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John Calvin Crane

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THE

NIPMUCKS AND THEIR COUNTRY.

BY

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Upon the advent of the white man in New England, he found among the principal tribes of Indians one called Nipmucks. The early historians have spelled the name in many ways, Nipmuck, Nipnet, Nipmug and Nopmat. Hubbard in first speaking of them calls them Nipnets, and continues to use that appellation throughout his history. Church in his first reference calls them Nipmucks, perhaps from a better knowledge. At any rate the latter has come down to us as the most generally accepted one, and signifies "Fresh Water."

The Pilgrims were at Plymouth. Ere long the Puritans were at Charlestown and had advanced on Boston. Blackstone had folded his tent and fled to Rhode Island, as had the old Baptist Roger Williams. Salem had her quota of England's refugees, who had come to the new land beyond the sea. We hear much of the expression, "The Nipmuck Country." The exact territory occupied by the Nipmucks is an open question. From the Nashua to Woodstock, Connecticut, is granted to them, as is also that ground well towards our northwestern border and to an indefinite line down the Blackstone river to meet the Narragansetts. Hubbard tells us: "The sea-coast from the pitch of Cape Cod to the mouth of Connecticut river, inhabited by several nations of Indians, Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Pequots, Mohegans, as the more inland part of the country by the Nipnets," and further says, "A general name for all inland Indians betwixt the Massachusetts and Connecticut river." Church in speaking of the Nipmuck country writes, "Country about Worcester, Oxford, Grafton, Dudley, etc." Some have extended its bounds over quite an area, but it is evident that the great body of the Nipmucks occupied the central part of the old Massachusetts province. Deacon Willis Hall of Sutton, who was an Indian trustee or commissioner long years ago, had among his papers many documents relating to this tribe, which might have thrown

some light on this question. As related to me by his great-granddaughter, Mrs. S. D. King, they met a fate to be regretted. It seems that after his death, a servant-girl in cleaning up the attic found his trunk containing the papers and committed them to the flames, congratulating herself on getting rid of so much rubbish. When told of their value after the deed was done, she went down deep into the valley of humiliation and bewailed her rash work. There was also in the same garret a tea-chest full of like documents, which escaped the vigilant eye of the house-maid, but when investigated, it was found that mice had destroyed much of Indian history. "The Nipmuck Country" was an unknown one to the white man. Narragansett bordered it southeast, the Pequot land hemmed it in on the south, west lay the Mohawk dominion, ever encroaching, while well to the north abided the Pigwackets and Coos. The coast Indians were not long in coming to the front and making the acquaintance of their white neighbors, but the Nipmucks were for a long time comparatively unknown. The Nipmuck region abounded with hills and valleys. Hundreds of beautiful lakes and ponds dotted its surface, the sources of many small rivers, which carried tribute to old ocean's store. Old Wachusett looked down upon the whole land, spying out its wondrous beauty. From his crest the red man lit his signal-fires, which told his story in every camp. The canoe and dugout floated on every stream and pond of note. Here were fish and game in abundance. The king and his prophets heard of the coming of the white man along the coast, but remained secluded from contact with him. But all this was to change. Ere long Hooker was to take up his march now memorable in history. Soon the Indian apostle Eliot would bear into these wilds the banner of the cross. The Puritan would begin shortly his journey, whose ending should be on the shore of the Pacific.

The white man with restless energy was looking with longing eyes towards this hidden territory of the Nipmucks. The march once begun meant extermination, but the Indian knew it not. But before all this was to be accomplished, bloodshed and massacre would have sway, and the hardy white pioneer would

flee before the red man's wrath. "The Nipmuck Country," by its isolation in early times, became the hatching-place of plots against the English settlers.

To it Philip fled after his reverses with the white men, and in its wild fastnesses of wood and water, he planned and gathered together his scattered followers for new onslaughts on the pale-faces. Thither came the Narragansetts and others, until at one time, at or near Worcester, he had a body of a thousand men ready and waiting to pillage and murder. Worcester, "The Heart of the Commonwealth," was also very near the heart of "The Nipmuck Country." The plantation of Quinsigamond, with its magnificent lake of the same name, offered an inviting gathering-place to the nomads of that early time. Southwest lay Bogachoag, on whose summit the Indian camp-fires burned day and night. Northwest, old 'Bumskit towered over all 1,400 feet above the coming and going of the tide in Massachusetts bay. Quinsigamond was literally a gathering-place of waters. To this centre came the tribute of Ramshorn, Kettle, Lynde, Tatnuck, and other streams, for distribution. The evidence points to Worcester then as a great Indian centre. But the Worcester of to-day, with its 100,000 souls, is a grand centre for the promulgation of useful knowledge, and her possibilities as yet are past finding out.

