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*JOHN ELIOT, THE APOSTLE TO THE INDIANS*

JAMES DE NORMANDIE

ROXBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

In the old and worn parchment leaves of the baptismal register of Widford Parish in "pleasant Hertfordshire" we find this record:

Anno dm. 1604. John Elliott the sonne of Bennett Elliott was baptized the fiftē daye of August in the yeere of our Lord God 1604.

There is also this record:

An° Dm. 1598. Bennett Eliot and Letteye Aggar were married the xxxth of October an° Sup Dicto.

Bennett Eliot had property in several of the neighboring parishes, and about 1608 removed to Nazing, where he died. In his will he directs his executor to pay out of the rents and profits of his lands and tenements, for the space of eight years from 1621, quarterly to his son John Eliot "the sum of eight pounds a yeare of lawful money of England, for and towards his maintenance in the University of Cambridge where he is a scholar."

The home of Eliot was marked by the best religious influences stirring England in these early days of the Reformation and the dawning of the Puritan controversy, for he speaks of his first years as "seasoned with the fear of God, the word, and prayer." He became a pensioner of Jesus College in 1619, took his first degree in 1623, and was early distinguished for his talent and proficiency in the study of languages. Upon leaving Cambridge he was a tutor for a time in a school kept by Rev. Thomas Hooker,--afterwards the founder of the state of Connecticut. Here the influences of his own home were deepened, for he wrote: "Here the Lord said unto my dead soul, live! live! and through the grace of God I do live forever! When I came to this blessed family I then saw as never before the power of godliness in its lovely vigour and efficacy."

Eliot was prepared for the ministry but the bitter enemies

of the Puritans and the advocates of imposing strict conformity on the observance of the ritual of the Church of England were making life intolerable for the nonconformists. A number of the inhabitants of Nazing and the neighboring villages were preparing to go to the new world, some on account of the religious disturbances, some out of that spirit of colonization so active at that period, and Eliot told them that if they wished he would be their minister when they were settled at Rocksborough.

In Winthrop's History of New England it is stated that "on November Twelfth 1631 the ship Lyon arrived at Nantasket. There came in her, the Governor's wife, and Mr. Eliot, a minister, and others, being in all about sixty persons, who all arrived in good health, having been ten weeks at sea." Mr. Savage in a note says, "This was the celebrated apostle of the Massachusetts Indians."

Immediately upon his arrival in Boston Eliot "adjoyned" the church at Boston and, as the pastor of that church was absent, Eliot "exercised" as its minister. The church became at once much interested in him, desired to call him as its teacher, and pleaded their great need of him; but Eliot replied that he was "preingaged" at his English home to his friends there about to settle at Rocksborough, that he would be their minister if they still so desired. As Winthrop says, "Though Boston labored all they could both with the congregation at Roxbury, and with Mr. Eliot himself, yet he could not be diverted from accepting the call at Roxbury; so he was dismissed." At the end of the summer he came to Roxbury, where a church had been gathered with Weld for its pastor and there he was ordained as teacher in November, 1632. His intended wife, Miss Ann Mumford, a name still lingering in the neighborhood of Widford, came over with the same company, and soon after Eliot's settlement over the church they were married. Then began a ministry which lasted over fifty-eight years.

Eliot was twenty-seven years old, vigorous and earnest for work. One account a little later says of him: "The first Teaching Elder is Mr. Eliot, a young man at his coming thither of a cheerful spirit, walking unblameable, of a godly conversation, apt to teach, as by his indefatigable pains both with his flock and

the poore Indians doth appeare, whose language he learned purposely to help them to the knowledge of God in Christ, frequently preaching in their wigwams and catechising their children." Another account says: "He that God hath raised up and enabled to preach unto them, is a man of most sweet, humble, loving, gracious, and enlarged spirit, whom God hath blest, and surely will still delight in, and do good by."

There is a little volume on the early life in New England, printed in 1639, which says that "Boston is a town of very pleasant situation two miles north east from Roxborough," and of Rocksborough it says: "It is a fair and handsome country town, the inhabitants of it all being very rich; it is well wooded and watered, having a clear and fresh brook running through the town. The inhabitants have fair houses, store of cattle, impaled cornfields, and fruitful gardens." The earliest residences were along the street which now bears the name of the old town, and around the hill on which the meeting-house was built, the same site occupied by all its successors, and now one of the best specimens of the old Puritan meeting-house standing in New England. There was a regulation (for safety from the Indians) that everyone must build within half a mile of the meeting-house-and "meeting-house" every one called it, for the word church was an offence to the Puritan. (Cotton Mather said that he found no just ground in Scripture to apply such a trope as church to a house for public assembly.) Simple and rude it was, about twenty by thirty feet in plan and twelve feet high, built of logs, the interstices filled up with clay, with a thatched roof and an earthen floor. Here was the scene of the faithful ministrations of Eliot as for nearly sixty years to all meetings on Sunday or during the week he came from his humble home not far removed.

