ally." Fifty years pass. The son of Massasoit, according to the Puritan annalist had divested himself of all independence.² He had meekly acknowledged himself and his people to be subjects of the King of England and New Plymouth and under their laws. Nor was this subjection a dead letter. The chiefs were summoned to appear and answer accusations often ill-founded. Restrictive laws were applied to trade and even to personal habits. Sachems were arrested, tried and executed for acts committed by order of their chief. Of King Philip the Plymouth Commissioners write that he was in arms,³ "from a guilty feare that we should send for him and bring him to tryall with the other murderers." All this may have been the necessary result of the contact of the strong with the weak. It may indeed, as Palfrey argues, have benefited the Indian himself. But it subjected him to restraints which to a savage were well nigh intolerable.

Add, now, that the colonists, having obtained the land and tethered the owners, had no faith in him; that they were haunted with the feeling that he was "plotting mischief"; that repeatedly Philip and his brother were summoned as suspected criminals and forced to submit to humiliating conditions; that the brother actually died of a fever, occasioned in part by the hardship endured on one of these arrests, and in part also by the rage and shame engendered by this very humiliation. This is the way matters stood in 1675 according to the conquerors' own statement. Read Philip's pathetic story recorded in Arnold's history and you will know how it looked to the conquered. Said he to John Borden of Rhode Island:—⁴

"The English who came to this country were but a handful of people, forlorn, poor and distressed. My father

¹ Drake's Indian Wars.

² See Hubbard's Indian Wars.

³ Plymouth Records, x., 364.

⁴ Arnold's Rhode Island, i., 394.

was then Sachem. He relieved their distresses. He gave them land to build and plant upon. He did all in his power to serve them. Their numbers rapidly increased. My father's counsellors became uneasy and alarmed. They advised him to destroy them before they should become too strong. But my father was also the father of the English. His advice prevailed. It was concluded to give victuals to the English. Experience has taught that the fears of my father's counsellors were right. By various means they got possessed of a great part of his territory. My elder brother became Sachem. They pretended to suspect him of evil designs. He was seized and confined, and thrown into sickness and died. After I became Sachem they disarmed all my people. They tried them by their own laws, assessed damages which they could not pay, and their land was taken. Thus tract after tract is gone. But a small part of the dominion of my ancestors remains. *I am determined not to live till I have no country.*"

So it is evident that life-and-death grapple, called King Philip's War, had to come. I am with those who doubt the accepted theory about it. Our fathers excited by natural and, for the most part, well-founded fears exaggerated both the capacity and plans of Philip. They believed that he had formed a gigantic Indian Confederacy. This theory rests on slender foundations. The King Philip of the annals is certainly a creature of the imagination. The real Philip had not head enough to plan such a confederacy; nor courage enough to carry it into effect. His commanding influence, if he ever had any, began with the attack on Swanzey and closed with his flight to the Nipmucks. From that moment as a great figure he disappears. Indeed, if we suppose the affair at Swanzey to be the culmination of years of plotting, what further proof of Philip's weakness is needed? There was no preparation whatever for defence. A few hundred hasty levies in forty-eight hours swept his tribe out of existence. There is very slight evidence that he was in command at any of the later undertakings. He certainly fled for a time to the Mohawks. Had not a certain Nemesis brought him back to die on his own hearth-

stone, and so lent pathos to life's close, he might almost have been forgotten. Philip foresaw,¹ as we have already seen, that soon he must be landless, and a slave instead of a king, if he did not fight. Of that we have absolute evidence. We may readily admit that he did what he could, with his own tribe, and with the Nipmucks, who were allied or united to his tribe by peculiarly close ties, to prepare for the emergency. But confederacy is a large term to apply to such despairing struggles. In fact there was no simultaneousness in the outbreak. It began in June with the raid on Swanzev. The Nipmucks rose in July. The tribes along the Connecticut River in August. Those of New Hampshire and Maine in September and October. The Narragansetts never rose at all; but were attacked and destroyed in mid-winter, because they did not deliver up fugitives; and because their loyalty was suspected;—and, as it would seem from the testimony of the Indian spy² employed by the English, unjustly.

