

FISKE JOHN

THE AMERICAN
REVOLUTION

John Fiske

The American Revolution

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John Fiske
The American Revolution

TO

MRS. MARY HEMENWAY

IN RECOGNITION OF THE RARE FORESIGHT AND PUBLIC SPIRIT

WHICH SAVED FROM DESTRUCTION ONE OF THE NOBLEST

HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN AMERICA, AND MADE IT A

CENTRE FOR THE TEACHING OF AMERICAN

HISTORY AND THE PRINCIPLES OF

GOOD CITIZENSHIP

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

VOLUME I

CHAPTER I THE BEGINNINGS

During the seventy years which elapsed between the overthrow of the Stuart dynasty and the victory of Wolfe on the Heights of Abraham, the relations between the American colonies and the British government were, on the whole, peaceful; and the history of the colonies, except for the great and romantic struggle with New France, would have been almost destitute of striking incidents. In view of the perpetual menace from France, it was clearly unwise for the British government to irritate the colonies, or do anything to weaken their loyalty; and they were accordingly left very much to themselves. Still, they were not likely to be treated with any great liberality, – for such was not then, as it is hardly even yet, the way of governments, – and if their attachment to England still continued strong, it was in spite of the general demeanour of the mother-country.

The Lords of Trade

Since 1675 the general supervision of the colonies had been in the hands of a standing committee of the Privy Council, styled the “Lords of the Committee of Trade and Plantations,” and familiarly known as the “Lords of Trade.” To this board the governors sent frequent and full reports of the proceedings in the colonial legislatures, of the state of agriculture and trade, of the revenues of the colonies, and of the way in which the public money was spent. In private letters, too, the governors poured forth their complaints into the ears of the Lords of Trade, and these complaints were many and loud. Except in Pennsylvania and Maryland, which were like hereditary monarchies, and in Connecticut and Rhode Island, where the governors were elected by the people, the colonial governors were now invariably appointed by the Crown. In most cases they were inclined to take high views regarding the royal prerogative, and in nearly all cases they were unable to understand the political attitude of the colonists, who on the one hand gloried in their connection with England, and on the other hand, precisely because they were Englishmen, were unwilling to yield on any occasion whatsoever one jot or tittle of their ancient liberties. Moreover, through the ubiquity of the popular assemblies and the directness of their control over the administration of public affairs, the political life of America was both really and ostensibly freer than that of England was at that time; and the ancient liberties of Englishmen, if not better preserved, were at least more conspicuously asserted. As a natural consequence, the royal governors were continually trying to do things which the people would not let them do, they were in a chronic state of angry warfare with their assemblies, and they were incessant in their complaints to the Lords of Trade. They represented the Americans as a factious and turbulent people, with their heads turned by queer political crotchets, unwilling to obey the laws and eager to break off their connection with the British Empire. In this way they did much to arouse an unfriendly feeling toward the colonies, although eminent Englishmen were not wanting who understood American affairs too well to let their opinions be thus lightly influenced. Upon the Lords of Trade these misrepresentations wrought with so much effect that now and then they would send out instructions to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*, or to abridge the freedom of the press. Sometimes their acts were absurdly arbitrary. In New Hampshire, the people maintained that as free-born Englishmen they had the right to choose their representatives; but the governor held, on the contrary, that this was no right, but only a privilege, which the Crown might withhold, or grant, or revoke, all at its own good pleasure. To uphold the royal prerogative, the governor was instructed to

issue writs for elections to some of the towns, while withholding them from others; but the resistance of the people to this piece of tyranny was so determined that the Lords of Trade thought it best to yield.