In all that ministry, with its restless missionary zeal, its busy labor of the scholar, and its deep interest in every social matter touching the welfare of a new community, there is never any hint of a neglect of his parish duties. He watched his flock, small at first but very rapidly growing, like a faithful shepherd. Every new settler was carefully looked after, and if his morals were questionable, there was no peace for him but through repentance

and reformation or banishment from the plantation. No search was ever keener than the Puritan's watch for heresy and for sin. Close by the meeting-house stood the stocks and the pillory, that any neglect of the gospel should soon be followed by the terror of the law.

About all that we can learn of the early ministry of Eliot must be from his records in the parish book. There was a special reason for the minister's making such records, in the Puritan's idea of the church. The church was a company of "visible saints," and its aim was to maintain a high standard of godliness among its members. Each church was a unit to determine its own rules of faith and life,--and as no church had any right or power to interfere with the faith or creed or discipline of any other church, so it had to be a jealous custodian of its own members. There was no disposition to gloss over the faults of any one who, having once taken hold of the covenant, had fallen from grace. So the minister was quite ready to record his spiritual judgment of his flock. These records of the Apostle Eliot are interesting beyond those of almost any of our New England churches because the man is the most interesting figure in our early history. There is a flavor of humanity and godliness still shedding from these pages because the man was so humane and godly. Here you read between these lines, you see what a yearning and tender love, what a broad and deep sympathy are beneath even the sentence of excommunication. Here was a man to whom the unseen things were more real than anything seen or handled. Mather says he once heard him utter these words upon the phrase, "Our conversation is in heaven":--"In the morning if we ask, 'where have I been to-day?' our souls must answer, 'in heaven.' In the evening if we ask, 'where have I been to-day?' our souls may answer, 'in heaven.' If thou art a believer, thou art no stranger to heaven while thou livest, and when thou diest, heaven will be no stranger to thee; no, thou hast been there a thousand times before."

Here is his watchfulness over trade. "The wife of William Webb. She followed baking, and through her covetuous mind she made light weight after many admonitions, and also for a grossly in public, flatly denying yt after she had weighed her dough,

she never nimed off bitts from each loaf, wh yet was four wit- nesses testified to be a comon if not a constant practis, for all wh grosse sins she was excommunicated, her ways having bene long a greif of heart to her Godly neighbors. But afterwards she was reconciled to ye Church, and lived christianly and dyed com- fortably."

Calling one day on a merchant in his parish, he noticed in his counting-room some books of business on the table, and some books of devotion laid away on a shelf, and said: "Here, sir, is earth on the table and heaven on the shelf; pray do not sit so much at the table, as altogether to forget this shelf; let not earth thrust heaven out of your mind."

"The Church takes notice of six, who humbled themselves by public confession in the Church, and we have cause to hope yt the full proceeding of discipline will doe more good than their sin hath done hurt."

"These young persons, males, all did publickly, by their own consent and desire, take hold on the covenant, waiting for more grace."

"Robert Lyman was an ancient christian but weak." "Valentine Prentise, lived a godly life, and went through much affliction by bodily infirmity, and died leaving a good savor of Godlyness behind him."

"William Hills, he removed to Hartford on Connecticott where he lived several yeares, without giving such good satisfaction to the consciences of the saints."

"John Moody had two men servants who were ungodly, especially one of them. They went to the oyster bank in a boate against the counsel of their governor; they did unskillfully leave their boate afloat, and quickly the tide caryed it away, and they were drowned, a *dreadful* example of God's displeasure against obstinate servants."

"Mary Chase, had a paralitik humor which fell into her back- bone, so that she could not stir her body, but as she was lifted, and filled her with great torture, and caused her backbone to goe out of joynt, and bunch out from the beginning to the end, of which infirmity she lay 4 years and a half, a sad spectacle of misery;but it pleased God to raise her againe."

One of our antiquarians searching among the old church records, and finding this account of Mary Chase's trouble wrote to Oliver Wendell Holmes, asking him to give a diagnosis of the case in the light of modern medical science. Dr. Holmes sent the following characteristic letter:

A consultation without seeing the patient is like a murder-trial without the *corpus delicti* being in evidence. You remember the story of Jeremiah Mason and the witness who had had a vision in which the Angel Gabriel informed him of some important facts. "Subprena the Angel Gabriel." So I should say, carry us to the bedside of Mary Chase, but she has been under green bedclothes so long, that I am afraid that she would be hard to wake up. We must guess as well as we can under the circumstances. The question is whether she had angular curvature, lateral curvature, or no curvature at all. If the first, angular curvature, you must consult such authorities as Bryant, DeWitt, and the rest. If you are not satisfied with these modern writers, all I have to say is, as I have said before when asked whom to consult in such cases, go to Pott, to Percival Pott, the famous surgeon of the last century, from whom this affection has received the name by which it is still well-known of "Pott's Disease," for if a doctor has the luck to find out a new malady, it is tied to his name like a tin kettle to a dog's tail, and he goes clattering down the highway of fame to posterity with his aeolian attachment following at his heels. As for the lateral curvature, if that had existed it seems as if the Apostle Eliot would have said she bulged sideways, or something like that, instead of saying the backbone bunched out from beginning to end. Besides I doubt if lateral curvature is apt to cause paralysis. Crooked backs are everywhere, as tailors and dressmakers know, and nobody expects to be paralyzed because one shoulder is higher than the other, as Alexander the Great's was, and Alexander Pope's also.

