

CHAPTER II.

INDIAN HISTORY.

Origin.—Manners.—Customs.—Religion.—Cape Indians.—Their Villages.—Their Tribes.
—Map.—Kindness.—Subjugation.—Decrease.—Extinction.—Legends.

THE history of this county may be regarded as beginning with its settlement by Europeans, or in those diplomatic relations between their governments and the adventurers who sought to control the prospective settlements within it; yet we may concern ourselves somewhat with a mention of those ill-fated Indians whom the Puritans found here, and whose extermination as a people was so speedily accomplished.

Scientists of every age and country have advanced ideas concerning their origin; but as they never had a written language the truth of these propositions must remain in darkness. That they have been called Indians since their existence became known is due to the fact that ancient navigators supposed that America formed a part of the East Indies.

Tradition, current among the Indians, throws little or no light on their origin. They generally believed that they sprang from the earth. In one tradition they have been represented as having climbed up the roots of a large vine from the interior of the globe, and in others as ascending from a cavern to the light of the sun. At an early day some of the Indians still retained indistinct traditions of crossing a body of water to reach this land; and others that they originally dwelt in a land across a narrow lake where wicked people dwelt, that the lake was full of islands, and they suffered with cold while crossing. Curious remains are extant in various parts of the country showing that the original dwellers here had rare mechanical skill, which they had not lost by the allurements of a wild forest life. These evidences, more especially confined to the western portion of America, are a vindication of the theory that the land was first peopled by the way of Behring strait; also, that less civilized bands drove them east and south—or they, in themselves, became more in love with forest life, scattering and multiplying until the whole land was peopled. Some historians trace the Indians to the ten lost tribes

of Israel, some to the dispersion from Babel, some to the enterprising Phœnician sailors, and others to the Carthagenians; but of all these theories, that of their coming from the Eastern continent across the straits to North America seems the most acceptable. While their race was distinct from all European peoples, in customs, personal appearance and language, yet they closely resembled each other and had many customs in common, although the several tribes found here by the Europeans were more generally distinguished from each other by the difference in their languages. Each tribe had a name for whatever could be heard, seen or felt, and except these but few words were used.

The same characteristics prevailed in the Indians on the Cape that were found in other tribes, and if any difference existed in minor peculiarities it would be logically attributable to climatic differences and their habits of life and employments, varying with the food supplies of mountain or valley, stream or seashore. Some were better agriculturists than others, and raised more corn than their neighbors. The Pilgrims found at Truro fifty acres under cultivation. The labor of raising corn devolved upon the women, or squaws, for all tribes concurred in the idea that labor was degrading and beneath the dignity of a warrior. The women provided the wood, erected wigwams, carried the burdens, prepared the meals, and even carried baggage on the march.

A regular union between husband and wife was universal, but a chief of sufficient ability to support such a luxury married, often, more than one wife. The ceremony of marriage was very simple, and differed in minor details in different tribes.

The education of the young warrior was in athletic exercises, to enable him to endure hunger and fatigue, and to use arms efficiently. In some families certain young were impressed with the tradition of their people, which task devolved upon the old, who in turn had received their knowledge from preceding ones.

The weapons were rude—stone hatchets, clubs, bows, arrows and spears. War was their delight, and their cruelties to enemies when death was decreed were only equalled by their kindness when they turned their tribal affection to the adopted ones.

They had a religion, primitive though it seems, that closely resembled that of civilized nations. They believed in a great spirit, and revered him; believed he was everywhere present, knew their wants, and aided and loved those who obeyed him. They had no temples nor idols. They believed the warrior hastened to the happy hunting grounds. They also had an evil spirit, which good Indians should shun. The graves of their fathers were held in reverence, and were defended with great bravery. To the restraints of civilization

they long showed an aversion, and were remarkably attached to their simple modes of life.

Whether the differences in complexion, stature, features, customs, religions, or any peculiarities, were caused by climate or any latitudinal separations, one thing seems conceded by historians—that they were of one origin. Doctor Mather regarded them as forlorn and wretched heathen ever since they first landed here; and “though we know not when or how they first became inhabitants of this mighty continent, yet we may *guess* that *probably* the devil decoyed them hither, hoping the gospel would never reach them to disturb or destroy his absolute empire over them.”

There were several tribes on the Cape, and all evidence from the colony records, from the time they were first visited by Europeans, points to their remarkable friendliness to the whites and to each other.

An early instance of the white man's abuse of their confidence is the shameless record of Thomas Hunt, who in 1615, as a subordinate left in command of Captain John Smith's ship, kidnapped twenty-seven of the natives, including seven from Nauset, to sell as slaves. This act was not without precedent, and after it had been avenged four years later upon some of the same crew, the Indian sense of justice seems to have been satisfied. In their subsequent intercourse with the pilgrims they performed acts of mercy that could only be expected of true Christian disciples.

