

## CHAPTER II

Efforts to civilize the Indians. — Eliot begins the Work. — Effects at Nonantum and at Concord. — Laws for the Indians. — Opposition. — Eliot's Labors and Petition. — Nashobah. — Notices of several Indians. — Account of the Praying Indians. — Nashobah sold.

It would be inconsistent with my design to portray at length the general character of the Indians, or give a full view of the early efforts to civilize and Christianize them. This is properly the province of the historian of the State or Country. So far, however, as they were made within our own territory, or in connexion with the native inhabitants, it will be proper that the local historian should describe them; and, more especially, since erroneous statements have been promulgated by writers whose authority is received with implicit faith.

One of the objects of the original settlers of the colony, as expressed in their charter, was to "win the Indians, natives of the country, to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Saviour of mankind, and the Christian faith." When they were actually surrounded by the natives, this object was not forgotten, though nothing effectual was done till nearly sixteen years after their arrival.

Squaw Sachem, at Concord, Kutshamikin, sachem at Dorchester, Musconomok, sachem at Ipswich, and Nashacowin and Wassamug,<sup>1</sup> two sachems near Wachusett, made a formal submission to the English government on the 8th of March 1644, and put themselves and their subjects under its protection. In their examination, as to their moral and religious views, they express their desire, "as opportunity will serve and English live among them," to learn "to read God's word, to know God aright, and to worship him in his own way." Two sachems (Pumham and Socononocho) near Providence, the preceding June, and Passaconaway, sachem at Merrimack and his sons, on the 20th of the succeeding June, submitted in like manner. Though the motives of these Indians might have been selfish, these were considered encouraging circumstances by the friends of their civilization. And the government, 13 Nov., 1644, ordered the county courts "to take care of the Indians residing within their several shires, to have them civilized, and to take order from time to time to have them instructed in the knowledge of God."<sup>2</sup>

These movements, and the disposition shown by particular Indians,<sup>3</sup> led some individuals specially to prepare themselves to instruct them. The Rev. John Eliot of Roxbury was the first and most distinguished in these Christian labors. He has justly been styled the "Apostle, not a whit behind the chiefest Apostles." He preached his first sermon Oct. 28, 1646 on the high grounds east of Newton corner, afterwards called Nonantum, — "a place of rejoicing," where he was joyfully received by Waban and several other Indians, who assembled to hear him. Four other meetings took place there, the 11th and 26th of November, and the 4th and 9th of December.

The Rev. Thomas Shepard of Cambridge, in his "Clear Sunshine of the Gospel," informs us, that "the awakening of these Indians raised a great noyse amongst all the rest round about us, especially about Concord<sup>4</sup> side where the Sachem [Tahattawan], as I remember, and one or two more of his men, hearing of these things, and of the preaching of the Word, and how it wrought among them here, came therefore hither to Noonanetum to the Indian lecture; and what the Lord spake to his heart wee know not, only it seems he was so farre affected, as that he desired to become more like to the English, and to cast off those Indian, wild and sinfull courses they formerly lived in; but when divers of his men perceived their sachem's mind, they secretly opposed him herein: which opposition being known, he therefore called together his chiefe men about him, and made a speech to this effect unto them, viz. "That they had no reason at all to oppose those courses the English were taking for their good," for, (saith he) "all the time you

1. The Rev. Samuel Danforth, in his Almanack for 1647, spells these names as follows: Cutchamakin, Mascanomet, Wassamegen, Nathawanon.

2. Col. Rec.

3. See "New England's First Fruits."

4. The Rev. Dr. Holmes, in his valuable "Annals," Vol. I. page 284, errs in saying "the Indians at the place *afterwards* called Concord," &c. Concord was incorporated [sic] and named *eleven years before*. Another expression "near to the place where Concord now stands" is equally erroneous. It was then in Concord.