I doubt whether Mary Chase had any real curvature at all. Her case looks to me like one of those *Mimoses* as Marshall Hall calls certain forms of hysteria which imitate different diseases and among the rest paralysis. The body of a hysteric patient will take on the look of all sorts of more serious affections. As for mental and moral manifestations a hysteric girl will lie so that Sapphira would blush for her, and she could give lessons to a professional pickpocket in the art of stealing. Hysteria might well be described as possession by seven devils, except that this number is quite insufficient to account for all the pranks played by the subjects of this extraordinary malady.

I do not want to say anything against Mary Chase, but I suspect

that, getting nervous, and tired, and hysteric, she got into bed, which she found rather agreeable after too much housework, and perhaps too much going to meeting, liked it better and better, curled herself up into a bunch which made her look as if her back was really disturbed, found she was cosseted, and posseted, and prayed over, and made much of, and so lay quiet until a false paralysis caught hold of her legs and kept her there. If some one had hollered "fire," it is not unlikely that she would have jumped out of bed, as many other such paralytics have done under such circumstances. She could have moved probably enough, if any one could have made her believe that she had the power of doing it. *Possumus quia posse mdemur*. She had played *possum* so long that at last it became *non possum*.

Yours very truly,

O. W. HOLMES, M.D.

In addition to such records as these there is little to be noticed about Eliot's early ministry; but these make interesting reading for our day, and let us into the secret of his life. Here is no formality of piety, only the deep, vigorous, serious, constant, bubbling-over life of the spirit. While much gentler and more amiable than his colleague Weld, he was still strenuous and unyielding for the faith he held, and a strong antagonist of the heresies he thought were creeping into the colony, as one may notice in his occasional notes about the Quakers, the Anabaptists, the Familists, and the part he took in the Anne Hutchinson controversy. One of the matters which now seem to us very trivial was his indignation over the sin of men wearing long hair. The discussion waxed so hot that Eliot with others sent a lengthy petition to the magistrates rather discouraging a contribution to the college until this sin was removed from the students, saying: "They are brought up in such pride as doth no wayes become such as are brought up for the holy service of the Lorde, either in the magistracy, or ministry especially, and in particular in their long haire, which last, first took hand and broke out at Colledg, so far as we understand and remember, and now it is got into the pulpit to the great greife and offense of many godly hearts in the country." Eliot's prejudice against long hair or the wearing of wigs seems an unaccountable weakness. He preached against it, he prayed against it; he thought all the calamities which came upon the

country, even Indian wars, might be laid to this fashion which was gaining such strong hold upon the people and especially on the young.

A scholar himself of no mean attainment, and with the best education England could give, he took early and throughout his life a great interest in the education of the young. He established the first Sunday school of which we have any account in this new land. "First our male youth in fitting season stay every Sabbath after the evening [that is, afternoon] service in the public meeting house; where [after they had already attended the two services of two or three hours each] the elders will examine their remembrance [of the services] that day and any fit point of catechize. Secondly, that our female youth should meet [on Monday] in one place where the elders may examine them of their remembrance yesterday, and about catechize, or what else may be convenient."

He was restless to offer to all young persons the best opportunities for learning, lest in the activities and demands of a new settlement they should be turned away from literary pursuits. Wherever he went he made a plan or a prayer for good schools. In a synod of the churches he exclaimed: "Lord for schools everywhere among us! That our schools may flourish! That every member of this assembly may go home and procure a good school to be encouraged in the town in which he lives. That before we die we may be so happy as to see a good school encouraged in every plantation of the country." Mather writes: "God so blessed his endeavors that Roxbury could not live quietly without a free school in the town, and the issue of it has been one thing which has almost made me put the title of *schola illustris* upon that little nursery; that is, that Roxbury has afforded more scholars, first for the college, and then for the public, than any town of its bigness, or if I mistake not, of twice its bigness in all New England. From the spring of the school at Roxbury there have run a large number of the streams, which have made glad this whole city of God."

The Trustees of the Roxbury Latin School have in their possession the agreement to establish the school, on a beautifully written parchment in ancient characters dated the last of August,



1645,--as follows: "Whereas the inhabitants of Roxburie, in consideration of their religious care of posteritie, have taken into consideration how necessarie the education of their children in Literature, will be to fitt them for public service, both in Church and Commonwealthe, in succeeding ages-they therefore unanimously have consented and agreed to erect a free schoole in the said Towne"; and a little later the teacher promises to use his best skill and endeavor both by precept and example to instruct in "all scholasticall, morall, and theological discipline."