The Indians of the Cape, made up of several small tribes, were among the thirty of New England yielding allegiance to Massasoit, the chief of the Wampanoags, and after his death in 1662 to his son, Metacomet, known in history as King Philip, or Philip of Pokanoket.

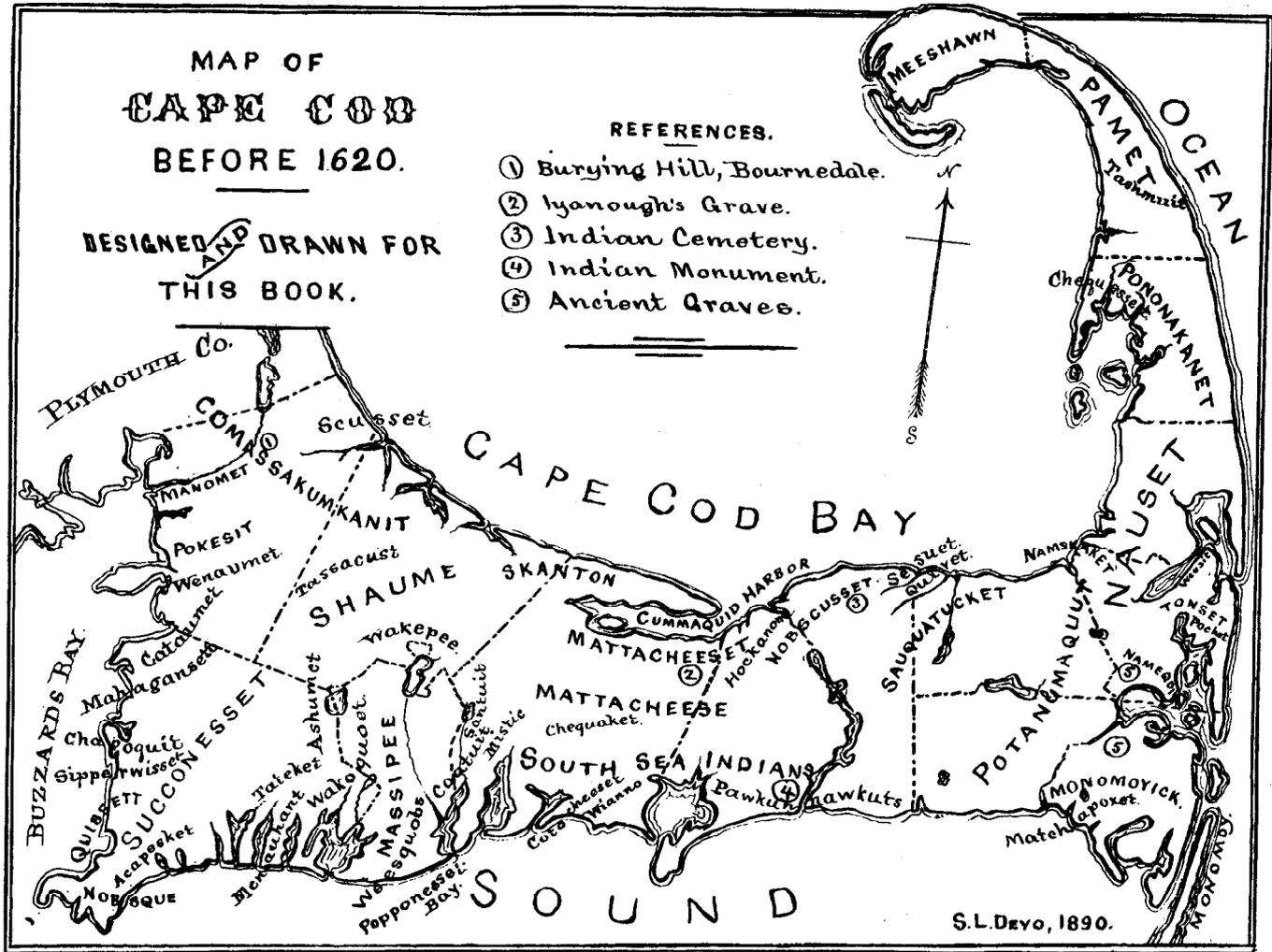
Of these the Nausets occupied the most prominent position, dwelling on the territory now Eastham, their country including also Brewster (Sauquatucket), Chatham (Monomoyick), Harwich (Potanum-aqut), Orleans (Pochet), the neck in Orleans (Tonset), Wellfleet (Ponakanet), Truro (Pamet), part of Truro and Provincetown (Meeshawn) and North Dennis (Nobscusset). The Nausets were also at Namskaket, now Orleans, and about the cove that separates Orleans from Eastham. In the northwest part of Yarmouth and around Barnstable harbor were Mattacheese and Mattacheeset; the south part of the east precinct in Barnstable, Weequakut; between Sandwich and Barnstable, Skanton; Falmouth, Succoneset; in Bourne, near Buzzards bay, Manomet; on Buzzards bay, Cataumet; near Sandwich, Herring pond, Comassakumkanit; Pocasset, Pokesit; Mashpee, Massipee—and this last body of Indians has long been the principal tribe of the county, and once included Cotuit, the southwest part of Barnstable; Santuit; Wakoquoet, part of Falmouth; Ashumet, in Falmouth, on west line of Mashpee; and Weesquobs, Great neck. The Indians on Nan-