have lived after the Indian fashion, under the power and protection of higher Indian sachems, what did they care for you? They only sought their owne ends out of you, and therefore would exact upon you and take away your skins and your kettles, and your wampum from you at their own pleasure, and this was all that they regarded; but you may evidently see that the English mind no such things, care for none of your goods, but only seeke your good and welfare, and instead of taking away, are ready to give to you” with many other things I now forget, which were related to me by an eminent man [Rev. P. Bulkeley?] of that town. What the effect of this speech was, we can tell no otherwise than as the effects shewed it: the first thing was, the making of certain laws for their more religious and civill government and behaviour, to the making of which they craved the assistance of one of the chief Indians in Noonanetum [Waban?], a very active Indian, to bring in others to the knowledge of God; desiring withall an able and faithful man in Concord [Simon Willard] to record and keep in writing what they had generally agreed upon. Another effect was, their desire of Mr. Eliot’s coming up to them to preach, as he could find time among them: and the last effect was their desire of having a town given them within the bounds of Concord near unto the English. This latter, when it was propounded by the sachem of the place [Tahattawan] he was demanded why he desired a towne so neare, whereas there was more roome for them up in the country. To which the sachem replied, that he therefore desired it because he knew that if the Indians dwelt far from the English, that they would not so much care to pray, nor could they be so ready to heare the word of God, but they would be all one Indians still, but, dwelling neare the English, he hoped it might be otherwise with them then. The towne therefore was granted them.”

The following are the orders agreed on at Concord, which Mr. Shepard assures us were drawn up by “two faithful witnesses,” and “their own copy with their own hands to it.” [Witnesses were Simon Willard and Thomas Flint]

“Conclusion and orders made and agreed upon by divers Sachems and other principal men amongst the Indians at Concord in the end of the eleventh Month (called January) An. 1646.

“1. That everyone that shall abuse themselves with wine or strong liquors shall pay, for every time so abusing themselves, twenty shillings.

“2. That there shall be no more Powwawing amongst the Indians. And if any shall hereafter powwaw, both he that shall powwaw and he that shall procure him to powwaw, shall pay twenty shillings apiece.

“3. They do desire that they may be stirred up to seek after God.

“4. They desire they may understand the wiles of Satan and grow out of love with his suggestions and temtations [*sic*].

“5. That they may fall upon some better course to improve their time than formerly.

“6. That they may be brought to the sight of the sinne of lying and whosoever shall be found faulty herein, shall pay for the first offence five shillings, and the second ten shillings, and the third twenty shillings.

“7. Whosoever shall steal any thing from another shall return fourfold.

“8. They desire that no Indian hereafter shall have any more but one wife.

“9. They desire to prevent falling out of Indians one with another, and that they may live quietly by one another.

“10. That they may labour after humilitie and not be proud.

“11. That when Indians doe wrong one to another, they may be lyable to censure, or fine, or the like, as the English are.

“12. That they pay their debts to the English.

“13. That they do observe the Lord’s day, and whosoever shall prophane it shall pay twenty shillings.

“14. That there shall not be allowance to pick lice as formerly and eat them, and whosoever shall offend in this case shall pay for every louse a penny.

“15. They will weare their haire comely as the English do, and whosoever shall offend herein shall pay four shillings.

“16. They intend to reform themselves in their former greasing themselves under the penalty of five shillings for every default.



“17. They do resolve to set up praying in their wigwams, and to seek to God both before and after meate.

“18. If any commit the sin of fornication, being single persons, the man shall pay twenty shillings, and the woman ten shillings.

“19. \* \* \* \*

“20. Whosoever shall play at their former games shall pay ten shillings.

“21. Whosoever shall committ adultery shall be put to death.

“22. Wilful murder shall be punished with death.

“23. They shall not disguise themselves in their mournings as formerly, not shall they weep a great noyse by howling.

“24. The old ceremony of the maide walking alone and living apart so many days twenty shillings.

“25. No Indian shall take an English man's canoe without leave under penaltie of five shillings.

“26. No Indian shall come into an English man's house except he first knock; and this they may expect from the English.

“27. Whosoever beats his wife shall pay twenty shillings.

“28. If any Indian shall fall out with and beat another Indian, he shall pay twenty shillings.

“29. They desire they may be a towne, and either dwell on this side of Beaver Swamp<sup>5</sup> or at the East side of Mr. Flint's Pond.

