

1675

A Relation of the Indian War, by Mr. Easton, of Rhode Island, 1675

John Easton

Deputy Governor of Rhode Island

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Preface

John Easton (1617-1705) was deputy governor of Rhode Island in the winter of 1675-1676 when he wrote this account of the beginnings of King Philip's War. One copy of the document was sent to Sir Edmund Andros, the governor of New York, and it was preserved in the state archives and is the original source of the version presented here. Jenny Hale Pulsipher writes that Easton "also may have sent copies of the narrative to England, proving to authorities that, contrary to Massachusetts's repeated protests, the colonies, not the Indians, bore responsibility for the conflict." (See her "'Subjects ... unto the same king': New England Indians and the Use of Royal Political Power," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 5 (2003); online @ <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/mhr/5/pulsipher.html>).

The "Relation" apparently circulated among some influential persons in New England, because Increase Mather seems to make reference to it in the preface to his *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England* (1676) (online at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/31/> page 3 and note, page 90). Easton's account is quite different from Mather's: where Mather was at pains to demonstrate that the Indians attacked the English without provocations, Easton gives both a full statement of the Native perspective (as presented by their leaders in pre-war negotiations) and a candid, if perhaps jaundiced, view of the motives of the United Colonies (Massachusetts, Plymouth, and Connecticut) and their established Puritan clergies.

Easton was a Quaker who, along with his father, had been forced out of Massachusetts in 1638. His father, Nicolas Easton (1593-1675), was President of Rhode Island in 1650-1651 and 1654, Deputy Governor 1666-1669 and 1670-1671, and Governor in 1672-1674. John Easton served as Deputy Governor 1674-1676, and as Governor of Rhode Island 1690-1695.

Rhode Island was governed under a Royal Charter, granted by King Charles II in 1663, which guaranteed religious liberty, and protected the colony's territorial claims against incursion from the

Puritan colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Slavery was prohibited in Rhode Island by statute, beginning in 1652, although this did not prevent its merchants and investors from engaging in the overseas trade.

Easton's "Relation of the Indian War" was first printed in 1858, and was reprinted in 1913 by Charles Lincoln in his *Narratives of the Indian Wars 1675-1699*. Both of these editions reproduce Easton's unorthodox spelling and orthography, and may appear somewhat opaque to the modern reader.

For the sake of greater clarity, this present edition renders Easton's "Relation" in modern English, changing spelling and word order and adding punctuation and auxiliary words as needed. The original language, as reprinted in Lincoln's compilation, is included as an appendix. Four paragraphs relating to Easton from Lincoln's introduction are also reproduced.

Short excerpts from the "Relation" appear online already: at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6226> and also mirrored at <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/solguide/VUS02/vus02a06.html> as "Metacom Relates Indian Complaints about the English Settlers, 1675" and at http://www.mayflowerfamilies.com/enquirer/kingphilips_view.htm as "King Philip's Views Of The English." The work is also reprinted in *Negotiating Difference: Cultural Case Studies for Composition*, ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Bedford/St Martins, 1996).

A related document, Easton's letter to Josiah Winslow of Plymouth Colony (dated "26th: 3m: 1675," or May 26, 1675) regarding Weetamo, sachem of the Pocassets, and her husband, and requesting that Winslow hear the tribe's case in Plymouth Colony's court to determine and officially record the boundary of the Pocasset's land, is online at <http://www.newenglandancestors.org/libraries/manuscripts/winslow.asp>

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May 29, 2006

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A RELATION OF THE INDIAN WAR, BY MR. EASTON, OF RHODE ISLAND, 1675

A true relation of what I know and of reports, and my understanding concerning the beginning and progress of the war now between the English and the Indians.

IN the winter in the year 1674 an Indian was found dead, and by a Coroner's inquest of Plymouth Colony judged murdered. He was found dead in a hole through ice broken in a pond, with his gun and some fowl by him. Some English supposed him thrown in. Some Indians that I judged intelligible and impartial in that case did think he fell in, and was so drowned and that the ice did hurt his throat, as the English said it was cut; but they acknowledged that sometimes naughty Indians would kill others but not, as ever they heard, to obscure it, as if the dead Indian was not murdered. The dead Indian was called Sausimun* and was a Christian that could read and write. Report was that

* This name is written Sosoman, Sassamon, Sausaman, and Sausimun, all abbreviations of his own spelling Wussausmon. He was a preacher to the Indians and possibly to Philip himself. Sausaman was born in Punkapog (now Canton, Massachusetts), was given the Christian name of John, was brought up by the English, and used frequently by them as an interpreter in negotiations with the Indians. He was used also as a scribe by Alexander and by Philip, the former granting him lands near Assawomset pond in Middleborough, Plymouth County, Massachusetts. It was here, as stated in the text, that his dead body was found January 29, 1674/5. [Notes are from Charles Lincoln's 1913 edition.]

he was a bad man; and that King Philip got him to write his will and that he made the writing for a great part of the land to be his, but read it as if it had been as Philip would have it; but it came to be known, and then he ran away from him. Now one Indian informed that three Indians had murdered him, and showed a coat that he said they gave him to conceal them; the Indians report that the informer had played away his coat, and these men sent him that coat, and afterwards demanded pay, and he, so as not to pay, accused them, and knowing it would please the English so, to think him a better Christian. And the report came, that the three Indians had confessed and accused Philip so to employ them, and that the English would hang Philip, so the Indians were afraid, and reported that the English had flattered them (or by threats) to belie Philip that they might kill him to have his Land; and that if Philip had done it, it was their Law so to execute whomever their kings judged deserved it, and that he had no cause to hide it.