The white men in "The Nipmuck Country" attest the fact that the means of subsistence for the Indians held out well. We find in the annals of Sutton the following: "Voted, that Mr. David Greenwood should be one of the men to take care that the deer within this province be not killed contrary to the law."

The original Nipmucks were no doubt a well-built, brave and hardy people, capable of great endurance. Previous to the coming of the white people, it would seem they had been overgoverned, and had lost much of their original standing and influence. Yet later events showed they recovered somewhat their former position and proved a foe to be feared. As time passed on, designing men among them fanned the spirit of jealousy of the white man until it rose to white heat and resulted in the many massacres that stand out on the page of our history. About eight



sub-tribes are thought to have made up the people known as Nipmucks, namely, Hassanamesits, Naticks, Nashuas, Pawtuckets, Pegans, Pennakooks, Quabogs and Wamesits: Hassanamesits at Grafton; Naticks at the town of that name; Nashuas on that river; Pawtuckets, Pennakooks and Wamesits inhabited along the Merrimac; Pegans at Dudley, near the great lake, and Quabogs at Brookfield. The Nashuas are included in the list just given, yet Hubbard throws some doubt about its being true. They may have been in some way tributary to the Nipmucks and at times reckoned as of them.

The Narragansetts at one time exercised dominion over a portion of the Nipmucks, as did also the Massachusetts. It is also known that King Philip was a Sachem among them, and had it not been for the influence of John Eliot, the entire tribe would have been found giving aid and comfort to him in the war of 1675. The habits and customs of the Nipmucks were similar to those of the Indians all over our land.

In the course of many months spent among the red men of our own country, Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, I have been unable to discover any great difference in the daily life and habits of one tribe from another. The male Indian among them all is averse to persistent hard labor with his hands, and fears to sweat his brow by honest toil. By the early historians of New England, the moral character of the Nipmucks was painted in rather dark colors. The testimony of such men as Williams, Hooker and others to this effect, is convincing evidence. With all uncivilized tribes and people, the Nipmucks believed in spirits, some good, some bad, and feared them all. Kitchtan was the good god in chief with many subordinate to him. To these their wants and wishes were made known. Anything they found by experience capable of doing them harm was exalted, appealed to, to bring them only good. It has been asserted that the Nipmucks and New England Indians did not use the figure of a serpent in any of their decorations of pottery or otherwise. Yet, only last year a stone was found in the heart of "The Nipmuck Country," having on it the form of a serpent, which has been

pronounced by an expert to be genuine Indian work. Fire played an important part in their worship, and with the tribes all over the land, religious dances were an established institution. Not only on religious occasions was the dance in order, but whenever grave matters came up for consideration.

Col. Church tells us that when King Philip was meditating war with the English, he (Col. Church) made attempts to propitiate Awashonks, the Squaw-Sachem of the Sogonates, and her first move was to order a dance and call her subjects together for deliberation. But the evil spirit Hobamocco was feared the most. Him they sought by gifts and worship to propitiate at all times. He worked, they thought, in the lightning, the flood and the pestilence. The latter came upon this people with devastating power, and helped confirm them in their belief as to the might of this god of evil.

We are told by Parson Whitney that this name Hobamocco, was given to a small pond in the west part of Westboro, "encircled (he says) by a meadow bearing the same name," the pond and swamp being thought, no doubt, a fit dwelling-place at times for his evil majesty. The Indians of Hassanamesit were frequent visitors to Marlboro, and the Indian great lake (Chauncey) was no doubt a favorite stopping-place for them as well as for other Indians about. Its Indian name as given by Judge Forbes in his history of the town is "a stunner," but not to be compared to the pride of Webster, "Chargoggagoggmanchoggagoggchaubunagun-gamaug," or as sometimes given, "Shegogummegogummegun-kamaug." There is good reason for believing that with the western tribes, the Nipmucks had their societies of the wolf, bear or kindred ones. I have been told by an Oneida Indian they existed among all bodies of red men. As evidence of the truth of this, we find among their stone-work many articles wrought out, the use of which is unknown. It is possible they were used in the ceremonies connected with such organizations.