The simplest explanation is probably the truest. Already the Indian chief had been repeatedly summoned to appear to answer to the charge of plotting against the colonists. Once he obtained deliverance by promising to deliver up the arms of his tribe; again by signing articles acknowledging himself a subject of the King of England; and the third time, as Increase Mather states it, by giving “a sum of money to defray the charges which his insolent clamors had put the Colony into,” or as Philip puts it “he was seized and confined till he sold another tract of country.” All this was sufficiently exasperating. But the cup of his indignation was full, when Sausamon, a Natick Indian, who had in times past taken refuge at Mount Hope, and been a subject and friend of Philip, in 1675 went to Plymouth with charges against his benefactor, and those charges were accepted as true. The death of Sausamon,—slain as

¹ See Arnold's Rhode Island, 395.

² See James Quanopokit's Relations in Mass. Archives.

it was believed by Philip's order,—naturally followed. The arrest of three Wampanoag Sachems for this supposed murder, their condemnation and execution under English law precipitated hostilities. The young warriors, already dissatisfied with Philip's timidity, sprang to arms. The rest was like the spread of a prairie fire, where all the herbage is ready for conflagration. Tribe after tribe, by a sort of warlike contagion rose. The habits of the race made bloodshed natural, while jealousy and fear, and often sense of injury, made it certain.

The *first* act of the war closed with Philip's flight from Mount Hope. At this seat of what, we are asked to believe, was a long conceived, subtle and powerful confederacy, almost literally no resistance was made. In forty-eight hours after the appearance of the hastily gathered English soldiery, the chief was a fugitive, and his tribe, as such, swept out of existence.

The *second* act could open only in just one place. Where could Philip flee? North were the solid settlements of Plymouth and Massachusetts, whose first levies had crushed his tribe at a blow. West was Narragansett Bay, and beyond the Rhode Island and Connecticut towns. But northwest, in central Massachusetts, was a tract more than fifty miles square where the Indian had sway. It was the Nipmuck country. It included nearly all of Worcester County and a large part of Hampshire County. In the centre of this region was Brookfield with possibly one hundred and fifty people; at Worcester seven deserted houses. Now the Nipmucks were Philip's natural allies. Between them and the Wampanoags there had been a close bond, either of friendship or subjection. It has been conjectured, and latterly asserted,¹ that Massasoit closed his life at Brookfield as chief of the Quabaugs. It was therefore inevitable that the defeated chief should take refuge among them, and that his coming should kindle afresh the flame.

¹ See Hist. No. Brookfield, 46, 47.

The assault of Brookfield was no accident. Brookfield was the half-way station between the established life on the seaboard, and the hopeful beginnings of life up and down the Connecticut River. In round terms it was thirty miles from the outposts of eastern Massachusetts, and as many miles from the first hamlets of western Massachusetts. Its maintenance, if the Connecticut River towns were to be saved, was of vital importance. So vital did it appear, that, though under stress of great difficulty it was twice abandoned, the authorities at once ordered its re-occupation; and to the close of the war it remained a place of refuge and arms. We may well believe that the Indians understood, quite as clearly as the whites, the importance of the post and its weakness. Their purpose to attack it must have been co-incident with their resolution to go to war.

Apparently the colonists were equally aware of the importance of the post and its danger. For in the latter part of June the Governor and Council of Massachusetts sent messengers to the western Indians to keep them, if possible, from uniting with Philip. Satisfactory assurances were received from the sachems. These assurances were very likely made in good faith. But with the actual breaking out of hostility the younger warriors' lust for battle swept away every principle of prudence. Early in July the authorities, still distrustful, sent that hardy frontiersman and scout, Ephraim Curtis, to Brookfield, nominally to confirm the peace, really, to use their racy language, "to make a perfect discovery of the motions of the Nipmug or Western Indians." His report could not have been reassuring. He found the Indians about two hundred strong encamped on a sort of little island, partly surrounded by a river, and wholly surrounded by miry swamps, called Wenamessit,—and about ten miles from the feeble English settlement. They were in a state of great excitement. Some cried out that he and his company should be killed.