So Philip kept his men in arms. The Plymouth Governor required him to disband his men, and informed him his jealousy was false. Philip answered he would do no harm, and thanked the Governor for his information. The three Indians were hanged, and to the last denied the fact; but one broke the halter, as it is reported, then desired to be saved, and so was a little while, then confessed they three had done the fact, and then he was hanged; and it was reported that Sausimun before his death had informed of the Indian plot, and that if the Indians knew it they would kill him, and that the heathen might destroy the English for their wickedness, as God had permitted the heathen to destroy the Israelites of old; so the English were afraid, and Philip was afraid, and both increased in arms, but for 40 years time reports and jealousies of war had been so very frequent that we did not think that now a war was breaking forth; but about a week before it did we had cause to think it would. Then to endeavor to prevent it, we sent a man to Philip to say that if he would come to the ferry,^{*} we would come over to speak with him. About four miles we had to come thither. Our mes-

^{*} Trip's Ferry.

senger came to them; they not aware of it and behaved themselves as furious but suddenly were appeased when they understood who he was and what he came for. Philip called his council and agreed to come to us; he came himself unarmed and about 40 of his men armed. Then 5^{*} of us went over; three were magistrates. We sat very friendly together.[†] We told him our business was to endeavor that they might not receive or do wrong. They said that was well—they had done no wrong, the English wronged them. We said we knew—the English said the Indians wronged them and the Indians said the English wronged them, but our desire was the quarrel might rightly be decided in the best way, and not as dogs decided their quarrels. The Indians owned that fighting was the worst way; then they propounded how right might take place, we said by arbitration. They said all English agreed against them, and so by arbitration they had had much wrong, many miles square of land so taken from them; for English would have English arbitrators, and once they were persuaded to give in their arms, that thereby jealousy might be removed, and the English having their arms would not deliver them as they had promised, until they consented to pay a 100 pounds, and now they had not so much land or money, that they were as good to be killed as to leave all their livelihood.[‡] We said they might choose an Indian king, and the English might choose the Governor of New

^{*} The reading is probably 5, possibly 50.

[†] No other contemporary historian has given an account of this conference. Possibly no other colony could have secured a conference with Philip at this time, but Rhode Island had been more friendly with the Indians than had Massachusetts or Plymouth.

[‡] A reference to the treaty at Taunton, which the Indians had interpreted as meaning a temporary surrender of arms brought to the meeting-place but which the English had construed as a permanent giving up of all arms in possession of the various tribes represented. On Philip's proposition a meeting of the New England Commissioners was held September 29, 1671, which resulted in the abandonment by the English of their construction of the treaty, conditional upon the payment by the Indians of £100 as stated in the text. This condition the Indians here declare to be impracticable.

York^{*}; that neither had cause to say either were parties in the difference. They said they had not heard of that way, and said we honestly spoke, so we were persuaded if that way had been tendered they would have accepted. We did endeavor not to hear their complaints, and said it was not convenient for us now to consider of; but to endeavor to prevent war, we said to them when in war against the English blood was spilt that engaged all Englishmen, for we were to be all under one king. We knew what their complaints would be, and in our colony had removed some of them in sending for Indian rulers insfar as the crime concerned Indians' lives, which they very lovingly accepted, and agreed with us to their execution, and said so they were able to satisfy their subjects when they knew an Indian suffered duly, but said in whatever was only between their Indians and not in townships that we had purchased, they would not have us prosecute, and that they had a great fear lest any of their Indians should be called or forced to be Christian Indians.[†] They said that such were in everything more mischievous, only dissemblers, and that then the English made them not subject to their own kings, and by their lying to wrong their kings. We knew it to be true, and we promising them that however in government to Indians all should be alike and that we knew it was our king's will it should be so, that although we were weaker than other colonies, they having submitted to our king to protect them, others dared not otherwise to molest them; so they expressed that they took that to be well, that we had little cause to doubt but that to us under the king they would have yielded to our determinations in whatever any should have complained to us against them; but Philip charged it to be dishonesty in us to put off the hearing of their complaints; and therefore we consented to hear them. They said they had been the first in doing good to the English, and the English the first in doing wrong; they said when the English first came, their king's father was as a great man and the English as a

^{*} Sir Edmund Andros.

[†] Neither Roger Williams nor any other religious leader appears to have tried to Christianize the Narragansetts so persistently as John Eliot worked in Massachusetts.

little child. He constrained other Indians from wronging the English and gave them corn and showed them how to plant and was free to do them any good and had let them have a 100 times more land than now the king had for his own people. But their king's brother, when he was king, came miserably to die by being forced into court and, as they judged, poisoned. And another grievance was if 20 of their honest Indians testified that a Englishman had done them wrong, it was as nothing; and if but one of their worst Indians testified against any Indian or their king when it pleased the English, that was sufficient. Another grievance was when their kings sold land the English would say it was more than they agreed to and a writing must be proof against all them, and some of their kings had done wrong to sell so much that he left his people none, and some being given to drunkenness, the English made them drunk and then cheated them in bargains, but now their kings were forewarned not to part with land for nothing in comparison to the value thereof. Now whomever the English had once owned for king or queen, they would later disinherit, and make another king that would give or sell them their land, that now they had no hopes left to kepe any land. Another grievance was that the English cattle and horses still increased so that when they removed 30 miles from where the English had anything to do, they could not keep their corn from being spoiled, they never being used to fence, and thought that when the English bought land of them that they would have kept their cattle upon their own land. Another grievance was that the English were so eager to sell the Indians liquors that most of the Indians spent all in drunkenness and then ravened upon the sober Indians and, they did believe, often did hurt the English cattle, and their kings could not prevent it. We knew beforehand that these were their grand complaints, but then we only endeavored to persuade them that all complaints might be righted without war, but could get no other answer but that they had not heard of that way for the governer of New York and an Indian king to have the hearing of it. We had cause to think that had it been tendered, it would have been accepted. We endeavored however that they should lay down their arms, for the English