The burial customs among the Nipmucks were like other eastern tribes, oftentimes in a sitting posture, the remains having buried with them many of the implements used by them in life.

As they camped and spent much time around rivers and ponds, so we find near them evidence of their last resting-places also. John Eliot began a good work among the Indians of Massachusetts, including the Nipmucks, as early as 1646. The experiment was successful. The first beginning of his labors was at Nonantum, the tribe then located there being later removed to Natick. The first Indian church was started in Massachusetts in 1661, and the good work continued until they were found in various places. The nearest one to Worcester was at Grafton, but preaching was done at the former place by Gookin, and no doubt by Eliot himself. I have some spikes which it is claimed were used in building the church at Grafton in 1671. The Hassanamiscos early became subject to the good influence of Eliot, as did also the Pegans. In spite of this the time came when the persuasion of Philip and his emissaries became so effectual, they for a time forgot the advancement made, and many tried issue with the whites. It proved fatal to them, and from influential and powerful sub-tribes, they descended to miscegenation and swift decay, helped on their way downwards by fire-water introduced among them by degenerate pale-faces. At the close of King Philip's war many Nipmucks left never to return, and the departure of so many and the causes above mentioned which affected every sub-tribe, made them easy victims of unscrupulous white men.

The names of two Nipmucks exist in our history as men of mark, namely, James Printer of Hassanamisco, and John Wampus. The former learned the printer's trade and became a valuable assistant to John Eliot in the preparation of his Indian Bible. The name of Printer was common at Grafton, and was handed down until nearly all trace of the Nipmuck was lost in the negro of more modern times. Early in the present century lived at Grafton a relative of Printer (the printer), a degenerate daughter of the tribe, Sarah Boston. She was tall, masculine in build, and much addicted to fire-water. She commonly appeared wearing a skirt, man's coat, boots and a stove-pipe hat, and was a terror to the small boy, and also to some of larger growth. She was easily



provoked when under the influence of drink, and on several occasions was engaged in rough-and-tumble contests with those who refused her her favorite beverage. On one occasion at Grafton, Samuel Harrington, who kept the old "Green Store," went into his cellar for some commodity, and by the light of his candle discerned a black face among his cider barrels. Sarah had stolen in and helped herself to repletion. She had also lost the plug to the barrel, and was busily engaged holding her hand over the outlet. Her first exclamation on seeing the proprietor was, "Who you think it was, Mr. Harrington, the devil?" Hon. Samuel Wood, of the same town, was among the store-keepers there in Sarah's day, and on her application refused to furnish strong drink. She became enraged at him, seized him by the collar, and tore his coat from his back. The contest became so warm for the honorable gentleman he was obliged to call in assistance. Sarah Boston was a strong, muscular woman, and the old story of lifting a barrel of cider by the chimes and drinking from the bunghole was credited to her. On one occasion at night she was returning to Grafton from Worcester, as usual well filled with the ardent, and on reaching the grave-yard just outside of the town, she heard someone praying therein. Sarah secreted herself behind a grave-stone and waited till the man was through with his petition, then suddenly rose up and exclaimed, "You've been praying to the Lord, now the devil will answer." As through the semi-darkness the petitioner got a glimpse of her tall form looming up, he fled in terror from the place.

The other Nipmuck referred to, John Wampus, sometime prior to 1704, had deeded to white settlers eight miles square of "The Nipmuck Country." Out of this purchase came the original town of Sutton. Wampus seems to have been a man of executive ability, and had the foresight to reserve the plantation of Hassanamisco for his brethren. This was not his only real estate transaction, as early records show. He was well known in Boston, had visited Europe, and as it appears was an intelligent man for his time. Among the first settlers of Sutton was Elisha Johnson, thought by some to be a relative of Gen. John Johnson of Rox-