Others dissuaded from such a course. Guns loaded and cocked were placed at his breast. The air was filled with uproar. Finally he had an interview with the sachems, and "left them," as he says, "well appeased."¹ At any rate he got away with a whole skin, which under the circumstances was hardly to have been expected. Curtis made a second visit to the same place ten days later. He found the savages outwardly more quiet but really more dangerous, as they were then committed to hostile measures. They promised to send sachems to Boston to speak to the great white sachem; a promise which they did not mean to keep.² Then it was, on the 27th of July, that the authorities ordered Captain Edward Hutchinson, who had just returned from a similar mission to the Narragansetts, to take Captain Thomas Wheeler of Concord and his little squad of twenty Middlesex troops and go to Quaboag. These men were, with a solitary exception, from Concord or the towns adjoining it. Captain Wheeler was a Concord man; so was his son Lieutenant Thomas; so was Simon Davis who succeeded him in command; and of the remaining eighteen,—though it is not possible to decide with absolute certainty,—probably ten came from the same town. The rest, with the probable exception of one, Zachariah Phillips of Boston, came from the adjoining towns of Chelmsford, Billerica and Sudbury. So the whole stress of danger and difficulty rested upon people of that immediate neighborhood.

The object of this visit was three-fold:—to confirm the Indians, if it might be, in peaceful counsels; to call them to account for their failure to send according to promise an embassy to Boston; and it was added,—we now quote the language of the instructions³—"in prosecution of this affayre, if you should meet with any Indians that stand in

¹ Mass. Archives, lxvii.

² Mass. Archives, lxvii.

³ Archives, lxvii.

opposition to you, or that declare themselves to be your enemies, then you are ordered to engage them, if you see reason for it and endeavor to reduce them by force of armes." Nothing could have been more foolhardy than this expedition. When we consider the nature of Ephraim Curtis's report, and remember that it was known that the Nipmucks had already attacked Mendon, the only explanation of this sending of twenty-five chosen men to seemingly sure death, is the utter contempt in which the Puritan held his foe. Was peace sought? Then Ephraim Curtis and his two or three Natick Indians were more likely to achieve it. Was war to be waged? What were twenty-five men to cope with two hundred or five hundred savages on their own soil?

Upon the incidents of Brookfield fight we need not dwell. They are simple and well known. The little force¹ "came on the Lord's day about noon (being August 1), to Brookfield, understanding that the Indians were about ten miles to the northwest." Four messengers were sent to tell the Indians that the troops were there, not to make war but to confirm peace. They found "the young men . . . stout in their speeches and surly in their carriage." The chiefs, however, agreed to meet the English the next morning at a plain three miles from Brookfield. Accompanied by three of the principal inhabitants the little force marched thither, but found no one. Captain Hutchinson and his colleague, Captain Wheeler, were then in great doubt; but, persuaded by the Brookfield men, who had entire confidence in the good intentions of the savages, concluded to march to the "swamp where the Indians then were." Between a long rocky hill and a miry swamp, where there was room to ride only in single file, they were surprised by two hundred or more of the enemy. Five soldiers and the three inhabitants were killed, Captain Hutchinson was mortally wounded and died seventeen days after at Marlborough. Captain

¹ Capt. Thomas Wheeler's Narrative.