were too strong for them. They said, then the English should do to them as they did when they were too strong for the English. So we departed without any discourteousness, and suddenly had a letter from Plymouth's Governor saying that they intended in arms to conform [i.e., subdue] Philip, but giving no information what it was that they required or what terms he refused to have their quarrel decided, and in a week's time after we had been with the Indians the war was thus begun. Plymouth soldiers had come to have their headquarters within 10 miles of Philip. Then most of the English thereabouts left their houses, and we had a letter from the Plymouth governor to desire our help with some boats, if they had such occasion, and for us to look to ourselves; and from the general* at the quarters we had a letter telling of the day they intended to come upon the Indians, and desiring some of our boats to attend them, so we took it to be necessity for one half our Islanders to attend one day and night and the other half the next, so by turns for our own safety. In this time some Indians fell to pilfering some houses that the English had left, and a old man and a lad going to one of those houses did see 3[†] Indians run out thereof. The old man bid the young man shoot, so he did, and an Indian fell down but got away again. It is reported that then some Indians came to the garrison and asked why they shot the Indian. They asked whether he was dead. The Indians said yea. An English lad said it was no matter. The men endeavored to inform them it was but an idle lad's words, but the Indians in haste went away and did not harken to them. The next day[‡] the lad that shot the Indian and his father and five more English were killed; so the war began with Philip. But there was a queen[§] that I knew was not a party with Philip, and the Plymouth Governor recommended

* Better known as Major James Cudworth. He was commander-in-chief by virtue of his command of the Plymouth forces representing the colony most interested.

† The reading is probably 3, possibly 30.

‡ June 24. On this same day an attack was made upon an Englishman at Rehoboth and on June 25 two Englishmen were killed at Fall River.

§ Weetamoo, queen of Pocasset, widow of Alexander the elder brother and predecessor of Philip.

to her that if she would come to our Island it would be well; and she desired she might if it were but with six of her men. I can sufficiently prove, but it is too large here to relate, that she had done much so that the quarrel might be decided without war, but some of our English, also in fury against all Indians, would not consent that she should be received to our Island, although I offered to be at all the charge to secure her and those she desired to come with her; so at length I prevailed that we might send for her, but one day accidentally we were prevented, and then our men had seized some canoes on her side, supposing they were Philip's, and the next day an English house there was burned, and mischief endeavored of either side to the other and much done, and her houses burned, so we were prevented from any means to attain her. The English army did not come down as we were informed they would,* so Philip got away and they could not find him. Three days after they came down, we had a very stormy night, so that in the morning the foot-soldiers were unable to return before they had refreshment. They were free to accept as we were willing to relieve them, but the Boston troopers said by their captain[†] that they despised it and so left the foot-soldiers. After the foot-soldiers had refreshed themselves, they too returned to their headquarters. And after hunting Philip from all the sea shores so that they could not tell what was become of him, the Narragansett kings informed us that the queen aforesaid must be in a thicket starving or conformed to Philip. But they knew she would be glad to be away from them, so from us they had encouragement to get her, and as many others as they could, away from Philip. After the English army, without our consent or informing us,

* The "English army" refers probably to the troops from Boston. Massachusetts at first thought that trouble would be averted by mediation, but on June 26, troops were sent to aid the Plymouth forces. They reached Swansey two days later, delayed by bad weather and some small engagements.

† Probably Captain Thomas Prentice

came into our colony,^{*} they brought the Narragansett Indians to articles of agreement with them. Philip being fled, about 150 Indians came in to a Plymouth garrison voluntarily. The Plymouth authorities sold all but about six of them for slaves, to be carried out of the country.[†] It is true the Indians generally are very barbarous people, but in this war I have not herd of their tormenting any; but that the English army caught an old Indian and tormented him. He was well known to have been for a long time a very decrepit and harmless Indian of the queen's. As Philip fled, the aforesaid queen got to the Narragansetts, along with as many of her men as she could get; but one part of the Narragansetts' agreement with Boston was to kill or deliver as many as they could of Philip's people: therefore Boston men demanded the aforesaid queen and others that they had so received; which the Narragansett Indians were not free to do, and so they made many excuses, such as that the queen was none of them and that some others were but sojourners with Philip because they had been removed by the English having got their land and were of their kindred, which we know is true. We think, however, they did shelter many they should not, and that they did know that some of their men did assist Philip, but according to their barbarous rules, they accounted such was not wrong or they could not help it. But some enemies' heads they did send in, and they told us they were informed that when winter came they might be sure the English would be their enemies, and so they stood doubtful for about five months. The English were jealous that there was a general plot of all Indians against the English, and the Indians were in like manner jealous of the English. I think it was general that they were

^{*} The troops from Plymouth and Boston seem to have aroused the jealousy of the Rhode Islanders by their independent action. The treaty referred to is the so-called treaty of July 15, 1675.