“Immediately after these things were agreed upon, most of the Indians of these parts set up prayer morning and evening in their families and before and after meate. They also generally cut their haire short, and were more civil in their carriage to the English than formerly. And they do manifest a great willingness to conforme themselves to the civil fashions of the English. The Lord's day they keepe a day of rest and minister what edification they can to one another. These former orders were put into this forme by Captaine Simon Willard of Concord, whom the Indians, with unanimous consent, intreated to bee their Recorder, being very solicitous that what they did agree upon myght be faithfully preserved without alteration.

“Thomas Flint. Simon Willard.”

I have not been able to find, after a careful examination of the Colony Records, that land was then definitely granted, either to the Concord Indians or to those at Newton; and I have been led to doubt whether any grants were made, as has been mentioned by many writers. The first order was passed May 26, 1647, four months after the Concord Indians had adopted their code of laws, and seven months after Eliot first preached at Waban; and this did not relate to grants of land, but to the civil regulations of the Indians generally; “where they assembled to hear the word of God.” It is probable they lived by sufferance on lands claimed by the English, prior to their gathering at Natick.<sup>6</sup>

As has been already intimated, these benevolent efforts were opposed by some of the natives. This opposition arose principally from the powwaws or priests. The Indians universally believed in “the existence and agency” of invisible spirits. “They worshipped Kitan, their good god, or Hobbamocco, their evil god.” Johnson speaks of them generally, as being “in very great subjection to the Divel,” and of the powwaws, as “more conversant with him than any other.” As his agents they pretended to perform cures by enchantment and witchcraft. So long as the peculiar sanctity of their office was recognised by their brethren, their influence was very great; and, to say the least, they were “back friends to religion.” Whenever civilization and Christianity were introduced, these erroneous notions were corrected, and their power ceased.

5. This was in the Southerly part of Lincoln.

6. Historians speak rather indefinitely, as appears to me, on this subject. Mention is frequently made of the Natick Indians as a distinct tribe, whereas none were known by that name till a place was settled in 1650, and then named Natick, granted like other tracts of land in which to form a civil community. The Christian Indians, gathered there from various tribes, were *afterwards* called Natick Indians, as the inhabitants of a town are called by the name of the town. And in regard to Indian titles, when the claims of Mason were asserted, and the charter forfeited in 1684, the settlers in various places endeavoured to get confirmatory deeds and titles to their land; and obtained such deeds from the Christian Indians, not because they were in all cases legal heirs, but probably because they could give as good titles as any in their power to obtain.



Of this they seemed to be aware.

In the discussions produced by the occurrences that have been described, Wibbacowitts, already mentioned, took an active part. He asked the English, why some of them had been twenty-seven years in the land, and never taught them to know God till then. "Had you done it sooner," he said, "wee might have known much of God by this time, and much sin might have been prevented; but now some of us are grown old in sin, &c." To whom the English answered, "We doe repent that we did not long agoe, as now we doe. Yet withal," they added, "we told them that they were never willing to hear till now, and that seeing God hath turned their hearts to be willing to hear, we are desirous to take all pains we can to teach them."

This opposition prevented their immediate settlement in civil order, and was considered, says Shephard, "a special finger of Satan resisting these budding beginnings," thought it did not prevent the gradual progress of Christianity. The influence of Rev. Mr. Bulkeley and other citizens of Concord, as well as of the native Indians, hereafter to be noticed, was great in this Christian enterprise.

Eliot preached about three years at Nonantum and Neponset; and also occasionally at Concord and other places. About the beginning of the year 1648, he "went with Mr. Flint and Capt. Simon Willard of Concord, and sundry others, towards Merimack river unto the Indian sachem Passaconaway, that old witch and powwaw, who, together with both his sons, fled the presence of the light for fear of being killed." In 1651, he made another visit there with considerable success. In 1650, a township was granted to the Indians called Natick, to which those in the vicinity were gathered, and denominated *Praying Indians*. Many of these were originally inhabitants of Concord, and had taken up a temporary residence at Nonantum and other places.

Those who had endeavoured to unite in civil order at Concord had been frequently disturbed in the places where they settled, as will appear from the following petition to the General Court.