bury, who was a member of Eliot's church, and father of Capt. Isaac Johnson, one of the six captains slain in the Narragansett swamp fight in 1675. In the absence of Elisha Johnson from his home at Sutton, on one occasion in the winter of 1716-17, his family owed their preservation to the kindness shown them by the Nipmucks. Such instances of well-doing go far to prove that the uncivilized savage had that within him which by cultivation might have made our history of different character than now appears. The last generation of full-blood Nipmucks long ago passed to the great unknown, but more than half a century ago it was my fortune to know quite a remnant of this tribe of mixed blood. Cider, brandy and other fire-water had made sad inroads among them. The males were dressed in clothes a modern tramp would scorn to wear, while the females adorned their persons with the garments of either sex. Debased and dirty, they tramped singly and in gangs through the territory of their ancestors, invariably begging for pork and cider. Almost my first recollection is that of meeting a band of some twenty of them who had taken possession of a portion of the highway leading from Grafton to Westboro, and were in truth making "Rome howl." I recall a few names of these choice spirits—"Old Geigger," "Betsey Geigger" and "Bets Hendricks." On the other hand, I remember some in whom the seed sown by Eliot and Gookin had borne fruit. They were pious and respected men and women, and endeavored by their lives and teaching to transmit to their descendants that which had kept them free from the faults of their brethren. Among this number I shall ever remember the venerable and respected Harry Arnold of the Hassanamiscos.

After the close of the Pequot war, a general peace prevailed among the Indians of New England, although a few bad men among them were continually striving to incite them to outbreaks on the English settlements. By these men a war campaign had been planned to take place in 1671, but failed of execution. A Nipmuck Indian seems to have been the first to destroy, by action, the apparent good feeling which existed. His name is

unknown, but that of his father we do know, which was Matoonas, a leading man among the Nipmucks, and known to have been a constable of Pakachoag. It seems that the Nipmucks at this period had in authority over them the renowned King Philip. This son of Matoonas evidently was in sympathy with him, and as the uprising planned for 1671 failed, he sought in some way to stir up strife, and slew a white man to that end. Other like outrages followed, until a hard feeling was engendered between the whites and Indians, finally culminating in what is known as "King Philip's war." Brookfield was taken, and pillaged by the Nipmucks in 1675. We learn that the authorities feared much trouble from them at this time, and sent messengers to find out how they stood as a people. In July of 1675, some of the tribe caused trouble at Mendon, killing several persons. This outcome was laid at the door of Matoonas, before mentioned. The ambush into which Wheeler and Hutchinson were drawn near Brookfield, was laid the month and year last mentioned. Maj. Simon Willard soon appeared upon the scene and gave the treacherous Nipmucks a lesson they did not soon forget. In November, 1675, Capt. Henchman appeared at Hassanamisco with his troop. This was about six weeks before the swamp fight at Narragansett. The mention of two names in the presence of adherents of King Philip brought dismay and terror—namely, Maj. Simon Willard and Col. Benjamin Church. The latter's son, Thomas Church, has left to us what he calls "The Entertaining History of King Philip's War, which began in the month of June, 1675." I have made reference to the Narragansett swamp fight, in which Capt. Isaac Johnson was killed. It would seem from the account of this battle, given by Church, that some of the Nipmucks were engaged in it. After the taking of the fort at Narragansett, General Winslow, with Col. Church and the soldiers, paid a visit to "The Nipmuck Country." It would seem the object of this march was the pursuit of King Philip, for we learn that about this time the Mount Hope chieftain was in the fight at Turner's Falls. After that contest Church says Philip rendezvoused near "Wetuset



hills,"\* at which place he gathered together the Narragansetts and Nipmucks for an attack on Sudbury.

In the spring and early summer of 1676, it was evident that the power of King Philip was on the wane. The Indians had begun to see they had made a mistake in following the fortunes of this bold leader, and forfeiting the friendship of their white neighbors. Crimination and recrimination followed, and the notes of discord were heard in the camps along the Connecticut. The powwows were frequent, and mutterings of insubordination at the leading of Philip heard on every hand. In council it was agreed that the different bands and tribes should return to their own dominions. Everywhere were signs of the coming of better days to the white pioneers. Philip left for his own region never to return to the Nipmuck land, and the day of his death fast hastened on.