[†] After the destruction of Dartmouth or New Bedford in July, 1675, Indians who had no part in the attack were persuaded to surrender by promises of protection from the whites. They were then taken to Plymouth where, as stated in the text, the whole party to the number of about 160 were ordered to be sold as slaves. It was not the only instance of the treatment here mentioned.

unwilling to be wronged and that the Indians do judge the English to be partial against them. And among all there was a filthy crew that did desire and endeavor for war, and those of any solidity were against it and endeavored to prevent the war;^{*} for concerning Philip, we have good intelligence that he advised some English to be gone from their out-places where they lived or otherwise they were in danger of being killed, but whether it was to prevent a war, or being informed by their priests that if they began they should be beaten, and otherwise not, so we have good intelligence. For I do think most of them had a desire the English would begin, and if the English be not careful to show that the Indians may expect equity from them, they may have more enemies then they would like, and more cause of jealousy. The report is that to the eastward the war began thus, by supposing that some of those Indians were at a fight in these parts and that there they saw a man wounded, so the authorities sent some officers to investigate, having before disarmed those Indians and confined them to a place, which the Indians were not offended at; but those officers coming upon them in a warlike posture, they fled so that the men caught but three of them. Those in authority sent out officials again to excuse themselves, but they could only come to the speech with one man, and he kept out of their reach. They excused themselves, and said his father, one of them they had previously taken, was not hurt. He replied he could not believe them, for if it were so they would have brought him; they had been deceitful to disarm them and so would have killed them all. And so he ran away, and then English were killed. And the report is that up in the country here a way, they had demanded the Indians' arms and went again to parley with them and the Indians by ambush treacherously killed eight that were going to treat with them.[†] When winter was come we had a letter from Boston of the United Commissioners that

^{*} War against the Narragansetts was not declared until November.

[†] This is considered by some as an unjust statement of the case of Wonolancet and the Indians in the Merrimac country, and the claim is made that the offense was on the side of the whites.

they were resolved to reduce the Narragansetts to conformity, so as not to be troubled with them anymore, and desired some help of boats and otherwise if we saw cause, and that we should keep secret concerning it. Our governor sent them word that we were satisfied the Narragansetts were treacherous and had aided Philip, and as we had assisted to relieve their army before, so we should be ready to assist them still, and advised that terms might be tendered that such might expect compensation that would not accept to engage in war and that there might be a separation between the guilty and the innocent, which in war could not be expected, we were not in the least expecting that they would have begun the war* and not before proclaimed it or not give them defiance—I having often informed the Indians that English men would not begin a war otherwise, it was brutish so to do. I am sorry that the Indians have cause to think me deceitful, for the English thus began the war with the Narragansetts after we had sent off our Island many Indians and informed them, if they kept by the watersides and did not meddle, that the English would do them no harm; although it was also not safe for us to let them live here. The army first took all those prisoners, then fell upon the Indian houses, burned them, and killed some men. The war began without proclamation; and some of our people did not know the English had begun mischief to the Indians, and being confident and having cause to be so, believed that the Indians would not hurt them before the English began. So they did not keep their garrison exactly. But the Indians, having received that mischief, came unexpectedly upon them and destroyed 145[†] of them beside other great loss. But the English army commanders say that they supposed Connecticut forces would have been there. They sold the Indians that they had taken as aforesaid, for slaves, except for one old man that was carried off our Island upon his son's back. He was so decrepit

* War was declared by the Commissioners at Boston on September 9, 1675. In October the size of the war force was increased and Josiah Winslow of Plymouth placed in command.

[†] Or perhaps the reading is 14.

he could not go, and when the army took them, his son upon his back carried him to the garrison. Some would have had him devoured by dogs, but the tenderness of some of them prevailed to cut off his head. And afterwards they came suddenly upon the Indians where the Indians had prepared to defend themselves, and so received and did much mischief. And for about six weeks since, the time has been spent by both parties to recruit; and now the English army is out to seek after the Indians, but it is most likely that those most able to do mischief will escape, and the women and children and impotent may be destroyed; and so the most able will have the less encumbrance to doing mischief.

But I am confident it would be best for English and Indians that a peace were made upon honest terms for each to have a due propriety and to enjoy it without oppression or usurpation by one to the other. But the English dare not trust the Indians' promises; neither the Indians to the English's promises; and each has great cause therefore. I see no way likely unless a cessation from arms might be procured until it might be known what terms King Charles would propound, for we have great cause to think the Narragansett kings would trust our king and that they would have accepted him to be umpire if it had been tendered about any difference, for we do know the English have had much contention against those Indians to invalidate the kings determination for Narragansett to be in our colony, and we have cause to think it was the greatest cause of the war against them. I see no means likely to procure a cessation from arms unless the Governor of New York can find a way to intercede; and so it will be likely a peace may be made without troubling our king. It has always been a principle in our Colony that there should be but one supreme authority for Englishmen both in our native country and wherever English have jurisdiction; and so we know that no English should begin a war and not first offer for the king to be umpire, and not persecute those that will not conform to their worship, even if their worship be what is not owned by the king. The king would not mind to have such things redressed; some may take it that he has not the power, and that there may be a

way for them to take power in opposition to him. I am persuaded that New England's priests are so blinded by the spirit of persecution and anxious to have their hire [*i.e.*, their public salaries] and to have more room to be mere hirelings, that they have been the cause that the law of nations and the law of arms have been violated in this war, and that the war would not have been started if there had not been a hireling who, for his management of what he calls the gospel, to have it spread by violence, and to have his gain from his quarters paid for; and if any magistrates are unwilling to act as their pack horses, they will be trumpeting for innovation or war.

5th of 12th month 1675.* *Rhode Island.*

JOHN EASTON

* By modern dating, this would have been the 5th of February 1676, since calendars at that time began the new year in March. [PR note]

From the "Introduction" to *Narratives of the Indian Wars 1675–1699*, by Charles H. Lincoln (New York, 1913).

It is most fitting that the first narrative of this Indian war series should be that of a Rhode Islander. That colony had been denied admittance into the New England Confederation of 1643, and feared that an Indian war would give Plymouth or Connecticut an opportunity to encroach upon her boundaries. Rhode Island was the home of the Narragansetts, the most important of Philip's allies and whose chief, Canonchet, was at least the equal of Philip in conducting the war, if not the foremost to arouse the various tribes for a united assault upon New England. In Rhode Island occurred the Swamp Fight, perhaps the most important battle of the war, and in the same colony was located Mount Hope, or Montop, the capital of Philip and the scene of his final defeat.