The governor's salary

In Massachusetts, for more than thirty years, there went on an unceasing controversy between the General Court and the successive royal governors, Shute, Burnet, and Belcher, with reference to the governor's salary. The Lords of Trade insisted that the governor should be paid a fixed salary; but lest this should make the governor too independent, the General Court obstinately refused to establish a salary, but made grants to the governor from year to year, in imitation of the time-honoured usage of Parliament. This method was, no doubt, inconvenient for the governors; but the colonists rightly valued it as one of the safeguards of popular liberty, and to their persistent refusal the Crown was obliged to give way. Similar controversies, in New York and South Carolina, were attended with similar results; while in Virginia the assembly more than once refused to vote supplies, on the ground that the liberties of the colony were in danger.



SIR ROBERT WALPOLE

Such grievances as these, reported year by year to the Lords of Trade, and losing nothing in the manner in which they were told, went far to create in England an opinion that America was a lawless country, and sorely in need of a strong government. From time to time various schemes were proposed for limiting the powers of the colonial assemblies, for increasing the power of the governors, for introducing a titled nobility, for taxing the colonists by act of Parliament, or for weakening the feeling of local independence by uniting several colonies into one. Until after the French troubles had been disposed of, little came of any of these schemes.

Sir Robert Walpole

A plan for taxing the colonies was once proposed to Sir Robert Walpole, but the sagacious old statesman dismissed it with a laugh. "What!" said he. "I have half of Old England set against me already, and do you think I will have all New England likewise?" From time to time the liberal charters of Rhode Island and Connecticut were threatened, but nothing came of this. But in one direction the Lords of Trade were more active. One of their most cherished plans was to bring about a union of all the colonies under a single head; but this was not to be a union of the kind which the Americans, with consummate statesmanship, afterward wrought out for themselves. It was not to be a union based upon the idea of the sacredness of local self-government, but it was a union to be achieved, as far as possible, at the expense of local self-government. To bring all the colonies together under a single viceroy would, it was thought, diminish seriously the power of each local assembly, while at the same time such a union would no doubt make the military strength of the colonies much more available in case of war.



In 1764, Francis Bernard, Governor of Massachusetts, wrote that "to settle the American governments to the greatest possible advantage, it will be necessary to reduce the number of them; in some places to unite and consolidate; in others to separate and transfer; and in general to divide by natural boundaries instead of imaginary lines. If there should be but one form of government established for the North American provinces, it would greatly facilitate the reformation of them." As long ago as 1701, Robert Livingston of New York had made similar suggestions; and in 1752, Dinwiddie of Virginia recommended that the Northern and Southern colonies be united respectively into two great confederacies.

The desirableness of bringing about a union of the colonies was also recognized by all the most liberal-minded American statesmen, though from a very different point of view. They agreed with the royal governors and with the Lords of Trade as to the urgent need for concentrating the military strength of the colonies, and they thought that this end could best be subserved by some kind of federal union. But at the same time they held that the integrity of the local self-government of each colony was of the first importance, and that no system of federation would be practicable which should in any degree essentially impair that integrity. To bring about a federal union on such terms was no easy matter; it was a task fitted to tax the greatest of statesmen at any time. At that time it was undoubtedly a hopeless task. The need for union was not generally felt by the people.

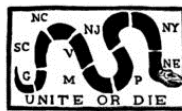
Weakness of the sentiment of union

The sympathies between the different colonies were weak and liable to be overborne by prejudices arising from rivalry or from differences in social structure. To the merchant of Boston, the Virginian planter was still almost a foreigner, though both the one and the other were pure-blooded Englishmen. Commercial jealousies were very keen. Disputes about boundaries were not uncommon.

In 1756, Georgia and South Carolina actually came to blows over the navigation of the Savannah river. Jeremiah Dummer, in his famous “Defence of the New England Charters,” said that it was impossible that the colonies should ever be brought to unite; and Burnaby thought that if the hand of Great Britain were once taken off, there would be chronic civil war all the way from Maine to Georgia.