In May, 1676, Henchman, Brattle, Prentice, Sill, Cutler and Holbrook, with foot and horse visited Hassanamesit and engaged in conflict with the Nipmucks and others. Victory perched upon the banners of the whites, and the expedition returned to Medfield. In July of this year, Sagamore John of the Nipmucks surrendered with one hundred and eighty men, and still more was done by him, for he brought in the crafty Matoonas who had caused the English so much trouble. The death of Philip soon followed, and thus ended this famous war which had kept the province in a constant state of alarm. King Philip being removed, and Annawan, his right-hand lieutenant, fallen into the hands of Benjamin Church, the brave old Indian fighter, gave cause for rejoicing among the white settlers. The Huguenots had fled from France, and in 1686 some of them had settled at Oxford near the heart of "The Nipmuck Country." For awhile the strife between the whites and Indians about seemed ended, but upon this devoted band of exiles from ancient Gaul, was yet to fall the heavy hand of Indian vengeance. Johnson was to fall a martyr-pioneer in the settlement of this inland region. For ten years at Oxford, this people struggled amidst hope and discour-

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\*In a note the historian says about Rutland.



agement, only to meet defeat, and then began the retreat. Their graves were left at the mercy of a savage foe, and the little church also a witness to the faith they held and had tried to implant 'midst a hostile people. The Nipmucks with other Indians early became possessed of fire-arms. In 1642 news came to Boston from Connecticut that a general uprising of the Indians of New England was feared. The authorities of Massachusetts, while not fully believing the report, disarmed all Indians over whom they had control. At the Narragansett swamp fight the savages used their guns as long as possible, and then in their extremity resorted to bows and arrows.

Some would-be writers of history have stated that flint-lock muskets were used in King Philip's war, and pictures have been put forth representing contestants bearing such arms, and even Philip himself. The fact is there was no such arm known at that time. Flint-locks first made their appearance about the year 1700, and were used by our soldiers as late as the Mexican war. For such writers is suggested the perusal of David Crockett's motto: "Be sure you're right, then go ahead." The passing of the Nipmucks long ago took place, yet we have with us localities named by which they will ever be remembered. The idea of retaining these names is one that should be encouraged. The Nipmuck history is very brief, but it is a subject that should interest all. Our society has made a good beginning in getting together relics of this strange people who once trod our fields. It has been said that the Indian population was never very numerous in this locality. But the more I investigate, the more I visit their chosen abiding places and find around our streams and ponds evidence of their sojourn, the numerous tools, utensils and weapons of warfare and the chase, the more I am convinced that the number of our Indian brethren has been underestimated. I know of localities where the frost of every spring leaves exposed new revelations of Indian handicraft. Occasionally is found the wampum or money used by the Nipmucks and other tribes. During the year 1896, I found in the heart of "The Nipmuck Country" the following tools and implements made and used by

the red men who preceded us, or some other residents before them, who practiced the crude art of the stone-age: one ceremonial stone, two broken soapstone vessels, two gouges, two pestles, two drills, two perforators, one reamer, one scalping-knife, two common knives, one bullet-mould, one hammer-stone, besides nearly two hundred arrow and spear points. Thus far this year, I have brought to light several fragments of pottery, some bearing slight traces of decoration: parts of soapstone bowls, one stone tomahawk, one scraper, one scalping-knife, one gouge, also, in round numbers, fifty arrow and spear points. Several Indian localities have been visited by me, but the unusual high water this year has been a hindrance to such work afield. The scalper which I secured was found a short distance from the old Pegan settlement at Dudley. Evidence exists to show that near the mouths of streams entering our ponds and the outlets of the latter, were chosen working-places for the Indians. Here are found many of their tools used, and rocks which served them for milling-places. Scattered along these streams entering these ponds or lakes are still to be found fragments of their bowls and cooking utensils. Also far back on the hill-sides sloping to the water, material for their stone-work may be seen, much of it bearing traces of their crude tools. I have a stone which was plowed up two years ago near Singletary lake on the Millbury side, which is notched on both sides, is axe-shaped, and bears curious markings.

During a visit last fall to the "Bears' Den" and the Indian region about New Salem, I found much evidence of former Indian occupation. While there I was shown quite a collection of their relics which had been plowed up. Among them was one stone circular in form, having carved on it two rings, an arrow-point and bow. It was evidently used as a neck-ornament, but the place by which it was suspended is broken off; what the inscriptions denoted will perhaps ever remain a mystery.