In no contemporary account of the war do we find more evidence of a desire to be impartial. Some have found the reason for John Easton's impartiality in his aversion to all fighting and in Rhode Island's equal fear of Massachusetts and of Indian conquest. Increase Mather indeed accused Easton of favoring the Indians, remarking that this narrative was "written by a Quaker in Road Island, who pretends to know the Truth of Things"; but that it was "fraught with worse Things than meer Mistakes." A more moderate view is that the boundary disputes may have urged Easton to emphasize the possibility of maintaining peace with the Indians by arbitration were it not for the indiscretion of their white neighbors. Easton regarded the Indians more kindly than did Mather or the authors of our other narratives,

but we shall not be far astray if we consider him as expressing the Rhode Island rather than the Indian point of view. His condemnation of the colonists in certain acts is shown, as in his account of the conference between Indian and white, but this is not accompanied by indiscriminate praise of Indian motives and methods. The Rhode Island writer intends to be fair and is reasonably successful in this intent.

Easton's birth and surroundings aided him in this effort. He was the son of Nicholas Easton, a Friend, who came to New England in 1634 and settled at Ipswich. From this Massachusetts town he moved successively to Newbury and Hampton, where he is said to have built the first English house. In 1638 Nicholas Easton was driven from Massachusetts by religious intolerance; he settled a year later at Newport, again building the first English house. There he held important positions until 1675, dying in Newport soon after his last term as governor of the colony. His son John, the author of our narrative, was born in 1617 and accompanied his father in his various removes. He was attorney-general of Rhode Island for much of the time between 1652 and 1674, and fifteen years after the death of his father John Easton also became governor of the colony.

Easton was about sixty years old at the time of the events recounted in the narrative. It was written by a person of mature years and of conservative temperament, a person well fitted to give a judicial account of the origin of the war and a careful estimate of its participants. The original narrative remains in manuscript form in the New York State Library. We are indebted to Mr. Peter Nelson, of the archives of that state, for collation of our text with the original. A printed edition limited to one hundred copies was published in Albany in 1858 under the careful editing of Franklin B. Bough. The importance of the narrative and inaccessibility of this edition warrant its republication at this time. The care with which it was written may lead the reader to wish that the record covered a greater period of the war, but the fact that Easton's father was governor of Rhode Island from 1672 to 1674 and that the son was deputy governor (1674-1676) when the war opened

may have given the son a peculiar fitness as a historian of the war's beginning which he would not have retained for its later history .

Appendix

Following is the document in its original orthography, as published in *Narratives of the Indian Wars 1675–1699*, edited by Charles H. Lincoln (1913). The pagination is the same as in Lincoln's edition.

A RELACION OF THE INDYAN WARRE, BY MR. EASTON, OF ROADE ISLD., 1675

*a true relation of wt I kno and of reports, and my understanding
Concerning the begining and progres of the war now between
the English and the indians.*

IN the winter in the year 1674 an indian was found dead, and by a Corener iquest of Plimoth Coleny judged murdered. he was found dead in a hole thro ies broken in a pond with his gun and sum foulle by him. sum English suposed him throne in sum indians that I judged intelegabell and impartiall in that Case did think he fell in and was so drowned and that the ies did hurt his throat as the English saied it was cut, but acnoledged that sumtimes naty¹ indians wold kill others but, not as ever thay herd to obscuer as if the dead indian was not murdered. the dead indian was caled Sausimun² and a Christian that could read and write. report was he was a bad man that king Philop got him to write his will and he made the writing for a gret part of the land to be his but read as if it had bine as Philop wold, but it Came to be knone and then he run away from him. now one indian informed that 3 indians had murdered him, and shewed a Coat that he said thay gave him to Conseall them, the indians report that the informer had played away his Coate, and these men sent him

¹ Naughty, i. e., wicked.

² This name is written Sosoman, Sassamon, Sausaman, and Sausimun, all abbreviations of his own spelling Wussausmon. He was a preacher to the Indians and possibly to Philip himself. Sausaman was born in Punkapog (now Canton, Massachusetts), was given the Christian name of John, was brought up by the English, and used frequently by them as an interpreter in negotiations with the Indians. He was used also as a scribe by Alexander and by Philip, the former granting him lands near Assawomset pond in Middleborough, Plymouth County, Massachusetts. It was here, as stated in the text, that his dead body was found January 29, 1674/5.

that coate, and after demanded pay and he not to pay so acused them, and knoing it wold pleas the English so to think him a beter Christian, and the reporte Came, that the 3 indians had confesed and acused Philop so to imploy them, and that the English wold hang Philop, so the indians wear afraid, and reported that the English had flatred them (or by threts) to bely Philop that thay might kill him to have his Land and that if Philop had dun it it was ther Law so to execute home¹ ther kings judged deserved it that he had no Case to hide it.

so Philop kept his men in arems. Plimoth Governer, required him to disband his men, and informed him his jelosy was falce. Philop ansered² he wold do no harem, and thanked the Governer for his information. the 3 indians wer hunge, to the last denied the fact, but one broke the halter as it is reported then desiere to be saved and so was a litell while then confesed thay 3 had dun the fact and then he was hanged³ and it was reported Sausimun before his death had informed of the indian plot and that if the indians knew it thay wold kill him, and that the hethen might destroy the English for ther wickedness as god had permitted the heathen to destroy the iserallits⁴ of olde, so the English wear afraid and Philop was afraid and both incresed in arems but for 40 years time reports and jelosys of war had bine veri frequent that we did not think that now a war was breking forth, but about a wecke before it did we had Case to think it wold,⁵ then to indever to prevent it, we sent a man to Philop that if he wold Cum to the

1 Whom.

2 Other accounts say that Philip paid no attention to the court and made no effort to clear himself of complicity or suspicion. The governor of Plymouth colony was Josiah Winslow.