"The humble petition of John Eliot of Roxbury, in behalfe of some Indians, sheweth, — That whereas the Praying Indians have their dwellings in sundry places, and in many respects cannot be all brought to any one place, and in particular, not to that of Natick; it seemeth therefore very necessary to further their civile cohabitation, in sundry fitting places, that so the Saboths may be sanctified by them, and other poynts of religion and civility may be promoted among them. And wheras there hath bene and is much trouble by some of their sittings downe upon such lands as are, some way or other, taken into the bounds of grants made to the English by the honord Gen: Court: These desire as much as may bee, to fix themselves in such places, as (so far as we know) are free from any just challenge of any English interest.

"First, therefore, the inhabitants of Nashoba, living 7 or 8 miles west of Concord, desire to have liberty to make a towne in y<sup>t</sup> place, with due accommodations thereunto. And though Concord have some conditional grant of lands y<sup>t</sup> way, yet I understand, that we shall have a loving and Christian agreement betwixt them and the Indians.

"Secondly, the inhabitants of Ogekauquoukanus [Marlborough], living about 7 or 8 miles west of Sudbury, where no English have yet desired any land, desire to have liberty to make a towne in y<sup>t</sup> place, with due accommodations thereunto.

"Thirdly, the inhabitants of Hasnemesuhkoh [Grafton], living about 16 miles west of Sudbury, desire the like liberty.

"And, they comiting this honored Court, and all the weighty affaires thereof unto the mercy and goodnesse of the Ld., I rest your unworthy petitioner

Boston this 4th of the 3d: 54.      John Eliot."

This petition was granted, "provided it doe not prejudice any former grant; nor that they shall dispose of it without leave first had, and obtayned from this Court." Nashobah, lying near Nagog Pond, partly in Littleton and partly in Acton, as now bounded, accordingly became an Indian town; and here a part of the Praying Indians in Concord, with others in the vicinity, gathered, and adopted civil and religious order, and had a *Ruler* and other municipal officers, though no church was formed. Such as were entitled to Christian ordinances probably went to Natick to celebrate the communion, after a church was organized there in 1660.



Nashobah, however, was not a very prosperous community. Certain rights of its inhabitants to lands granted to Concord in 1655, were sold to Concord in 1660; but in 1665, the Court granted them 2000 acres more. In consequence of the war, which was carried on between the Maquas or “Inland Indians,” and the neighbouring tribes, from 1665 to 1670, this town suffered severely, and was entirely deserted. Some of the principal men were killed. After the peace in 1670 it was re-peopled, and was thus described by [Gookin](#) in 1674. “The inhabitants are about ten families, and consequently about fifty souls. The dimensions of this village is four miles square. The land is fertile, and well stored with meadows and woods. It hath good ponds of fish adjoining it. The people live here, as in other Indian villages, upon planting corn, fishing, hunting and sometimes labouring with the English. Their ruler of late years was John Ahattawance [Tahattawan], a pious man. Since his decease, Pennakennit is the chief. Their teacher is John Thomas, a sober and pious man. His father was murdered by the Maquas in a secret manner, as he was fishing for eels at his weare, some years since during the war. He was a pious and useful person; and that place sustained a great loss in him. In this village as well as in other old Indian plantations, they have orchards of apples, whereof they make cider; which some of them have not the wisdom and grace to use for their comfort, but are prone to abuse unto drunkenness. And although the laws be strict to suppress sin, and some of their own rulers are very careful and zealous in the execution of them, yet such is the madness and folly of man naturally, that he doth eagerly pursue after that which tendeth to his own destruction.”<sup>7</sup>

This gives but a sorry picture of a civilized community; but it is far from being applicable generally to this, or the other Indian towns. There were in them some examples of the Christian character, which would have been honorable in any community. Some of the most distinguished were of the Musketaquid Indians.

TAHATTAWAN (sometimes written Tahattawants, Attawan, Attawance, and Ahatawance) was a sagamore, or “sachem of the blood, or chief of the royal line,” of Musketaquid; and appears to have possessed rights in the soil equal if not superior to Squaw Sachem; and like her to have consented to its sale. What the connexion between him and Squaw Sachem was, does not fully appear. He had a powerful influence over his subjects; and was one of those who early attended the preaching of Eliot at Newton, and spoke, as already mentioned, in favor of forming a civil community in this town. He was a worthy, upright Indian. The following members of his family embraced Christianity and they and their descendants were always among the most persevering, influential, and exemplary persons at Natick and Nashobah, the places to which the different individuals removed after they left Concord.