A visit the past autumn to Asnebumskit pond was barren as to finding any relics of the Indians of that locality, but in Paxton the same day, I succeeded in bringing to light a neatly made flint-knife and a much used gouge made of a bluish stone, closely

resembling one I found at Sutton a short time before. The ceremonial stone I have mentioned I found at Sutton, and for a time was in doubt as to what it was used for. By a photograph in the last report of the Bureau of Ethnology, kindly sent me by Hon. Geo. F. Hoar, I was able to identify it. I consider it valuable and a rare find for this section, going to prove that the Nipmucks were not behind their western brethren in society work. From one island in one of our natural ponds covering an area of perhaps one acre, I gathered twenty arrow-tips and one gouge. These all lay exposed in plain sight, yet the place had often been visited by others, though it is safe to say they knew nothing of Indian work, and had eyes to see, but saw not. The careless farmer leaves his tools in the field, and the storms of winter render them unfit for use. But the Indian could leave his where his last work was done in safety, and many did.

After the repulse and death of Philip, many a Nipmuck fled, leaving behind forever his relics and the scene of his exploits, for the march westward to extermination. Many kinds of material were used in the manufacture of their arrow and spear points. In some localities that is lacking which we find in others. A hard, yellow stone was largely used in the making of spear points. This we find around nearly all of our ponds. The stone used the most by the Nipmucks for arrow-tips was a species of white quartz. This material is in veins among the rocks and ledges near our lakes, and the places where it was clipped off can be seen to this day. Certain material used for the purpose mentioned is found hereabout, which was evidently secured by exchange with the Indians of the west and south. I have found some pieces of a black substance resembling obsidian, but is of a lighter weight. I have a Nipmuck pestle made of slate, nicely finished. A hard, flinty yellow stone served for making gouges, of which I have one. I have four gouges made of a very hard blue stone and two made from a species of sandstone; also an axe manufactured from a brownish stone which seems to contain iron. In the making of drills they used hard black flint, three of which I have. I have also one made from a hard blue stone. Pestles and grinders



among the Nipmucks were mostly worked out of granite. Picks from some hard stone seldom finished, but were required to have a good point. Their bowls and vessels were, except their mortars, universally wrought from soapstone, some crude and others well finished, but nearly all having on them knobs or handles. It is known that among the Esquimaux are found many shallow dishes or bowls made of soapstone. These are used to contain grease or blubber, which is burned therein to light their huts. Among the Nipmuck relics we find many shallow bowls made from the same material, which, compared with those of the Esquimaux vessels, resemble them very closely. Several of this kind I dug up the past year, near a favorite camping-place of the Nipmucks on the shore of Ramshorn pond in Sutton. A writer in one of our local papers, evidently unacquainted with Indian work, referring to some arrow-points in the collection of our society, said some were made of soapstone. In all of my experience among Indian handicraft, I have never yet seen a finished one made from that material. The nearest approach to this was one I found at Sutton last fall, a crude attempt, and evidently the work of some Indian youth. The material was too soft, and was rejected for that purpose. The Indians of this locality, as compared with the western and southern tribes, furnished mostly rather crude work. Yet there were workmen in some places who left behind beautiful specimens of their handicraft. I believe it to be possible to pick out the work of certain arrow-tip makers, the specimens showing certain marks which distinguish them from the work of others. In fact, I have many tips in my collection found in different localities that I should be glad to place to the credit of the Nipmuck, who, I believe, was a master of his art, did I but know the name he went by in the long ago. At these favorite places where the Indians wrought in making arrow and spear points, the soil about abounds with the chippings and fragments of the material used. Around one pond I am familiar with, the shore on one side shows many remains of their labor, while the opposite shore is barren of chippings, and after much searching, only one lone arrow-point was secured.



The following document, the original of which I have, mentions three Indians by the surname of David. This name appears among the Nipmucks of Grafton. For this reason, together with the fact that one of the makers of the note, Rodolphus Edson, became a resident of Oxford in 1798, and was at one time the owner of the Indian mortar which stands in front of the building of this Society, it is here inserted :

BRIDGEWATER, March 25, 1785.

For value recd., we jointly and severally promise to pay John Turner, David Kingman and John Nelson, as they are guardians to the Indians for the county of Plymouth, and to their successors in said trust, thirty-two pounds, nineteen shillings and three pence of lawful silver money, with interest for the same sum until paid, as witness our hands.

RODOLPHUS EDSON.

POLYCARPUS EDSON.

Attest : EZRA KINGMAN.

February Ye 10, 1794, then received of Mr. Rodolphus Edson, three pounds, eleven shillings and ten pence, in part on the above note.