Another effort which Eliot very early made, together with his colleague Weld and with Mather of Dorchester, was the preparation of the "Bay Psalm-Book," the first book printed in this country. The intention was good, to turn the Psalms of David into verses to be sung-but the result was awful! How congregations could venture to sing such verses, or to think there was anything musical in them, can be explained only by granting that somewhat of the beauty and harmony of the Psalms had already stolen into their hearts. These men were scholars, they were faithful ministers, but such a work was beyond their gifts. They must themselves have felt the inadequacy of their work, and something of the ridicule with which it might be received by the churches, for they have their apology in the preface: "If the verses are not alwayes so smooth and elegant as some may desire or expect, let them consider that God's altar needs not our pollishings; for wee have expected rather a plaine translation, than to smooth our verses with the sweetness of any paraphrase, and we have attended conscience rather than elegance, fidelity rather than poetry in translating the Hebrew words into English Language, and David's poetry into English Metre." It was reserved for some of Eliot's descendants, Fitz-Greene Halleck with his ringing strains of "Marco Bozzaris," and Ethelinda Eliot Beers, who wrote "All Quiet along the Potomac," to compensate for the signal poetical failure of their ancestor.

Eliot's efforts for a good school did not cease with the founding of the Roxbury Latin School. A short time before his death he gave an estate of about seventy-five acres of land to certain persons and their heirs for the support of a school and schoolmaster in that part of Roxbury then called the Pond Plains, or Jamaica

Plain; to provide teaching for the children of that end of the town, "together with such Indians and negroes as shall or may come to the school, and to no other use, intent, or purpose what- ever." That school had been established some years before, but by reason of the generous gift of the Apostle Eliot his name was given to it and it continues to the present time. Today it is an industrial school, designed, in the words of Eliot, "to remove the inconvenience of ignorance."

It is impossible to learn when Eliot first turned his attention towards the native Americans, and felt that his life-work was to be for them. Several of the ministers hereabout were interested in them, and joined in visiting and preaching and in endeavors to convert them to Christianity, but no one else who, in the large spirit of humanity which marked Eliot's whole life, regarded them as the children of God, and believed that if the gospel was for God's children it was for the red man as much as for the white, and that if civilization was a benefit, they should share in that benefit. Many of the early charters expressed an interest in the Indians, as also did some of the early settlers, but generally they were looked upon as savages to be exterminated, or as children of Satan deserving little sympathy; and the curiosity or welcome or friendly offices which were so often manifested upon the first arrival of the whites soon turned into bitter hostility as the natives found their possessions taken from them and themselves driven further and further away to seek new hunting- grounds.

Eliot had been in the ministry here about ten years, mingling with the Indians, whom he saw daily in the village or hiding between the trees watching with piercing eyes these strange white creatures and their strange ways, when it came to him that his chief mission was to learn the Indian language, and preach the gospel to them in their own tongue. He believed, and it was not an uncommon opinion in his day, that the Indians belonged to the lost tribes of Israel; and after the Captivity had made their way into America from the extreme parts of Asia. He also believed that in their language he would find some traces of the Hebrew, which he firmly believed was the language of heaven, in which by God's own voice the Old Testament had been given to men, and

which would be forever the only language of the redeemed. Eliot was a remarkable Hebrew scholar, and had such a love for this language that he thought it better fitted than any other to become the universal language of mankind. "It had need be so," he writes, "for being the language which shall be spoken in heaven, where knowledge will be so enlarged, there will need a spacious language, and what language fitter than this of God's own making and composure? And why may we not make ready for heaven in this point, by making and fitting that language, according to the rules of the divine artifice of it, to express all imaginable conceptions and notions of the mind of man in all arts and sciences?" However, as he went on in his studies he found the Hebrew did not help him to understand the Indian language.

In 1643 he began the study of their tongue. He found a bright young Indian who had been a servant in an English home, and "him," he says, "I made my interpreter and thus I came at it, we must not sit still and look for miracles. Up and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee. Prayer and pains through faith in Jesus Christ will do anything." He made such progress that in three years he attempted to preach to the Indians. It was on the 8th of October, 1646, at a place called Nonantum, a part of Newton. As Eliot with three friends accompanying him drew near to the wigwam of Waban the chief, he met them with expressions of welcome, and led them to his wigwam, where quite a large company were gathered. Eliot began the service with a prayer in English, "being," he said, "not so farre acquainted with the Indian language as to express our hearts herein before God to them." There was the feeling, probably, of looking upon prayer as a more serious and sacred matter than preaching, so that any errors of speech might make it ludicrous. Perhaps, too, there was something of the feeling which many have that it might be rather difficult for the Almighty to understand any other tongue as well as their own. The story is told of an Indian squaw, who might have been an unusually neat one, and kept her wigwam cleanly swept, who had learned only the word "broom." She became deeply concerned about her salvation. Her Christian friends begged her to pray. She supposed she must pray in English, but she had only that one word. Her anxiety grew intense,

and at last, throwing herself upon her knees, and lifting up her eyes in the attitude of prayer she kept repeating, "Broom! broom! broom! broom! broom!" Was it not as acceptable, and as well understood, as the most ornate and finished prayer?