1. *Waban* married Tasunsquaw, eldest daughter of Tahattawan, sachem of Concord. From documents given in this history, and others in my possession, it appears that he originally lived in Concord, where he was probably born. He is called, “merchant” in the records, probably on account of his occupation. He was not a sachem by birth, as some have asserted, but acquired rights in the soil and assented to its sale, by virtue of his marriage into the “royal family.” After the English settled Concord, he removed to Newton, where in 1646, as already mentioned, he became the first convert to Christianity, under the instruction of Eliot. It is said by Shepard that Indians gave “names to their children, usually according to appearances of providences; and the most active Indian for stirring up other Indians to seek after the knowledge of God in these parts is Waban, which signifies *wind*, although they never dremt of this, that this their Waban should breath such spirit of life and incouragement into the rest of the Indians, as he hath endeavored in all parts of the country both at Concord, Merrimack, and elsewhere.” He assisted in gathering the society and church at Natick, of which he was chosen chief ruler during his life. He is represented as a man of great prudence, piety, and usefulness. His confession on account of his religious exercises of mind, was published in 1653, and also an exhortation, made in 1658.<sup>8</sup> He died in the full exercise of the Christian faith in 1674 aged 70. His last words immediately before he expired were – “I give my soul to thee O my redeemer, Jesus Christ. Pardon all my sins, and deliver me from hell. Help me against death and then I am willing to die; and when I die, O help me and relieve me.”<sup>9</sup>

His widow was living at Natick in 1684. His son Weegrammomenet, *alias* Thomas Waban,

7. I Hist. Coll. vol. i. page 188.

8. Tears of Repentance, page 8

9. Hist. Coll. Vol v. page 264.



received a tolerable education, and was many years town clerk of Natick.<sup>10</sup> His name frequently appears in Indian deeds, granting rights to the English, which he acquired rather indefinitely from his father, and like many others as an associate of the Praying Indians.

2. *John Tahattawan*, son of Tahattawan, removed to Nashoba. He was chief ruler of the Praying Indians gathered there, and is said to have been a pious, good man. He died about 1670. He married Sarah, daughter of John, Sagamore of Patucket, who after her husband's death married again Onamog, one of the rulers of the Praying Indians at Marlborough, with whom she lived a short time only. She was living at Patucket, as a widow, in November 1675, when she was wounded by some unfriendly whites, and her only son by Tahattawan was slain.<sup>11</sup>

Tahattawan's sole heir was Kehonowsqua, *alias* Sarah; and is first mentioned in the deed of Nashobah given to the Hon. Peter Bulkeley in 1686, hereafter to be noticed.

3. *Naanishcow*, *alias* John Thomas, married Naanashquaw, *alias* Rebeckah, another daughter of Tahattawan. His father had been a leading man at Nashobah but was murdered by the Maquas Indians, as has been mentioned. He was teacher at that place till it was abandoned, when he removed to Natick, where he died, January 17, 1727, at the great age of 110 years. He was exemplary through life, and had his reason and speech till within a few hours of his death. His eldest son was Solomon Thomas, *alias* Naashiomenett, who became influential at Natick.

Pennahannit, *alias* Captain Josiah, who was marshal-general or high-sheriff to all the Praying Indian towns, and attended the chief courts held at Natick and elsewhere, dwelt at Nashobah, and was chief ruler of that place after the death of John Tahattawan.

Jethro, *alias* Tantamous, was present at the first purchase of Concord. He embraced Christianity and removed to Natick. In 1674, he was appointed missionary to the Indians at Weshakim [Sterling], but continued there only a short time.

Notices of other Indians, whose names occasionally occur in connexion with the affairs of Concord might be given; but these are the most prominent.