Thomas Wheeler and his son Thomas and two others were wounded but recovered; though it is believed that the lives both of the Captain and his son were materially shortened on account of their injuries. Among those killed was Samuel Smedley, son of Baptiste Smedley, one of the early settlers of Concord, of Huguenot extraction the name would suggest, who owned and occupied a farm near where to-day Mr. Franklin Daken lives. Mr. Walcott, in his valuable work, "Concord in the Colonial Period," states that a son-in-law had already been killed at Nashoba, and adds that "the death of his son was too heavy a blow for the already severely taxed powers of the aged father, and the tragedy was made complete by the death of Baptiste Smedley only a fortnight after." I cannot refrain from quoting Captain Wheeler's account of his own escape—as found in that narrative which has been justly termed "the epic of Colonial times." The Indians, he says, "fired violently out of the swamp and from behind the bushes on the hillside, wounded me sorely, and shot my horse under me, so that he faltering and falling, I was forced to leave him, divers of the Indians being then but a few rods distant from me. My son Thomas Wheeler flying with the rest of the company missed me amongst them, and fearing that I was either slain or much endangered returned towards the swamp again, though he had then received a dangerous wound in the reins, where he saw me in the danger aforesaid. Whereupon he endeavored to rescue me, shewing himself therein a loving and dutiful son, he adventuring himself into great peril of his life to help me in that distress, there being many of the enemies about me, my son set me on his own horse and so escaped awhile on foot himself, until he caught a horse whose rider was slain, on which he mounted and so through God's great mercy we both escaped." "But for this attempt for my deliverance he received another dangerous wound." It is worth while to recall occasionally this simple old story of filial fidelity and filial heroism. The

remnant of the troop, leaving their dead where they fell, rode as they could up the steep and rocky hill, and were conducted by the Christian Indian guides, through paths known to them back to Brookfield, and took refuge in the largest and strongest house in the town. There were gathered, as the historian of North Brookfield believes, eighty-two persons, thirteen soldiers, thirteen citizens, six wounded men and about fifty women and children. And there for nearly three days they endured a siege in a fortress whose sole bulwarks were the single boards of an ordinary dwelling-house, through which the bullets of the enemy constantly passed, killing, wonderful to relate! only one person, Henry Young of Concord. The savages, to use Hubbard's words, "for two days assaulted that poor handful of helpless people; both night and day pouring in shot incessantly with guns; also thrusting poles with fire-brands, and rags dipt in brimstone tyed to the ends of them to fire the house; at last they used this devilish stratagem, to fill a cart with hemp, flax and other combustible matter, and so thrusting it backward with poles spliced together a great length, after they had kindled it; but as soon as it had begun to take fire, a storm of rain unexpectedly falling, put out the fire, else all the poor people would either have been consumed by merciless flames, or else have fallen into the hands of their cruel enemies, like wolves continually yelling and gaping for their prey." Twice that brave scout, Ephraim Curtis, strove to steal through their lines, and was driven back. The third time he succeeded, creeping a long way on his hands and knees, and bore tidings of their peril to Marlborough. On the evening of the third day their hearts were gladdened by the appearance of Major Simon Willard and Captain James Parker of Groton with fifty-one men, including five Christian Indians. The siege was at an end; and, as a home of men, for ten years, Brookfield ceased to be.

Just where did Brookfield fight take place? Upon this

point there has been earnest and long-continued discussion. Nor is there to-day any perfect agreement. Many hold that the scene of conflict is to be sought at some point in the defile from the head of Wicaboag Pond, crossing the present town line into New Braintree. Others maintain that it is to be sought on the easterly side of the Winimisset Valley in New Braintree, anciently embraced in Hardwick. Mr. Temple in his history of North Brookfield has admirably stated the evidence for the first theory; while the arguments for the other are clearly put by Dr. Paige in his article in the thirty-eighth volume of the *Genealogical Register*, entitled "Wicaboag or Winimisset?" Several members of this society passed a delightful day in last June, under the auspices of its President, surveying the whole region. One would wish to visit the spot many times before committing himself thoroughly to either theory. What I should say would be that the valley beyond Wicaboag answers well to Captain Wheeler's description: "A very rocky hill is on the right hand," under which one could march sixty or seventy rods. "A thick swamp is on the left hand." Between the two is a narrow defile, to-day in places "so bad that we could march only in single file." At a little distance an Indian trail is said to lead circuitously back to Brookfield. The objections to this theory are twofold: first, the defile is not in direct line ten miles, as Captain Wheeler is thought to state, but only five and a half from the house in which the fugitives took refuge; and second, if the swamp where the fight occurred was the same as that which Ephraim Curtis visited when the Quaboags were encamped on their four-acre island, then the little brook, flowing near the rocky hill, does not answer very well to the muddy river described by him.