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of an eye,  
When none but God is near.

After the prayer, Eliot preached a long sermon from a passage in Ezekiel, "Prophecy unto the wind." The name of Waban signified wind, so that the Indians thought it was the same as if he had said "prophecy unto Waban," and as if it were a call from the Scriptures to him to be converted and join the Christians, but Eliot told them he had no thought of such an application when he selected his text.

At this first meeting Eliot began a custom, continued through his preaching, of having the hearers ask whatever questions they chose, either for a clearer understanding of what had been spoken to them, or for light upon any point which had exercised their minds. "We asked them," said Eliot, "if they understood all that which was already spoken, and whether all of them did understand all that which was then spoken to them, or only some few. And they answered with multitude of voyces, that they all of them did understand all that which was spoken." It is somewhat doubtful if any congregation today could understand all that the Apostle preached to them that day. "It was," says Eliot, "a glorious affecting spectacle to see a company of perishing, forlorn outcasts, diligently attending to the blessed word of salvation then delivered; it much affected us that they should smell some things of the Alabaster box broken up in that dark and gloomy habitation of filthiness and unclean spirits."

The questions of the Indians at some of these meetings make an interesting study of their minds when presented with the statement of a religion and a theology of which nothing had been heard; for Eliot not only spoke of the pure living it required of them, but with that he entered into some of the abstrusest dogmas of the faith which the greatest of Christian theologians have

never been able to state with clearness. Eliot never reproached them for the insufficiency or falsity of their own religion, he only presented with earnestness what he thought was the heaven- descended and glorious faith; and if they were not won from their own, they received it in a respectful silence out of their love for him. And never through his long missionary work among them do we find a trace of the experiences the Jesuit fathers relate as frequently theirs. The Indians would give to them, in their slight knowledge of the language, the most vulgar and obscene words, and the priests would use them with the most sacred offices of their religion and notice the Indians convulsed with laughter over the mistakes that were made.

There is a story of a later date which ought to be a wise lesson to all missionaries. One of them was instructing a group of Indians in the truths of his holy religion. He told them of the creation of the earth in six days, and of the fall of our first parents by eating an apple. The courteous savages listened attentively, and, after thanking him, one related in his turn a very ancient tradition concerning the origin of the maize. But the missionary plainly showed his disgust and disbelief, indignantly saying, "What I delivered to you were sacred truths, but this that you tell me is mere fable and falsehood!" "My brother," gravely replied the offender Indian, "it seems that you have not been well grounded in the rules of civility. You saw that we, who practise these rules, believed your stories; why, then, do you refuse to credit ours?" There are many of the Indian myths and legends about creation quite as helpful and spiritual as the story of the fall of man by eating the apple. Any genuine appreciation of Christianity ought to dispose us to be kindly and courteous and receptive of the best in any other religion; ought to urge us to a careful study of what that best is, and not to despise it, or call it all false because its traditions or its forms or its views may be so contrary to our own- and all this without yielding the least of any principle of faith or life which we regard as essential.

Some of the answers the Apostle gave to the questions of the Indians have, also, a far-off interest. Let us look at a few of both. "Do not English spoil their souls when they say that a thing

costs them more than it did cost, and is not that all one as to steal?"

"If a man talk of another's faults and tell others of them when he is not present to answer, is not that a sin?"

"Why did not God give all men good hearts that they might be good?"

"Why did not God kill the devil that made all men so bad?"

"If a man should be enclosed in iron a foot thick, and thrown into the fire, what would become of his soul? Could the soul come forth thence or not?"

"Were the Englishmen ever at any time so ignorant of God and Jesus Christ as themselves?" Answer: "There are two sorts of English men. Some are bad and live wickedly, and these are as ignorant in a way as the Indians now are. Another sort are good men and love Christ and honor him. Once they were all as ignorant of God and Christ, as the Indians are, but the Indians shall know him if also they seek him."

"What do you get by praying to God and believing in Jesus Christ? You are as poor as we, and we take more pleasure than you do. If we could see that you gain anything by being Christians we would be so too." Answer: "There are two sorts of mercies. The little ones [which he illustrated by holding up his little finger], and the great ones [which he signified by extending his thumb]. The little ones are riches, good clothes, houses, pleasant food; the great ones are wisdom, the knowledge of God and Christ, of truth and eternal life. Though God may not give you any large measure of the little mercies, he gives you what is much better, the greater blessings."