3 For a different account of the manner in which the Indians had come to kill Sausimun see *The Present State of New England*, p. 24, *post*. It is not certain that the three men were hanged. One is reported to have been reprieved for a time and shot later. The jury trying the accused consisted of four Indians and twelve whites. One bit of evidence is stated by Increase Mather: "When Tobias came near the dead body, it fell a bleeding on fresh, as if it had been newly slain."

4 Israelites.

5 Four years earlier peace had been made at Taunton on Apr 11, 1671, but since that time the Indians had been reported as dissatisfied with the conditions imposed upon them and as preparing for a renewal of the war.

fery¹ we wold Cum over to speke with him. about 4 mile we had to Cum thether. our mesenger Come to them, thay not awar of it behaved themselefs as furious but sudingly apesed when thay understood who he was and what he came for. he Called his counsell and agreed to Cum to us came himselef unarmed and about 40 of his men armed. then 5² of us went over. 3 wear magestrats. we sate veri frindly together.³ we told him our bisnes was to indever that thay might not reseve or do rong. thay said that was well thay had dun no rong, the English ronged them, we saied we knew the English saied the indians ronged them and the indians saied the english ronged them but our desier was the quarell might rightly be desided in the best way, and not as dogs desided ther quarells. the indians owned that fighting was the worst way then thay propounded how right might take plase, we saied by arbetration. thay saied all English agred against them, and so by arbetration thay had had much rong, mani miles square of land so taken from them for English wold have English Arbetrators, and once thay wer perswaided to give in ther arems, that therby Jelosy might be removed and the English having ther arems wold not deliver them as thay had promised, untill thay consented to pay a 100^{po}, and now thay had not so much land or muny, that thay wear as good be kiled as leave all ther livefiyhode.⁴ we saied thay might Choose a indian king, and the English might Choose the Governer of new yorke⁵ that nether had Case to say ether weare parties in the diferans. thay saied thay had not herd of that way and saied we onestly spoke so we wear perswaided

1 Trip's Ferry.

2 The reading is probably 5, possibly 50.

3 No other contemporary historian has given an account of this conference. Possibly no other colony could have secured a conference with Philip at this time, but Rhode Island had been more friendly with the Indians than had Massachusetts or Plymouth.

4 A reference to the treaty at Taunton, which the Indians had interpreted as meaning a temporary surrender of arms brought to the meeting-place but which the English had construed as a permanent giving up of all arms in possession of the various tribes represented. On Philip's proposition a meeting of the New England Commissioners was held September 29, 1671, which resulted in the abandonment by the English of their construction of the treaty, conditional upon the payment by the Indians of £100 as stated in the text. This condition the Indians here declare to be impracticable.

5 Sir Edmund Andros.

if that way had bine tendered thay wold have accepted. we did indever not to here ther Cumplaints, saied it was not Convenient for us now to Consider of, but to indever to prevent war, saied to them when in war against English blud was spilt that ingadged all Englishmen for we wear to be all under one king. we knew 'what ther Cumplaints wold be, and in our Colony had removed sum of them in sending for indian rulers in what¹ the Crime Conserved indians lives which thay veri lovingly accepted and agreed with us to ther execution and saied so thay wear abell to satesfie ther subjects when thay knew an indian sufered duly, but saied in what was only between ther indians and not in townshipes that we had purchased, thay wold not have us prosecute and that thay had a great fear to have² ani of ther indians should be Caled or forsed to be Christian indians.³ thay saied that such wer in everi thing more mischivous, only disemblers, and then the English made them not subject to ther kings, and by ther lying to rong their kings. we knew it to be true, and we promising them that however in government to indians all should be alicke and that we knew it was our kings will it should be so, that altho we wear wecker then other Colonies, thay having submited to our king to protect them others dared not otherwise to molest them, so thay expresed thay tooke that to be well, that we had litell Case to doute but that to us under the king thay wold have yelded to our determenations in what ani should have Cumplained to us against them, but Philop Charged it to be disonesty in us to put of the hering the complaints therfore we Consented to here them. thay saied thay had bine the first in doing good to the English, and the English the first in doing rong, saied when the English first Came their kings father was as a great man and the English as a litell Child, he Constrained other indians from ronging the English and gave them Coren and shewed them how to plant and was free to do them ani good and had let them have a 100 times more land, then now the king had for his own peopell, but ther kings brother when he was king Came miser-

1 In so far as.

2 Lest.

3 Neither Roger Williams nor any other religious leader appears to have tried to Christianize the Narragansetts so persistently as John Eliot worked in Massachusetts.

ably to dy by being forsed to Court as thay judged poysoned,¹ and another greavanc was if 20 of there onest indians testefied that a Englishman had dun them rong, it was as nothing, and if but one of ther worst indians testefied against ani indian or ther king when it plesed the English that was sufittiant. another grivanc was when ther kings sold land the English wold say it was more than thay agreed to and a writing must be prove² against all them, and sum of ther kings had dun rong to sell so much he left his peopell none and sum being given to drunknes the English made them drunk and then cheted them in bargens, but now ther kings wear forewarned not for to part with land for nothing in Cumpareson to the valew therof. now home³ the English had owned for king or queen thay⁴ wold disinheret, and make a nother king that wold give or sell them there land, that now thay had no hopes left to kepe ani land. another grivanc the English Catell and horses still incresed that when thay removed 30 mill from wher English had anithing to do, thay Could not kepe ther coren from being spoyled, thay never being iused to fence, and thoft when the English boft⁵ land of them that thay wold have kept ther Catell upone ther owne land. a nother grevanc the English wear so eger to sell the indians lickers that most of the indians spent all in drunknes and then ravened upone the sober indians and thay did belive often did hurt the English Catell, and ther kings Could not prevent it. we knew before these were ther grand Cumplaints, but then we only indevered to perswaid that all Cumplaints might be righted without war, but Could have no other answer but that thay had not herd of that way for the Governer of yorke and a indian king to have the hering of it. we had Case to thinke in⁶ that had bine tendred it wold have bine accepted. we indevered that however thay should lay doune ther arems for the English wear to strong for them. thay saied then the English should do to them as thay did when thay wear to strong for the english. so we departed without ani discurtiousneB, and sudingly had leter from Plimoth Governer thay intended in arems to Conforem⁷ philop, but no information what that was thay required or what termes he refused to