The missionary labors of Eliot and his associates were attended with considerable success. At Natick was a kind of theological seminary, where natives were educated and sent forth to be rulers and teachers in other places. The Bible and several other books were translated and printed in their language, which requires the word: *Kummogkodonatoottummootiteaongannunnonash* to express in English "our question." This was indeed a Herculean task. In 1674, Eliot had organized two churches and fourteen towns, containing 1100 inhabitants<sup>12</sup> who had ostensibly embraced Christianity. A part of them only, however, appear to have been influenced by Christian principles. During Philip's War, this number was very much reduced. Many of them became treacherous, and were among the worst enemies of the English. Some of them suffered death for their defection.<sup>13</sup> The remainder were gathered in English towns, behaved like exemplary Christians, and were of essential service to the English in Philip's War. The whole number on the 10th of November 1676, was 567 only, of which 117 were men and 450 women and children. The Nashobah or Concord Praying Indians, who remained friendly to the English were 10 men and 50 women and children; and they then lived in Concord under the inspection of the committee of militia and the selectmen of the town. The other places where the Praying Indians met on the Sabbath for religious worship at this time, were Medfield, Andrew Deven's Garrison, near Natick, Lower Falls, Nonantum and Dunstable.<sup>14</sup>

Some other notices of the Nashobah Indians, while resident in Concord will be given when the events of Philip's War are treated of. After this time, they appear to have nearly abandoned their plantation, and to have removed to Natick. May 19, 1680, 23 inhabitants of Concord petitioned the General Court that the lands belonging to those Indians might be granted to them, but it was refused; because there were "debts due from the country which might be provided for by the sale of the land, if the Indians have no right or have deserted the place." In reply the

10. Biglow's Hist. of Natick.

11. [Gookin's MS.](#)

12. 1 Hist. Coll. vol. i, page 195.

13. Mattoon, constable at Pakachoog, was executed.

14. I have communicated to the American Antiquarian Society for publication, among other papers, a document in the hand writing of [Major Gookin](#), giving a particular account of the disposition of all the Praying Indians at this time, from which the above facts are taken.



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petitioners say, "There never were any lands purchased of the country for townships." The petition was ineffectually renewed in 1691. It appears, however, that the Honorable Peter Bulkeley of Concord and Major Thomas Henchman of Chelmsford on the 15th of June, 1686, bought the easterly half of the Nashobah plantation for £70 sterling. The Indian grantors were as follows: "Kehonowsquaw, *alias* Sarah, the daughter and sole heiress of John Tahattawan, sachem, and late of Nashobah, deceased; Naanishcow, *alias* John Thomas; Naanasquaw, *alias* Rebeckah, wife to the said Naanishcow; Naashkinomenet, *alias* Solomon, eldest son of said Naanishcow and Naanasquaw, sister to the aforesaid Tahattawan; Weegrammominet, *alias* Thomas Waban; Nackcominewock, relict [widow] of Crooked Robin; and Wunnuhhew, *alias* Sarah, wife to Neepanum, *alias* Tom Doublet." This tract of land was bounded by land sold by the aforesaid Indians to Robert Robbins and Peleg Lawrence both of Groton towne, which land is part of the aforesaid Nashobah plantation, and this line is exactly two miles in length and runs east three degrees northerly, or west three degrees southerly, and the south end runs parallel with this line; on the westerly side it is bounded by the remainder of said Nashobah Plantation and that west line runs south seven degrees and thirty minutes east, four miles and one quarter. The northeast corner is about four or five poles southward of a very great rock that lieth in the line between the said Nashobah and Chelmsford plantation.<sup>15</sup> The remaining history of Nashobah properly belongs to Littleton. It may be well, however, to remark that in 1714 when that town was incorporated, 500 acres of land were reserved for the Indian proprietors. Sarah Doublet, an Indian, was the only heir to it in 1734, being then old and blind, and committed to the care of Samuel Jones of Concord. She then petitioned for liberty to sell it to pay her maintenance and it was granted for the purpose to Elnathan Jones and Mr. Tenney. One corner was near the southeast part of Nagog Pond; then across the pond, north ten degrees west, 133 rods north of said pond to a point, and then making a right angle, it ran 286 rods, and the south line ran 279 rods to a point 90 rods south of Fort Pond, and then across Nagog Pond to the first place mentioned.

### TO CONTINUE READING:

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15. Reg. of Deeds, vol. x., page 117.