If you turn now to the second theory, you can say, that the Winimisset swamp is nearly ten miles from Brookfield; that it is unquestionably a spot where the Indians had a somewhat permanent encampment, and that a muddy river

still exists. On the other hand no such clearly marked defile as the narrative seems to call for is found. The determination of this question depends upon the decision made on just two points; first, was the swamp where, as Wheeler states it, "the Indians then were," the one where Curtis found them, and where Captain Hutchinson's messengers sought them? That is, did the Indians fight near their home or away from it? Second, does Captain Wheeler's ten miles mean in direct line, or by the way which he says "none of us knew" as they rode, to avoid danger of ambuscade, "in open places"? The best judges will differ. As for myself I lean with moderation to "Wicaboag."

We cannot close without some allusion to the English actors in this tragedy. For I question whether in any human transaction, out of such a little body of men you could pick so many who were in themselves so worthy of remembrance, and to whom have come so many descendants of mark.

Let us begin with Captain Edward Hutchinson, a notable member of a notable family. Son of William and the celebrated Ann Hutchinson, he was born in England in 1613. His father owned and occupied an estate, on a part of which the famous Corner Book Store in Boston now stands, and the son's early manhood was probably spent there.¹ In 1637 he was included in the list of such as had been seduced and led into dangerous error by Mr. Wheelwright and Mrs. Hutchinson, and who were ordered to deliver up "all such guns, pistols, shot and matches as they shall be owner of." He lived however to recover the entire confidence of the authorities, and to obtain positions of honor both in military and civil life. He was a sergeant in 1642,² ensign in 1645, and in 1664 was elected captain of the celebrated "Three County Troope," so called because its members

¹ Mass. Records, 1., 211.

² Mass. Records.

came from Suffolk, Essex and Middlesex Counties. In 1642 he was sent to the great tribe of Narragansetts, "with certain instructions to demand satisfaction for certain injuries." Thirty-three years later, two weeks after the opening of King Philip's War, two weeks before his fatal errand to Brookfield, he was one of those who dictated terms of peace to the same tribe. His opposition, in which he stood almost alone, to the cruel laws against the Quakers better entitles him to remembrance than all his civic or martial honors. He was fortunate in his descendants. His son Elisha was twenty-five years a member of the Council, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and Commander-in-Chief of an expedition to Maine against the French and Indians. His grandson Thomas was also for many years a member of the Council; and the Eliot school-house in North Bennet Street, Boston, stands a monument to his liberality and to the fierce prejudice generated by the Revolution, which refused, in the name of the school-house he gave, to perpetuate his memory. The second grandson, Edward, was selectman, representative, Judge of Probate, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas and Treasurer of Harvard College thirty years. In Thomas Hutchinson, the second, great-grandson of Captain Edward, the honors of the family culminated. We think of him as tory and refugee; but for many years he was the most distinguished and most popular of the sons of Massachusetts. Simply enumerate the positions he held! He was ten years a representative, two years speaker of the House, sixteen years member of the Council, six years Judge of Probate, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court many years,—Lieutenant-Governor thirteen years and Governor three years. In 1760, while Governor Pownal was absent, he actually held and exercised the offices of Judge of Probate, Chief Justice, Councillor, Lieutenant-Governor and acting Governor, an accumulation of offices perhaps never before or since held by one person; and held apparently by him to

the entire satisfaction of the community, until in the great controversy he sided with the King.