MAP OF CAPE COD BEFORE 1620.

DESIGNED AND DRAWN FOR
THIS BOOK.

REFERENCES.

- ① Burying Hill, Bourne-dale.
- ② Iyanough's Grave.
- ③ Indian Cemetery.
- ④ Indian Monument.
- ⑤ Ancient Graves.



S. L. Deyo, 1890.

tucket, Martha's Vineyard and Elizabeth islands were separate tribes, in constant communication with the tribes on the Cape, and had their own sachems. All these tribes had their sachems or sagamores, and though owing fealty to the Wampanoags they could not be induced by King Philip to join in the wars of 1675. The tribe at Manomet, after their adhesion to the English, proved a defense and were faithful to their friendship.

As an evidence of the friendship and hospitality of the Cape Indians, it is said that when the ship *Fortune* in 1621 touched at Cape Cod, the Indians carried word of her approach to the settlers at Plymouth.

In 1622 the colonists were compelled to go to the Cape Indians for corn. They sailed around the Cape, along southerly, anchoring in a harbor at Chatham, and obtained eight hogsheads of corn and beans. During that and subsequent years corn was obtained of the Indians at Sagamore hill, Mattacheese, and other places on the north side.

For these purchases the Indians received trinkets and clothes. Various facts are given that show a friendship beyond the hope of gain. In 1630, when an English vessel was shipwrecked on the Cape, those passengers who died from exposure were carefully buried in the frozen earth to keep the bodies from wild beasts, the sick were nursed to health and the survivors were conducted to Plymouth. The incident of the lost boy—strayed from Plymouth and found among the Nausets—when Iyanough with his warriors assisted in the search, and the Nauset sachem, Aspinet, so promptly delivered the boy to the English, is another proof of their friendliness. The various kind offices of Iyanough upon the departure of the whites—the festival, the filling of their rundlets with fresh water, and the taking the bracelet from his neck and placing it upon the leader of the party—are matters of record in the pilgrim history.

Some of the natives were possessed of such an inherent love of tinsel display that the bounds of Captain Standish's strict doctrines were sometimes overstepped. In 1623, while the captain and his men were at Mattacheese purchasing corn, they were forced to lodge in the wigwams of the natives. Missing a few beads in the morning, he ranged his men around the sachem's cabin and threatened to fall upon the inmates unless the beads were returned. The offender was discovered, restitution made, and a penalty for the offense was paid with more corn.

In 1637, when the whites commenced the purchase of lands from the Indians on the Cape, satisfaction was given by full returns of beads, hoes, hatchets, coats and kettles; but years later, as the number of the Indians was diminished from various causes and the increase of the whites was rapid, the natives could not see their best plantation

lands appropriated by others without a protest. Writing of this in its relation to Yarmouth, Hon. C. F. Swift says: "The claims of the Indians were paid in articles which, though of no great commercial value, seemed to be prized by them. The Indians soon became painfully aware that their transfer of the soil carried with it a degree of vassalage far from agreeable to their ideas of personal independence. In 1656, Mashantampaigne, a sagamore, was brought before the court on a charge of having stolen a gun. The court held the opinion that the gun was his. He was also accused of having a chest full of tools stolen from the English, and proudly delivered up his keys to Mr. Prince, so that he might search his chest. Complaint was made by John Darby that this sachem's dogs 'did him wrong among his cattle, and did much hurt one of them.' These proceedings are interesting as showing that the Indians, sixteen years after the settlement, were completely under subjection to the colonial laws."

Would it be considered foolish in a poor Indian, whose sachem had bargained and given possession to the lands of the tribe, if, when he saw his hunting grounds trespassed upon, he should claim that he had not been paid sufficiently for them? This claim was often made, of which one instance is referred to in our chapter of charters and deeds.