On the back of the note is written :

Rodolphus and P. Carpus Edson's note. April 8, 1788, recd. six pounds in part of this note, by an order paid William Kennedy for the use of Elisabeth David.

Sept. 21, 1789, recd. fifteen pounds in part of this note, same being paid to Ephm. Winslow, in behalf of Job David, Indian man, deceased. Also, the further sum of twenty shillings in part of this note, to defray charges.

Jan. Ye 28, 1791, recd. one pound, ten shillings and seven pence by a certificate from Doct. Jonathan Crane, certifying that he received said sum of Capt. Abizer Edson, and paid it to Col. Edson in Sept., 1774 ; also allow on this note forty shillings, which we found due to Edson for supplying Leah David.

July 14, 1792, recd. three pounds by the hand of Bezer Leach in part of this note.

August 28, 1792, recd. four pounds, fifteen shillings and five pence, paid to Col. Nelson in part of this note.

The following extracts are found in the late C. C. Baldwin's MS. history of Sutton, which, through the courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, I was allowed to copy :

“The interest of £2500, being £150, was annually received and amount paid the trustees (Indian) until 1739, when from that time, including 1739, no settlement was made by the trustees until July 16, 1744. The reason why a settlement was so long delayed has not been ascertained, nor can it be learned from the records. The accounts are fully stated at the close of each year, similar to those which are published until July 12, 1739, when all the record made of settlement was: At a meeting at Hassanamisco, July 12, 1739, made a payment to the Indians, settled an agreement between Andrew and Abimelech (Indians). Committed six pounds and ten shillings (allowed by Andrew) to Mr. Fletcher, with desire that he disburse it with discretion to Abimelech, to benefit of Hannah, or otherwise to Hannah herself.”

Original of the above paper undoubtedly belonged to the Indian (Nipmuck) trustees, as Deacon Hall's name appears on the back of it.

On another page of Mr. Baldwin's book this is found relating to Barre, Mass.:

“I was informed by old Mr. Franklin Nurse, of Barre, then about 80 years of age, that when he was quite small, about 1754 or 55, the Indians used to come in the fall of the year and build cabins on and near the farm owned by Jo Paige, formerly owned by Col. Buckminster, and spend a few weeks in hunting deer. He said they came from Rhode Island, as he understood.”

Mr. Baldwin has this on another page:

“It is said the Hassanamisco Indians were visited by the Narragansetts, and it was a common custom with them to go together to the neighborhood of the Wachusett, in the fall, to hunt.”

Mr. Baldwin has preserved for us the name of one Grafton Indian, who was “Isaac Rumbly Marsh.”

Mr. Baldwin's book furnishes us this account of the affray at Sutton, which was according to his record:

“A battle between the Indians and English on the southern shore of Ramshorn Pond. The Indians posted themselves on Potter Hill (so called from the owner), and the English on a small

elevation of land, now an island in the pond at the south end, and the battle was fought in the morning. They spent the night in the places before mentioned. Several Indians were killed, and many bullets have been found since on the battle-grounds. Two human skeletons have been found some fifty years ago a short distance south of the pond, and one cranium was found on the place where the battle was fought. This tradition comes from Anthony Dike's father, who had it from one of the soldiers who was in the battle."

I would say that on the island, where, it is said, the white men spent the night, I found a gun-flint showing evidence of much use.

Funds are yet paid from the state treasury, from year to year, to much mixed descendants of Nipmucks, and Grafton yet holds for the benefit of some a small reservation of land. But the pale-face is lord of "The Nipmuck Country," and his cattle graze above the bones of this ancient people. History represents the Nipmucks as treacherous, cruel and crafty. The narrative of the many massacres in which they were engaged shows many inhuman deeds performed. Yet we must remember they were a savage people at best, and war is ever demoralizing. The history of our late civil contest presents many pictures of inhumanity that equals theirs. This was done by men whom we call civilized, and who boasted of the highest culture. Shall we condemn the Indian and pass the white man by? The key to the Indian troubles in those early days was jealousy. The French settlers of Canada were jealous of the English here, and the leading men among the Indian tribes were jealous of them also. One helped on the other in the cruel work performed. Fate, or whatever you may call it, decreed that the Nipmuck should go, and the fact remains that out from them all not one of pure blood remains.