Of Captain Thomas Wheeler and his descendants we know less. The name was too common a one to permit the most accomplished antiquarian to unravel the various genealogies. But his "narrative" alone ought to make his name immortal; it is so clear, so full and so charged with the thought and feeling of the time. Our first notice of him is found in the Massachusetts Records; wherein it appears that certain "inhabitants of Concord, Chelmsford, Billerikey, Lancaster and Groton," having petitioned, "the Court judgeth it meet that such persons living in the frontier towns" be "legally capacitated to lyst themselves troopers" "under Thomas Wheeler Sen^r, whom the Court appoints to be their Leiftenant." Two years after he was made Captain, and so remained till his death. This occurred one year and four months after the fight. His son, the Ensign, followed him the next month, leaving as a townsman records only a horse, pistols, cutlash and gun, valued at £6, 12 s., the sole reward, it would seem, of his most valiant service. Captain Wheeler's descendants appear to have been chiefly plain yeomen, whose vocation has not brought them into public notice; but in this generation few men have had a career more honorable than the late Vice-President Wheeler, in whose veins flowed the blood of the old Puritan Captain.

Lieutenant Simon Davis, who succeeded to the command after his superior officers were disabled, was a Concord man, whose home was near what is now the Abel Clark place. According to Wheeler's narrative it was "his lively spirit" which kept up the courage of the survivors. He was one of the two sons of Dolor Davis who was himself first probably of his name in the new country. Lieutenant Simon became Captain Simon, and in King William's war from 1689 to 1697 with forty troopers and thirty foot soldiers was appointed to defend the frontier from Dunstable to Marl-

borough. Of few men can it be said that three Massachusetts governors have sprung from their loins. Yet John Davis, John Davis Long, and George Dexter Robinson are all descendants of Dolor Davis. Whether all come from Lieutenant Simon or from his brother and townsman, Samuel Davis, is not quite clear.

Simon Willard, uncle of Lieutenant Simon Davis, who rescued the Brookfield garrison when it was in extremity, was one of the noted persons in early Massachusetts history. Coming from County Kent, as so many of our best did, with Peter Bulkeley he shared the honor of planting Concord. Twenty-four years later he was called to take the helm at Lancaster, and steered that frontier settlement through all the obstacles and dangers of its early life. He had held almost every post of duty, civic or military, and now at the allotted three-score years and ten he was giving his last moments to perilous public service. He left his stamp on his descendants. The period from 1689 to 1763 was almost one long war between the colonists and the French and Indians. And in that time hardly a day in which one of Simon Willard's blood and name was not standing guard on the frontier; while two presidents of Harvard attest the interest of the family in sound learning.

This account would be incomplete, and unjust in its incompleteness, without some allusion to Captain James Parker of Groton, who, as second in command, accompanied Major Willard and the rescuing party. He was, says Dr. Green in his "Groton during the Indian Wars," "in the early history of Groton without question its most influential inhabitant." This is easily seen to be true. There is hardly an important public paper relating to the infant town but has his signature. Was a meeting-house to be built he must be at the head of the Committee to further it. Was a road to be laid out who so fit to have part in doing it as "Sergeant Parker?" He was chairman of the first Board of Selectmen in 1662, and he appears in that capacity as late

as 1694. He was Town Clerk for several years. With the first fear of an Indian war, on May 6, 1673, it was ordered that, "James Parker of Groaten, having had the care of the military company there for several yeares is appointed and ordered to be their leiftennant, and Wm. Larkin to be ensigne to the said Company there." Sixteen years after, when the conflict entitled "King William's war," was impending, it was still the veteran James Parker who was called to lead the soldiers of the town, being appointed Captain in 1689. Judge Joel Parker was one of his descendants, and the Lawrence family which has filled so large a space in the commercial, manufacturing and philanthropic life of Massachusetts is descended on one side from the Parkers—whether of the Capt. James branch, the genealogy of the family has not been sufficiently put in order to permit a definite statement.