The Albany Congress

In 1754, the prospect of immediate war with the French led several of the royal governors to call for a congress of all the colonies, to be held at Albany. The primary purpose of the meeting was to make sure of the friendship of the Six Nations, and to organize a general scheme of operations against the French. The secondary purpose was to prepare some plan of confederation which all the colonies might be persuaded to adopt. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland – only seven colonies of the thirteen – sent commissioners to this congress. The people showed little interest in the movement. It does not appear that any public meetings were held in favour of it. Among the newspapers, the only one which warmly approved of it seems to have been the “Pennsylvania Gazette,” edited by Benjamin Franklin, which appeared with a union device and the motto “Unite or Die!”



The circumstances of Franklin's life, no less than the wide sweep of his intelligence, had fitted him for sounder views of the political needs of the time than were taken by most of his contemporaries. As a native of Massachusetts who dwelt in Pennsylvania, he may be said to have belonged to two very different colonies; and he had spent time enough in London to become well acquainted with British ideas.

Franklin's plan of union, 1754

During the session of the Albany Congress, a first attempt was made to establish a permanent union of the thirteen colonies. It was to Franklin that the plan was chiefly due. The legislative assembly of each colony was to choose, once in three years, representatives to attend a federal Grand Council; which was to meet every year at Philadelphia, a town which could be reached by a twenty days' journey either from South Carolina or from New Hampshire. This Grand Council was to choose its own speaker, and could neither be dissolved nor prorogued, nor kept sitting longer than six weeks at any one time, except by its own consent or by especial order of the Crown. The Grand Council was to make treaties with the Indians and to regulate the Indian trade; and it was to have sole power of legislation on all matters concerning the colonies as a whole. To these ends, it could levy taxes, enlist soldiers, build forts, and nominate all civil officers. Its laws were to be submitted to the king for approval, and the royal veto, in order to be of effect, must be exercised within three years.

To this Grand Council each colony was to send a number of representatives, proportioned to its contributions to the continental military service; yet no colony was to send less than two or more than seven representatives. With the exception of such matters of general concern as were to be managed by the Grand Council, each colony was to retain its powers of legislation intact. On an emergency, any colony might singly defend itself against foreign attack, and the federal government was prohibited from impressing soldiers or seamen without the consent of the local legislature.

The supreme executive power was to be vested in a president or governor-general, appointed and paid by the Crown. He was to nominate all military officers, subject to the approval of the Grand Council, and was to have a veto on all the acts of the Grand Council. No money could be issued save by joint order of the governor-general and the council.

This plan, said Franklin, “is not altogether to my mind, but it is as I could get it.” It should be observed, to the credit of its author, that this scheme, long afterward known as the “Albany Plan,” contemplated the formation of a self-sustaining federal government, and not of a mere league. As Frothingham well says, “It designed to confer on the representatives of the people the power of making laws acting directly on individuals, and appointing officers to execute them, and yet not to interfere with the execution of the laws operating on the same individuals by the local officers.” It would have erected “a public authority as obligatory in its sphere as the local governments were in their spheres.” In this respect it was much more complete than the scheme of confederation agreed on in Congress in 1777, and it afforded a valuable precedent for the more elaborate and perfect Federal Constitution of 1787. It was in its main features a noble scheme, and the great statesman who devised it was already looking forward to the immense growth of the American Union, though he had not yet foreseen the separation of the colonies from the mother-country. In less than a century, he said, the great country behind the Alleghanies must become “a populous and powerful dominion;” and he recommended that two new colonies should at once be founded in the West, – the one on Lake Erie, the other in the valley of the Ohio, – with free chartered governments like those of Rhode Island and Connecticut.



W Pitt

But public opinion was not yet ripe for the adoption of Franklin's bold and comprehensive ideas. Of the royal governors who were anxious to see the colonies united on any terms, none opposed the plan except Delancey of New York, who wished to reserve to the governors a veto upon all elections of representatives to the Grand Council. To this it was rightly objected that such a veto power would virtually destroy the freedom of elections, and make the Grand Council an assembly of creatures of the governors.