Eliot's first missions among the Indians were so encouraging that every day his enthusiasm and hope increased. The work became a fervent zeal which went out only with his death. In the summer of 1650 Natick, or "the place of hills," was chosen as a fit spot for a town where the converted or praying Indians could be gathered into a community of their own, renounce their roving habits, and follow the arts of civilization. The town was laid out in three streets, two on one side and one on the other of the river Charles, with a foot-bridge the Indians themselves built. Each family had a lot, and they built a large house, the lower part to

be used for their worship on Sunday, and a room in the upper part set apart for the Apostle whenever he should visit them. A form of government was arranged for them, entirely from the Scriptures, and since they had no previous conception of laws, Eliot thought it would be easy for them to adopt that form to which he was sure all the world must finally come, with the Lord for their judge, the Lord for their lawgiver, the Lord for their king.

These praying Indians took the gospel as it has been said the Hebrews took their religion, with a gush, with a joy. They received its precepts and its ceremonies with great seriousness, and made them a large part of daily life. A great reason for their lapsing into indifference was that they soon found the English were so loud in their professions and so lax in their lives. One of them, lodging at the home of an Englishman one night, asked the next day why the man at whose home he stayed did not pray in his family as Eliot had taught the Indians to do every day. Then he concluded there were *matchet* Englishmen as well as *matchet* Indians, men who did not practise what they professed, *-matchet* meaning wicked.

Eliot's heart was full of joy. He had found the better side of the Indian character. They trusted and venerated him. He never deceived them; he treated them with absolute sincerity; he believed they were quite as worthy in the sight of God as him-self; they never faltered in their allegiance to him as a benefactor and friend. In vision, he saw the whole race coming into the Christian fold. His labors knew no end: on week-days, reaching them wherever he could by walking or on horseback; on Sunday, when he could leave his own flock; and on longer journeys, when he could spare the time; down as far as Cape Cod, up through Concord and Lowell as far as the forests of New Hampshire, back into the state as far as Lancaster, and on west as far as Brookfield; with no roads, no bridges, no inns for lodging or refreshments; fording swollen rivers, riding in drenching rains; in mid-summer heat or winter storms; following lonely paths through dense forests with only blazed trees to mark the way-wherever he could find a little gathering of the red men, in their wigwams, or under some broad-branching tree, there the Apostle was to be

found. He gave his strength and his money, and faced danger and perils and death, with the quiet, undaunted spirit of the early martyrs. Often with no shelter, wet to the skin all day long, halting to rest at night by the hospitality of some Indian or only the forest's shade; wringing the water from his stockings, cold and hungry, he speaks of it all with joy. "God stepped in and helped, for I considered that word of his, 'endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ.'"

Then, when the day's work was done, or the journey ended, in the evening in his study teaching his Indian classes, or long into the hours of the night, by the light of a tallow candle, with a physical endurance and a mental force and a spiritual zeal hardly ever equalled, translating the Scriptures and books of piety for his Indian converts. The story of those missionary labors has gone throughout Christendom. A few years ago I found a "Life of Eliot" in Greek, published at Malta.

Now, however, a far greater task confronted the Apostle. It was difficult enough to learn the Indian language, of which Mather says: "If their alphabet be short, I am sure the words composed of it, are long enough to tire the patience of any scholar in the world. One would think they had been growing ever since Babel, unto the dimensions to which they are now extended: if I must translate 'our loves,' it must be 'Noowomantainmoon-kamnownash.' I pray you count the letters."

After learning the language so as to converse with them, and preach to them, and pray with them, there was something more to be done. Eliot could not visit them as frequently as they were pressing him to come; and his voice would soon be silent. He was Christianity to them; they could listen to no other, and they must have the Bible and religious books in their own language to read when he could no longer counsel them. Then began that mighty task of translating the Bible into the Indian language; although in the beginning of his work of translation he had not the faintest idea that he could ever live to complete it all. "Since the death of the Apostle Paul," writes Edward Everett, "a nobler, truer, and warmer spirit than John Eliot never lived; and, taking the rudeness of the age into consideration, the state of the country, the narrowness of the means, the history of the Christian



church does not contain an example of resolute, untiring, successful labor, superior to that of translating the entire Scriptures into the language of the native inhabitants of Massachusetts, a dialect as imperfect, as unformed, as unmanageable as any spoken on earth; a labor performed not in the flush of youth, nor within the luxurious abodes of academic ease, but under the constant burden of his duties as a minister and a preacher, and at a time of life when the spirits begin to flag."

First came a little catechism in 1654, supposed to be the first book in the Indian language; the book of Genesis in 1655; a few of the Psalms in 1658; the whole of the New Testament in 1661, and the completed Bible in 1663.

