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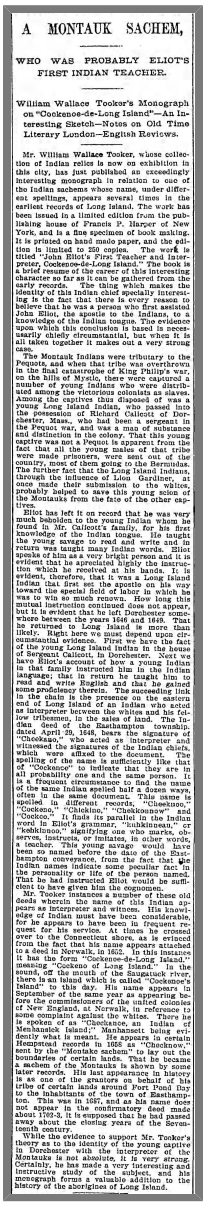

A MONTAUK SACHEM,

WHO WAS PROBABLY ELIOT'S FIRST INDIAN TEACHER.

William Wallace Tooker's Monograph on "Cookenoe-de-Long Island"—An Interesting Sketch—Notes on Old Time Literary London—English Reviews.

Mr. William Wallace Tooker, whose collection of Indian relics is now on exhibition in this city, has just published an exceedingly interesting monograph in relation to one of the Indian sachems whose name, under different spellings, appears several times in the earliest records of Long Island. The work has been issued in a limited edition from the publishing house of Francis P. Harper of New York, and is a fine specimen of book making. It is printed on hand made paper, and the edition is limited to 250 copies. The work is titled "John Eliot's First Teacher and Interpreter, Cookenoe-de-Long Island." The book is a brief resume of the career of this interesting character so far as it can be gathered from the early records. The thing which makes the identity of this Indian chief specially interesting is the fact that there is every reason to believe that he was a person who first assisted John Eliot, the apostle to the Indians, to a knowledge of the Indian tongue. The evidence upon which this conclusion is based is necessarily chiefly circumstantial, but when it is all taken together it makes out a very strong case.

The Montauk Indians were tributary to the Pequots, and when that tribe was overthrown in the final catastrophe of King Philip's war, on the hills of Mystic, there were captured a number of young Indians who were distributed among the victorious colonists as slaves. Among the captives thus disposed of was a young Long Island Indian, who passed into the possession of Richard Calicott of Dorchester, Mass., who had been a sergeant in the Pequot war, and was a man of substance and distinction in the colony. That this young captive was not a Pequot is apparent from the fact that all the young males of that tribe were made prisoners, were sent out of the country, most of them going to the Bermudas. The further fact that the Long Island Indians, through the influence of Lion Gardiner, at once made their submission to the whites, probably helped to save this young scion of the Montauks from the fate of the other captives.

Eliot has left it on record that he was very much beholden to the young Indian whom he found in Mr. Calicott's family, for his first knowledge of the Indian tongue. He taught the young savage to read and write and in return was taught many Indian words. Eliot speaks of him as a very bright person and it is evident that he appreciated highly the instruction which he received at his hands. It is evident, therefore, that it was a Long Island Indian that first set the apostle on his way toward the special field of labor in which he was to win so much renown. How long this mutual instruction continued does not appear, but it is evident that he left Dorchester somewhere between the years 1646 and 1649. That he returned to Long Island is more than likely. Right here we must depend upon circumstantial evidence. First we have the fact of the young Long Island Indian in the house of Sergeant Calicott, in Dorchester. Next we have Eliot's account of how a young Indian in that family instructed him in the Indian language; that in return he taught him to read and write English and that he gained some proficiency therein. The succeeding link in the chain is the presence on the eastern end of Long Island of an Indian who acted as interpreter between the whites and his fellow tribesmen, in the sales of land. The Indian deed of the Easthampton township, dated April 29, 1648, bears the signature of "Chookaan," who acted as interpreter and witnessed the signatures of the Indian chiefs, which were affixed to the document. The spelling of the name is sufficiently like that of "Cookenoe" to indicate that they are in all probability one and the same person. It is a frequent circumstance to find the name of the same Indian spelled half a dozen ways, often in the same document. This name is spelled in different records, "Cheekuno," "Cockeno," "Chickino," "Cheekounow" and "Cockoe." It finds its parallel in the Indian word in Eliot's grammar, "kuhkinnean," or "kohkinnon," signifying one who marks, observes, instructs, or imitates, in other words, a teacher. This young savage would have been so named before the date of the Easthampton conveyance, from the fact that the Indian names indicate some peculiar fact in the personality or life of the person named. That he had instructed Eliot would be sufficient to have given him the cognomen.

Mr. Tooker instances a number of these old deeds wherein the name of this Indian appears as interpreter and witness. His knowledge of Indian must have been considerable, for he appears to have been in frequent request for his service. At times he crossed over to the Connecticut shore, as is evinced from the fact that his name appears attached to a deed in Norwalk, in 1652. In this instance it has the form "Cookenoe-de-Long Island," meaning "Cookeno of Long Island." In the sound, off the mouth of the Saugatuck river, there is an island which is called "Cockenoe's Island" to this day. His name appears in September of the same year as appearing before the commissioners of the united colonies of New England, at Norwalk, in reference to some complaint against the whites. There he is spoken of as "Checkanoe, an Indian of Meshauock Island;" Manhansett being evidently what is meant. He appears in certain Hempstead records in 1658 as "Chechenow," sent by the "Montake sachem" to lay out the boundaries of certain lands. That he became a sachem of the Montauks is shown by some later records. His last appearance in history is as one of the grantors on behalf of his tribe of certain lands around Fort Pond Bay to the inhabitants of the town of Easthampton. This was in 1687, and as his name does not appear in the confirmatory deed made about 1702-3, it is supposed that he had passed away about the closing years of the Seventeenth century.

While the evidence to support Mr. Tooker's theory as to the identity of the young captive in Dorchester with the interpreter of the Montauks is not absolute, it is very strong. Certainly, he has made a very interesting and instructive study of the subject, and his monograph forms a valuable addition to the history of the aborigines of Long Island.

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