Rejection of the plan

On the popular side the objections were many. The New England delegates, on the whole, were the least disinclined to union; yet Connecticut urged that the veto power of the governor-general might prove ruinous to the whole scheme; that the concentration of all the military forces in his hands would be fraught with dangers to liberty; and that even the power of taxation, lodged in the hands

of an assembly so remote from local interests, was hardly compatible with the preservation of the ancient rights of Englishmen. After long debate, the assembly at Albany decided to adopt Franklin's plan, and copies of it were sent to all the colonies for their consideration. But nowhere did it meet with approval. The mere fact that the royal governors were all in favour of it – though their advocacy was at present, no doubt, determined mainly by sound military reasons – was quite enough to create an insuperable prejudice against it on the part of the people. The Massachusetts legislature seems to have been the only one which gave it a respectful consideration, albeit a large town meeting in Boston denounced it as subversive of liberty. Pennsylvania rejected it without a word of discussion. None of the assemblies favoured it. On the other hand, when sent over to England to be inspected by the Lords of Trade, it only irritated and disgusted them. As they truly said, it was a scheme of union “complete in itself;” and ever since the days of the New England confederacy the Crown had looked with extreme jealousy upon all attempts at concerted action among the colonies which did not originate with itself. Besides this, the Lords of Trade were now considering a plan of their own for remodelling the governments of the colonies, establishing a standing army, enforcing the navigation acts, and levying taxes by authority of Parliament. Accordingly little heed was paid to Franklin's ideas. Though the royal governors had approved the Albany plan, in default of any scheme of union more to their minds, they had no real sympathy with it.

Shirley recommends a stamp act

In 1756, Shirley wrote to the Lords of Trade, urging upon them the paramount necessity for a union of the American colonies, in order to withstand the French; while at the same time he disparaged Franklin's scheme, as containing principles of government unfit even for a single colony like Rhode Island, and much more unfit for a great American confederacy. The union, he urged, should be effected by act of Parliament, and by the same authority a general fund should be raised to meet the expenses of the war, – an end which Shirley thought might be most speedily and quietly attained by means of a “stamp duty.” As Shirley had been for fifteen years governor of Massachusetts, and was now commander-in-chief of all the troops in America, his opinion had great weight with the Lords of Trade; and the same views being reiterated by Dinwiddie of Virginia, Sharpe of Maryland, Hardy of New York, and other governors, the notion that Parliament must tax the Americans became deeply rooted in the British official mind.

Writs of assistance

Nothing was done, however, until the work of the French war had been accomplished. In 1761, it was decided to enforce the Navigation Act, and one of the revenue officers at Boston applied to the superior court for a “writ of assistance,” or general search-warrant, to enable him to enter private houses and search for smuggled goods, but without specifying either houses or goods. Such general warrants had been allowed by a statute of the bad reign of Charles II., and a statute of William III., in general terms, had granted to revenue officers in America like powers to those they possessed in England. But James Otis showed that the issue of such writs was contrary to the whole spirit of the British constitution. To issue such universal warrants allowing the menials of the custom house, on mere suspicion, and perhaps from motives of personal enmity, to invade the home of any citizen, without being held responsible for any rudeness they might commit there, – such, he said, was “a kind of power, the exercise of which cost one king of England his head and another his throne;” and he plainly declared that even an act of Parliament which should sanction so gross an infringement of the immemorial rights of Englishmen would be treated as null and void. Chief Justice Hutchinson granted the writs of assistance, and as an interpreter of the law he was doubtless right in so doing; but Otis's argument suggested the question whether Americans were bound to obey laws which they

had no share in making, and his passionate eloquence made so great an impression upon the people that this scene in the court room has been since remembered – and not unjustly – as the opening scene of the American Revolution.