If we had among us now some Indians who thoroughly understood the Algonquin language, which was the dialect most used hereabout in Eliot's time, and could tell us how his translation of the Bible was received, how some of the long chapters of genealogies or some of the rapt passages of the prophets, or the sublime pictures of nature in the Psalms, or the metaphysical arguments of Paul, or the profound and far-reaching moral requirement of the epistles, or the sublime, heaven-descending beatitudes and spiritual utterances of Jesus, fell upon the ears or entered the hearts of the red men of the woods, - what an interesting revelation it would be! All this has gone beyond recovery. Or, if will had some one who, better acquainted with the language, could show us the imperfections of the Apostle in trying to put the Scriptures into any meaning they could grasp! That too is impossible. With all the incredible toil and profound interest at heart, what an elementary work must have been the result! If only Eliot himself could have left on record some of the mistakes into which he was led for the lack of words, or his knowledge of them, to convey the meaning of the Scripture! We have but one instance, and this may be somewhat apocryphal. When he came to translate the verse in Judges, "The mother of Sisera looked out at the window, and cried through the lattice," he could find no word for lattice. He asked one after another, he described it as a framework with open spaces, as netting, as a kind of open basket-work or wicker. At last they gave him a long, unpronounceable word; and years after, when he understood the language better, he was

much amused to find that he had rendered it: "The mother of Sisera looked out at the window, and cried through an eel-pot." What of it all? They may have got the pith of the bloody story, and it might have soothed their consciences in some similar tragedy in their own wigwams, as in the tent of Jael.

One of the most pleasing incidents in Eliot's life must have been a visit paid to him by another who shared the same zeal for these tribes of the woods. Of the devoted Jesuit missionaries of the Northwest, few were more active than Father Gabriel Druillettes. On one of his expeditions he came from Quebec down the waters of the Kennebec, and at last embarked for "Rogs-bray," to visit a minister he had heard much of named "Heliot." He came to Eliot's and found him instructing some savages. "Eliot," he wrote, "received me with respect and affection, and prayed me to pass the winter with him." At a time when the religious antipathies of the Protestants and Romanists were most bitter, here we find two men in the vigor of life, yet to pass their fourscore years in their loved and poorly rewarded labors, met in simple, fraternal fellowship, comparing notes about their methods, successes, disappointments, hopes. The aims of each were the same, but their methods very unlike.

Of Eliot's personal appearance we know nothing. No portrait of him is in existence. He kept no diary full of self-depreciatory, self-conceited, self-lauding exclamations, like Cotton Mather's, now bearing witness to God's special providences to him, now confessing himself the vilest of worms, and now telling of his wonderfully persuasive eloquence and gifts, and wide influence. His ministry was one of utter unworldliness, of self-exacting toil, of entire surrender to the good of others, of a daily walk hid with Christ in God. He had no time to write daily notes of self-introspection. Every gift and every strength and every movement was devoted self-renunciation. "His apparel," says one of his biographers, "was without any ornament except that of humility. Had you seen him with his leathern girdle (for such a one he wore) about his loins, you would almost have thought what Herod feared,—that John Baptist was come to life again. He that will write of Eliot, must write of his charity, or say nothing. His charity was a star of the first magnitude in the

bright constellation of his virtues, and the rays of it were wonderfully various and extensive. His liberality to pious uses, whether public or private, went much beyond the proportions of his little estate in this world. Many hundred pounds did he freely bestow upon the poor; and he would, with very forcible importunities, press his neighbors to join with him in such beneficences. He did not put off his charity to be put in his last will, as many who therein show that their charity is against their will, but he was his own administrator and he made his own hands his executors, and his own eyes his overseers."

The story, familiar as it is, must always be added to any sketch of his life, of the treasurer of the parish who on paying him his quarterly salary, knowing well his lavish expenditure for the relief of others, put the money in a handkerchief and tied it in as many hard knots as possible to compel him to carry it home. On his way thither, he called to see a poor sick woman, and told her that God had sent some relief. Then he began to untie the knots, but there were Indians waiting in his study to be taught, and, growing impatient with the delay to get at his money, he threw it all into her lap, saying, "Here, my dear, take it, I believe the Lord desires it all for you." And charity in its deeper sense was shown, when to a minister, complaining of injurious treatment from some of his parishioners, Eliot said, "Brother, learn the meaning of these three little words, bear, forbear, and forgive." And when a friend asked him how he was in his last sickness, he replied: "Alas! I have lost everything. My understanding leaves me, my memory fails me, my utterance fails me; but I thank God my charity holds out still. I think that rather grows than fails."

Eliot's preaching must have been of a very high character for that day, to judge by occasional references which have been preserved. One may be sure it was long, and filled with Biblical quotations, without any regard to the context, or to their meaning at the time, - they were all God's words and it did not matter much how they were used. His sermons were prepared with all possible care and mental effort, as he said upon hearing a good preacher, "Brother, there is oil required for the service of the sanctuary; but it must be beaten; I praise God that your oil was

so well beaten today." His other labors were so distinguished that his preaching has been little noticed. The agents of the Labadist community, in the record of their visit in 1680, speak of Eliot as a very old man, and "the best of the ministers we have yet heard in Boston and its vicinity." And John Dunton, a book-seller from London, describes him in 1686 as "the glory of Roxbury, as well as of all New England." In his old age he said that he feared his friends Cotton of Boston and Mather of Dorchester, who had been in heaven a long time, would suspect that he had gone the wrong way because he stayed so long behind them, and added, "I wonder for what the Lord Jesus Christ lets me live. He knows that I can do nothing for him." He was compared to Moses because his face was continually shining as a result of his communion with God; and to Homer's Nestor from whose lips dropped words sweeter than honey. There was a tradition that the country could never perish as long as Eliot was alive.