1 See *post*, p. 26, note

2 Proof.

3 Whom.

4 The English.

5 Thought; bought.

6 It.

7 Conform, subdue.

have ther quarell desided, and in a weckes time after we had bine with the indians the war thus begun. Plimoth soldiers were Cum to have ther head quarters within 10 mile of philop. then most of the English therabout left ther houses and we had leter from Plimoth governer to desier our help with sum boats if thay had such ocaion and for us to looke to our selefts and from the genarall¹ at the quarters we had leter of the day thay intended to Cum upon the indians and desier for sum of our bots to atend, so we tooke it to be of nesesity for our leslanders one halef one day and night to atend and the other halef the next, so by turens for our oune safty. in this time sum indians fell a pilfering sum houses that the English had left, and a old man and a lad going to one of those houses did see 3² indians run out therof. the old man bid the young man shoote so he did and a indian fell doune but got away againe. it is reported that then sum indians Came to the gareson asked why thay shot the indian. thay asked whether he was dead. the indians saied yea. a English lad saied it was no mater. the men indevered to inforem them it was but an idell lads words but the indians in hast went away and did not harken to them. the next day³ the lad that shot the indian and his father and fief⁴ English more wear killed so the war begun with philop. but ther was a queen⁵ that i knew was not a party with philop and Plimoth Governer recumended her that if shee wold cum to our lesland it wold be well and shee desiered shee might if it wear but with six of hir men. I Can sutfiantly prove, but it is to large here to relate, that shee had practised much the quarell might be desided without war, but sum of our English allso in fury against all indians wold not Consent shee should be reseved to our lesland alltho I profered to be at all the Charg to secur

1 Better known as Major James Cudworth. He was commander-in-chief by virtue of his command of the Plymouth forces representing the colony most interested.

2 The reading is probably 3, possibly 30.

3 June 24. See *post*, p. 28. On this same day an attack was made upon an Englishman at Rehoboth and upon June 25 two Englishmen were killed at Fall River.

4 Five.

5 The queen referred to was Weetamoo, queen of Pocasset, widow of Alexander the elder brother and predecessor of Philip.

hir and those shee desiered to Cum with hir, so at length prevailed we might send for hir, but one day acsedentaly we"wear prevented, and then our men had seased sum Cannos on hir side suposing they wear Philops and the next day a English house was there burned and mischif of ether side indevered to the other and much dun, hir houses burned, so we wear prevented of ani menes to atain hir. the English army Cam not doune as informed thay wold¹ so Philop got over and thay could not find him. 3 days after thay came doune had a veri stormy night, that in the morning the foote wear disabled to returen before thay had refreshment. thay wear free to accept as we wear willing to relive them, but [boston] trupers Sayed [by]² thear Captaine³ thay despised it and so left the foote. after the foote had refreshed themselefts thay allso returned to ther head quarters, and after hunt[ing] Philop from all sea shors that thay Could not tell what was becum of him, the naroganset kings informed us that the queen aforesaied must be in a thicket a starving or conformed to Philop, but thay knew shee wold be glad to be from them, so from us had incuredgment to get hir and as mani as thay Could from Philop. after the English army with out our Consent or informing us came into our coleny,⁴ broft the naroganset indians to artickels of agreement to them philop being flead about a 150 indians Came in to a Plimoth gareson volentarely. Plimoth authority sould all for slafes (but about six of them) to be Caried out of the Cuntry.⁵—it is true the indians genaraly ar very barbarus peopell but in this war I have not herd of ther tormenting ani

1 The "English army" refers probably to the troops from Boston. Massachusetts at first thought that trouble would be averted by mediation, but on June 26 troops were sent to aid the Plymouth forces. They reached Swansea two days later, delayed by bad weather and some small engagements.

2 The words in brackets are conjectural; the manuscript seems to read "bonton."

3 Probably Captain Thomas Prentice is meant.

4 The troops from Plymouth and Boston seem to have aroused the jealousy of the Rhode Islanders by their independent action. The treaty referred to is the so-called treaty of July 15, 1675. "Broft" means brought.

5 After the destruction of Dartmouth or New Bedford in July, 1675, Indians who had no part in the attack were persuaded to surrender by promises of protection from the whites. They were then taken to Plymouth where, as stated in the text, the whole party to the number of about 160 were ordered to be sold as slaves. It was not the only instance of the treatment here mentioned.