James Otis

The chief justice of New York

In the same year the arbitrary temper of the government was exhibited in New York. Down to this time the chief justice of the colony had held office only during good behaviour, and had been liable to dismissal at the hands of the colonial assembly. The chief justice was now made removable only by the Crown, a measure which struck directly at the independent administration of justice in the colony. The assembly tried to protect itself by refusing to assign a fixed salary to the chief justice, whereupon the king ordered that the salary should be paid out of the quit-rents for the public lands.

At the same time instructions were sent to all the royal governors to grant no judicial commissions for any other period than “during the king’s pleasure;” and to show that this was meant in earnest, the governor of New Jersey was next year peremptorily dismissed for commissioning a judge “during good behaviour.”

In 1762, a question distinctly involving the right of the people to control the expenditure of their own money came up in Massachusetts. Governor Bernard, without authority from the assembly, had sent a couple of ships to the northward, to protect the fisheries against French privateers, and an expense of some £400 had been thus incurred. The assembly was now ordered to pay this sum, but it refused to do so.

Otis’s “Vindication”

"It would be of little consequence to the people," said Otis, in the debate on the question, "whether they were subject to George or Louis, the king of Great Britain or the French king, if both were arbitrary, as both would be, if both could levy taxes without Parliament." A cry of "Treason!" from one of the less clear-headed members greeted this bold statement; and Otis, being afterward taken to task for his language, published a "Vindication," in which he maintained that the rights of a colonial assembly, as regarded the expenditure of public money, were as sacred as the rights of the House of Commons.



George Grenville

In April, 1763, just three years after the accession of George III., George Grenville became Prime Minister of England, while at the same time Charles Townshend was First Lord of Trade. Townshend had paid considerable attention to American affairs, and was supposed to know more about them than any other man in England. But his studies had led him to the conclusion that the colonies ought to be deprived of their self-government, and that a standing army ought to be maintained in America by means of taxes arbitrarily assessed upon the people by Parliament.

Expenses of the French war

Grenville was far from approving of such extreme measures as these, but he thought that a tax ought to be imposed upon the colonies, in order to help defray the expenses of the French war. Yet in point of fact, as Franklin truly said, the colonies had “raised, paid, and clothed nearly twenty-five thousand men during the last war, – a number equal to those sent from Great Britain, and far beyond their proportion. They went deeply into debt in doing this; and all their estates and taxes are mortgaged for many years to come for discharging that debt.” That the colonies had contributed

more than an equitable share toward the expenses of the war, that their contributions had even been in excess of their ability, had been freely acknowledged by Parliament, which, on several occasions between 1756 and 1763, had voted large sums to be paid over to the colonies, in partial compensation for their excessive outlay. Parliament was therefore clearly estopped from making the defrayal of the war debt the occasion for imposing upon the colonies a tax of a new and strange character, and under circumstances which made the payment of such a tax seem equivalent to a surrender of their rights as free English communities.

Grenville's Resolves

In March, 1764, Grenville introduced in the House of Commons a series of Declaratory Resolves, announcing the intention of the government to raise a revenue in America by requiring various commercial and legal documents, newspapers, etc., to bear stamps, varying in price from threepence to ten pounds. A year was to elapse, however, before these resolutions should take effect in a formal enactment.

It marks the inferiority of the mother-country to the colonies in political development, at that time, that the only solicitude as yet entertained by the British official mind, with regard to this measure, seems to have been concerned with the question how far the Americans would be willing to part with their money. With the Americans it was as far as possible from being a question of pounds, shillings, and pence; but this was by no means correctly understood in England. The good Shirley, although he had lived so long in Massachusetts, had thought that a revenue might be most easily and quietly raised by means of a stamp duty. Of all kinds of direct tax, none, perhaps, is less annoying. But the position taken by the Americans had little to do with mere convenience; it rested from the outset upon the deepest foundations of political justice, and from this foothold neither threatening nor coaxing could stir it.

