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‡ Famous American Indians ‡

KING PHILIP

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Philip, ruler of the Wampanoags, was the only Indian in our country to whom the English colonists gave the title of King. Where his family generally lived is now called Mount Hope, and is twelve or fifteen miles southeast of Providence, Rhode Island. The date of Philip's birth is unknown. It is probable, however, that he was born before 1620. His home did not differ very much from those of his playmates, for there was no aristocracy among the Indians.

As a child Philip liked to sit by the camp fire and listen to the stories of adventure told by his elders. Philip's Indian name was Matacomet. He was the second son of Chief Massasoit. There were five Wampanoag tribes that owed allegiance to Massasoit. The most prominent man in these villages was called a sagamore. These villages were united and ruled by a sachem or chief. Such a chief was Massasoit. He called the sagamores together frequently for consultation, and led them rather than ruled them. At such meetings, and by the camp fire, as a child, Philip would hear strange stories of adventure. In such a way he first heard about the English, or "palefaces," as the Indians called them.

Philip received the same education that the other young boys of his tribe received. The education was training to make him brave, daring, hardy, and able to bear pain. In his boyhood he was greatly interested in the coming of the white man. Massasoit and his people were on friendly terms with the palefaces. It was Somoset of Massasoit's tribe that rushed into the Pilgrims' settlement and boldly exclaimed, "Englishmen welcome!" Somoset, accompanied by Squanto, visited the Pilgrims again. Squanto had been taken aboard a ship with twenty-three others by a Thomas Hunt, who betrayed them in a most dishonest and inhuman manner. He carried them to Malaya and there sold them. Squanto escaped to England and returned to his native land. He taught the Pilgrims how to catch eels, where to go fishing, when to plant their corn, and how to put a fish in every hill

to make it grow faster. He liked the Pilgrims so much that on his death bed he asked Governor Bradford to pray so he might go to the white man's heaven. With Squanto as interpreter Massasoit and the Governor made a treaty in which the Indians and the Pilgrims were to live like friends and brothers, doing all they could to help each other. This promise was kept for more than fifty years, long after the two men who made it were in their graves. Massasoit and his people shared the first Thanksgiving with the Pilgrims. "The Indians brought venison and other good things; there were plenty of wild turkeys roasted; and so they sat down together to a great dinner, and had a merry time in the wilderness."

The Wampanoag's refused to be converted to Christianity. They could not see how it would make them any better when it did not make some of the white people better, so they preferred their former mode of life.

Massasoit died about 1661. His eldest son, Wamsutta, followed him as chief. Soon after he was arrested and taken to Plymouth where he was charged with plotting against the English. He was treated well. Nothing was proved in his disfavor and he was released. On his way home, unfortunately, he died. Philip followed him as chief. A mischievous report was started that the white people had poisoned Wamsutta. This report was untrue.

King Philip made no attempt to injure the whites in any way. However, by wrong rumors the whites became suspicious of Philip and summoned him to Plymouth to answer a charge of plotting against them. Philip proved that he did not plot against them, and showed them that it was against his own interests to have any trouble with them, and, as proof, he offered to leave his brother with them as a hostage. He agreed to continue the treaty his father had made forty years before. He kept the treaty faithfully for several years.

In 1667, six years after Philip became chief, an Indian told the people at Plymouth that Philip wished the Dutch would defeat the English in the war which was being carried on between Holland and England. He was called to account for this, but he proved this false by offering to surrender all his arms of war.

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