The colonial laws, made soon after the settlement of the Cape, had much to do with restraining the dissatisfaction or desire of revenge in the breasts of those evil disposed. Fire arms were kept from them and other enactments for mutual preservation were made by the court at Plymouth. The parliament of the mother country afterward, in 1649, passed acts for "promoting and propagating the Gospel among the Indians:" but even the Indians asked "how it happened that Christianity was so important, and for six and twenty years the English had said nothing to them about it?" The Indians were gradually brought under the white man's laws. In 1668, Francis, sachem of Nauset, was fined £10 "for uncivil and inhuman words to Captain Allen, at Cape Cod, when cast away." In 1673 the laws were enforced to the extent that natives were worked for debt, drunken ones fined and whipped, idle Indians bound out to labor, and for theft were compelled to pay fourfold. While the poor Indians were taught to heed the laws and religion of the colonists they were restricted in their freedom— forbidden to visit Plymouth during court time, no white was allowed to lend them silver money, and they were placed under many other, to them, humiliating restrictions.

After the dawn of the last century their decrease was rapid. In 1685 Governor Hinckley reported nearly one thousand praying Indians within the limits of Barnstable county, distributed as follows: At Pamet, Billingsgate and Nauset, 264; at Monomoyick, 115; at Satucket

and Nobscusset, 121; at Mattacheese, 70; at Skanton, 51; at Mashpee, 141; at Manomet, 110; and at Succonesset, 72. He also says that besides these there were boys and girls under twelve years of age, three times as many. In 1698 the commissioners appointed to enumerate the Indians reported in the territory of the original Plymouth colony—and all told—1,290, and in 1763 but 905, of which Barnstable county had 515; and in 1798 few lingered, except in Mashpee. The last squaw of Yarmouth is well remembered by the oldest inhabitants there as dwelling on the west bank of Bass river, on a portion of what was once, in the better days of the tribe, the last reservation.

In 1889 Mr. Swift, in writing of Yarmouth, says: There are few memorials or evidences existing of the former occupants of the soil, save the shell heaps near the sea shore and the arrow-heads and stone utensils thrown up by the passing plowshare of the husbandman, giving evidence of their numbers before the advent of the white man on these shores. Occasionally portions of an Indian skeleton are also found here, but not in sufficient numbers to give evidence of any considerable burial place. The last of these who died in considerable numbers, about the time of the revolutionary war, were interred on the eastern borders of Long pond in South Yarmouth, and a pile of unhewn stone marks the spot, on one of which is chiseled this inscription:

ON THIS SLOPE LIE BURIED
THE LAST OF THE NATIVE INDIANS
OF YARMOUTH.

Their burial places, of which there are several others on the Cape, have been preserved with a commendable degree of respect by the people of the towns wherein they are located. Over the trail of the swift-footed runner of that departed race now speeds the iron horse, and their hunting grounds are now the sites of flourishing villages.

Their beautiful legends yet linger in the written pages of the white man's lore, and the recurrence of the changes in nature is an index to the unwritten traditions of the Indians. As the fogs creep up from the sound, who can forget their explanation of the phenomenon? The Mattacheeset idea was that a great many moons ago a bird of monstrous size visited the south shore of the Cape, carrying off papposes, and even the larger children, to the southward. An Indian giant named Maushop residing in those parts, in his rage at the havoc, pursued the bird, wading across the sound to an hitherto unknown island, where he found the bones of children in heaps around the trunk and under the shade of a great tree. Wishing to smoke on his way back, and finding he had no tobacco, he filled his pipe with *poke*—a weed used afterward by the Indians when tobacco failed—and started across the sound to his home. From this mem-

orable event the frequent fogs in Nantucket and on and around Vineyard sound came; and when the Indians saw a fog rising they would say in their own tongue, which rendered was, "There comes old Mau-shop's smoke."

The Indians about Santuit pond had a legend that a great trout in the South sea wished to visit that pond, and on his way plowed up the land. He turned and wound along, avoiding the large trees and high lands, and arrived at the pond. The water of the sea followed him and formed the present river. After a rest in the pond he tried to return to the sea, but died from exhaustion, and the Indians covered the trout with earth. It has been called Trout Grave since, and is yet so known in the neighborhood. The river yet flows, and the mound where the legendary trout was covered is still plainly visible on the bank of the river, just west of the residence of Simeon L. Ames of Cotuit.

The Indians had no faithful records of their own times to portray the virtues of their race; but if we look back to the period when the white man's firewater was unknown, when the proud independence which formed the main pillar of their moral fabric was unbroken, then they were a people with as generous impulses, as lofty purposes and as chivalrous deeds as paler men; but an irresistible power seems to have decreed that another people—weaker, yet stronger—should develop on their soil a higher civilization.