In several letters we find him taking much interest in the progress of medical science, and he speaks in high praise of the studies and results of the College of Physicians in London. "By the blessing of God upon them, they seem to me to design such a regimen of health, and such an exact inspection into all diseases, and knowledge of all medicaments, and prudence of application of the same, that the book of divine Providence seemeth to provide for the lengthening of the life of man again in this latter end of the world, which would be of no small advantage unto all kinds of good learning and government." Then he adds his curious and ever-ready confirmation of his opinion from the Scriptures: "Doth not such a thing seem to be prophesied in Isaiah? If the child shall die one hundred years old, of what age shall the old man be? But I would not be too bold with the Holy Scriptures."

So wore this long and faithful ministry out, until with laboring steps he made his way up the meeting-house hill, and once, leaning upon his deacon's arm, he said, "This is very like the way to heaven, 'tis up hill; the Lord by His grace fetch us up." And spying a bush near by, he added, "And truly there are thorns and briars on the way."

What remains of all these labors? His Indian Bible not a per-

son in America can read. It is worthless except for the enormous price set upon it by the hunters of literary relics. The Indians have all vanished from the scenes of his teaching, loving sympathy, and guidance. Even before the Apostle died, he had to grieve that the evils of civilization were creeping upon them beyond the power of the gospel to stay. The settlers as a rule had always been suspicious of them, and their treatment of them, like that of the government with its broken treaties since, only strengthened and deepened whatever treacherous traits they had; and at last, after the war with Philip, the chief settlements at Natick were broken up, and by order of the State the families were all removed to Deer Island in Boston Harbor. There is hardly another scene so pathetic as when the Apostle, bending in old age, had to bid them submit to the decree of the Court, and with tearful eyes, bidding them farewell, said, "You will learn that through much tribulation. you are to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Were these plodding toils of the scholar and the missionary all in vain? We may think he might have spent his gifts in a higher service. He did not think so. Was this life a waste or a failure? Is any life spent in such entire devotion to what it regards as a special mission in the uplift of any part of humanity as the service of God a failure? Think what a change two centuries have wrought! What prosperity, what power, what luxury! What results of agriculture, mining, manufactures, and commerce! What comfortable homes! What opportunities and obligations! Our problems may be far more intricate and perplexing and threatening; are we giving ourselves to them with the heroism, the consecration, the deep love of humanity, the undisturbed faith in the Eternal which marked the Apostle Eliot? Is it a time to forget those who, in the day of small things, laid the foundation of all we enjoy?

The tumult and the shouting dies,  
 The Captains and the kings depart:  
 Still stands their ancient sacrifice,-  
 An humble and a contrite heart.  
 Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,  
 Lest we forget,- lest we forget!

In the church, on the site of the Apostle's ministry, a tablet has been placed which bears the following inscription:

JOHN ELIOT

APOSTLE TO THE INDIANS

BORN AT WIDFORD 1604 HIS FIRST YEARS  
 SEASONED WITH THE FEAR OF GOD THE WORD  
 AND PRAYER EDUCATED AT JESUS COLLEGE  
 CAMBRIDGE CAME TO THE NEW WORLD 1631  
 PREINGAGED TO THE CHURCH IN ROXBURY  
 ORDAINED AS PREACHER WITH WELD 1632  
 WHOM HE SUCCEEDED AS PASTOR 1641  
 1645 FOUNDED THE ROXBURY LATIN SCHOOL  
 1689 THE ELIOT SCHOOL IN JAMAICA PLAIN  
 ONE OF THE AUTHORS OF THE BAY PSALM BOOK  
 1646 BEGAN HIS MARVELLOUS WORK AMONG  
 THE NATIVE TRIBES OF NEW ENGLAND  
 1660 FOUNDED AT NATICK THE FIRST INDIAN  
 CHURCH IN THE MASSACHUSETTS COLONY  
 1663 COMPLETED THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE  
 IN ZEAL EQUAL TO SAINT PAUL IN CHARITY  
 EQUAL TO SAINT FRANCIS HE TRAVERSED THE  
 LAND FOR FORTY YEARS IN PERILS OF THE  
 WILDERNESS IN PERILS OF THE HEATHEN IN  
 HUNGER AND THIRST WITH GENTLENESS AND  
 FEARLESSNESS TO BEAR THE GOSPEL TO THE  
 CHILDREN OF THE WOODS WHO WERE TO BE  
 THE CHILDREN OF GOD  
 DIED MAY 21 1690  
 FIRST AMONG PURITAN SAINTS