but that the English army Cote an old indian and tormented him. he was well knone to have bine a long time a veri decreped and haremless indian of the queens. as Philop flead the fore said queen got to the narogansets and as mani of hir men as shee could get, but one part of the narogansets agreement to bostun was to kill or deliver as mani as they Could of philops peopell, therfore bostun men demanded the fore said queene and others that thay had so reseved for which the indians wear unfree and made mani excuses as that the queen was none of them and sum others wear but sudieners¹ with philop becuse removed by the English having got ther land and wear of ther kindred which we kno is true. not but we think thay did shelter mani thay should not, and that thay did kno sum of ther men did asist Philop, but acording to ther barbarus ruells thay acounted so was no rong or thay could not help it, but sum enemis heds thay did send in and told us thay wear informed that however when winter Came thay might be suer the English wold be ther enemies, and so thay stood doutful for about 5 months. the English wear jelous that ther was a genarall plot of all indians against English and the indians wear in like maner jelous of the english. I think it was genarall that thay wear unwilling to be ronged and that the indians do judg the English partiall against them and among all a philthy Crue that did desier and indever for war and those of ani solidety wear against it and indevered to prevent the war,² for conserning Philop we have good intelegenc that he advised sum English to be gon from ther out plases wher thay lived or thay wear in danger to be killed, but whether it wear to prevent a war, or by ther prests informed if thay begun thay should be beaten and otherwise not so we have good intelegenc for I do think most of them had a desier the English wold begin, and if the English be not carefull to manefest the indians mai expect equity from them, thay mai have more enemies then thay wold and more Case of Jelosy. the report is that to the estward the war thus began, by suposing that sum of those indians wear at a fight in thes parts and that thear thay sa a man woned, so authority sent sum forth to discufer, having before disarmed those indians

1 Sojourners.

2 War against the Narragansetts was not declared until November.

and confined them to a place, which the indians wear not ofended at, but those men Coming upon them in a warlike postuer thay fled that the men Cote but 3 of them. those in authority sent out againe to excuse them sefels, but thay could only cum to the spech with one man as he kept out of ther reach. thay excused them sefels and saied his father was not hurt, one of them thay had taken. he saied he could not believe them, for if it wer so thay wold have broft him, thay had bin desaitfull to disarem them and so wold have killed them all, and so he run away, and then English wear killed, and the report is that up in the cuntri here away thay had demanded the indians arems and went againe to parell¹ with them and the indians by ambushcade tretcherously killed 8 that wear going to treat with them. when winter was Cum we had leter from bostun of the iunited Comitioners that thay wear resolved to reduce the narogansets to Conformity not to be trubled with them ani more and desiered sum help of botes and otherwise if we sa Case and that we should kepe secret conserning it. our governer sent them word we wear satesfied narogansets wear tretcherous, and had ayded Philop, and as we had asisted to relive ther army before so we should be redy to asist them still, and advised that terems might be tendered that such might expect Cumpation² that wold accept not to ingag in war and that ther might be a seperation betwene the giltly and the inosent which in war Could not be expected, we not in the lest expecting thay wold have begun the war and not before proclaimed it or not give them Defienc,³ I having often informed the indians that English men wold not begin a war otherwise it was brutish so to do. i am sory so the indians have Case to think me desaitfull for the English thus began the war with the narogansets we having sent ofe our Iesland mani indians and informed them if thay kept by the water sides and did not medell that however the English

1 Parley. The lines following are considered by some as an unjust statement of the case of Wonalancet and the Indians in the Merrimac country, and the claim is made that the offense was on the side of the whites.

2 Compensation.

3 War was declared by the Commissioners at Boston on September 9, 1675. In October the size of the war force was increased and Josiah Winslow of Plymouth placed in command.

would do them no harm altho it was not save for us to let them live here. the army first take all those prisoners then fell upon indian houses burned them and killed sum men. the war [began] without proclamation and sum of Our peopell did not know the English had begun mischief to the indians and being Confederate and had Case therefore, that the indians would not hurt them before the English begun, so did not keepe their gareson exactly, but the indians having reserved that mischief Came unexpected upon them destroyed 145¹ of them beside other great lose, but the English army say they supposed coneticot forces had been there. they sold the indians that they had taken as aforesaid, for slaves, but one old man that was Carried of our Island upon his Sons back. he was so decrepid Could not go and when the army tooke them upon his back Carried him to the garison, sum would have had him devoured by dogs but the tendernes of sum of them prevailed to Cut off his head, and after Came suddenly upon the indians when the indians had prepared to defend themselves and so reserved and did much mischief and for about six weeks since hath been spent as for both parties to recruit, and now the English army is out to seeke after the indians but it is most likely that such most able to do mischief will escape and women and children and impotent may be destroyed and so the most able will have the less incumbrance to do mischief.² but I am confident it would be best for English and indians that a peace wear made upon honest terms for each to have a due propriety and to enjoy it without oppression or iusurpation by one to the other. but the English dear not trust the indians promises neither the indians to the Englishes promises and each have great Case therefore. I see no way likely but if a sensation from a reme might be procured untill it might be known what terms King Charels would propound, for we have great Case to think the naroganset kings would trust our king and that they would have accepted him to be umpier if it had been tendered about any difference, for we do know the English have had much contention against those indians to invade the kings determination for naroganset to be in our colony,

¹ Or perhaps the reading is 14.

² Compare this account of the proceedings of the summer of 1675 with that given in *The Present State*, post, pp. 29-31.

and we have Case to think it was the greatest Case of the war against them. I see no means likely to procure a sensation from a reme except the governer of new york can find a way so to intersete and so it will be likely a peace may be made without troubling our king. not but it always hath been a principle in our Colony that there should be but one supreme to English men and in our native Country where ever English have jurisdiction and so we know no English should begin a war and not first tender for the king to be umpier and not persecute such that will not conform to their worship, and their worship be what is not owned by the king. the king not to mind to have such things redressed, sum may take it that he hath not power, and that there may be a way for them to take power in opposition to him. I am so persuaded of new England priests they are so blinded by the spirit of persecution and to maintain to have hyer, and to have Rome to be mere hyerlings that they have been the Case that the law of nations and the law of a reme have been violated in this war, and that the war had not been if there had not been a hyerling that for his managing what he calleth the gospell, by violence to have it Chargabell for his gaine from his quarters and if any in magistrasy be not so as their pack horses they will be trumpating for innovation or war.

5th : 12m : 1675. *Roadiesland.*

JOHN EASTON