I reserve the most picturesque figure for the last: Ephraim Curtis, scout and interpreter. One wonders that so little has been made of this person; for you have to come down to the days of Robert Rogers, and Israel Putnam, and John Stark, before you find an individual who stands out so clearly on the background of our frontier history. He was the son of Henry Curtis, one of the first settlers of Sudbury, born in 1642, and so only 33 years old at Brookfield. He was evidently a man of courage and iron firmness both in peace and war. No chapter in Lincoln's History of Worcester is more entertaining than the first, in which he gives an account of the contest between the Committee of Settlements and one Ephraim Curtis, a young man from Sudbury. This young man had bought a grant of Ensign Thomas Noyes of 250 acres, and had located it just where the Committee wanted to lay out town lots, especially one for the minister, one for the meeting-house, and one for a mill. This was in 1669. A petition to the Great and General Court signed by four men of name and substance did not terrify the "young man." Four years after he

had added to the difficulty by taking possession of his ground and building thereon a house, becoming, as I judge, the first settler of Worcester. Things began to look serious, whereupon another petition, signed not only by the aforesaid four men of name and substance, but by twenty-nine persons proposing to settle, was sent to the General Court. They stated that they had made all proper offers to the young man, which he had declined. They intimate that if they cannot get the coveted two hundred and fifty acres they shall have to give up the plantation. The affair was finally compromised by giving Curtis fifty acres in the village, on which a descendant still lives, and two hundred and fifty acres outside the village. When we consider that Daniel Henchman, Daniel Gookin, Richard Beers and Thomas Prentice constituted that Committee, men of experience, men of high position and influence in the colony, we can understand of what metal the young man from Sudbury was made. In this frontier life Curtis had somehow become a sagacious scout, and had learned to speak with fluency the Indian tongue. These qualities, together with his known firmness and courage, made him the very man to send on the mission to the Nipmucks. In his narration of that expedition his coolness and undaunted bravery are hardly more evident than his power to picture vividly the exact condition of affairs. In the siege which followed, it was necessary that some one should carry to Marlborough news of the peril of the beleaguered garrison. Twice Curtis failed. But the third time he succeeded, creeping on his hands and knees through the enemies' lines. Thrice afterwards he appears on the Massachusetts Records;—once as a witness against an Indian chief; once as clothed with power to raise a company, “to march under his commands into the wood, and endeavor to” surprise, kill or destroy any of the Indians our enemies;—finally, liberty was given Ephraim Curtis “with such other Englishmen as he shall procure, provided they be not less than thirty men well

armed," "to gather and improve for their own use all the Indian Corn of the Indian plantations belonging to our enemies the Indians that are fled." With these records my knowledge of this heroic character ends. Whether he went back to his trade as a carpenter, or peaceably tilled his acres, or remained to the end a daring scout and Indian fighter I know not. It may be assumed perhaps, that in 1718 he was dead, as his farm was then improved by his son. George William Curtis, the silver-tongued orator, traces back his origin to this stalwart Puritan; and I think it may be admitted, that, in addition to persuasive speech, of which his ancestor does not seem to have been destitute, he inherits the capacity to have views of his own and to stand by them.

With these personal sketches ends my account of the affair at Brookfield and of its actors. I do not propose to follow farther the desperate conflict. The war pursued its devious, cruel course till it closed, so far as our State was concerned, with the death, twelve months later, of Philip, who like a wounded wild beast sought his own lair to die. And when it closed, the Wampanoags, who had welcomed the Pilgrim and given him food and kindness, as a tribe had ceased to exist. It was the first and the last independent Indian war on Massachusetts soil. All later wars may properly be termed French and Indian Wars. And the savage allies of the most Christian monarchs, the Kings of France, came largely from outside the Bay State.

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