Reply of the colonies

The first deliberate action with reference to the proposed Stamp Act was taken in the Boston town meeting in May, 1764. In this memorable town meeting Samuel Adams drew up a series of resolutions, which contained the first formal and public denial of the right of Parliament to tax the colonies without their consent; and while these resolutions were adopted by the Massachusetts assembly, a circular letter was at the same time sent to all the other colonies, setting forth the need for concerted and harmonious action in respect of so grave a matter. In response, the assemblies of Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and South Carolina joined with Massachusetts in remonstrating against the proposed Stamp Act. All these memorials were remarkable for clearness of argument and simple dignity of language.



They all took their stand on the principle that, as free-born Englishmen, they could not rightfully be taxed by the House of Commons unless they were represented in that body. But the proviso was added, that if a letter from the secretary of state, coming in the king's name, should be presented to the colonial assemblies, asking them to contribute something from their general resources to the needs of the British Empire, they would cheerfully, as heretofore, grant liberal sums of money, in token of their loyalty and of their interest in all that concerned the welfare of the mighty empire to which they belonged. These able and temperate memorials were sent to England; and in order to reinforce them by personal tact and address, Franklin went over to London as agent for the colony of Pennsylvania.

The Stamp Act

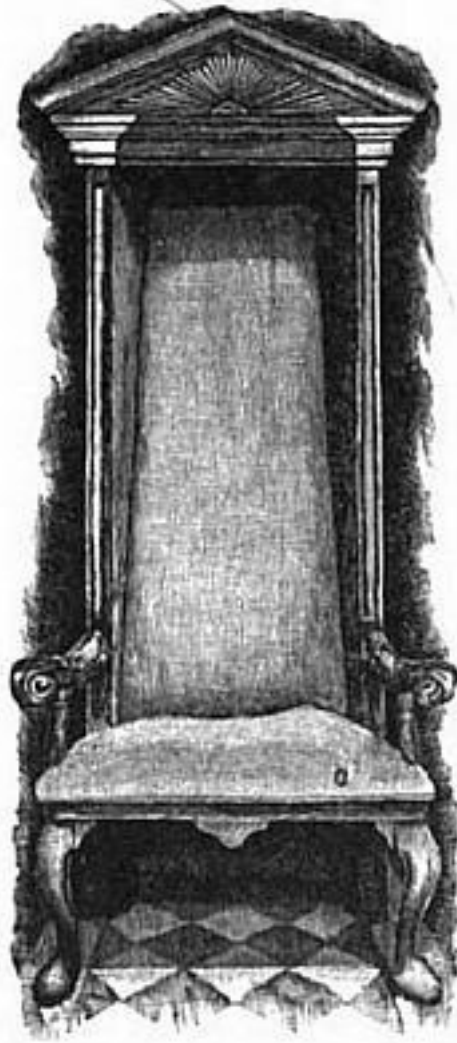
The alternative proposed by the colonies was virtually the same as the system of requisitions already in use, and the inefficiency of which, in securing a revenue, had been abundantly proved by the French war. Parliament therefore rejected it, and early in 1765 the Stamp Act was passed. It is worthy of remark that the idea that the Americans would resist its execution did not at once occur to Franklin. Acquiescence seemed to him, for the present, the only safe policy.



In writing to his friend Charles Thomson, he said that he could no more have hindered the passing of the Stamp Act than he could have hindered the sun's setting. "That," he says, "we could not do. But since it is down, my friend, and it may be long before it rises again, let us make as good a night of it as we can. We may still light candles. Frugality and industry will go a great way towards indemnifying us." But Thomson, in his answer, with truer foresight, observed, "I much fear, instead of the candles you mentioned being lighted, you will hear of the works of darkness!" The news of the passage of the Stamp Act was greeted in America with a burst of indignation. In New York, the act was reprinted with a death's-head upon it in place of the royal arms, and it was hawked about the streets under the title of "The Folly of England and the Ruin of America." In Boston, the church-bells were tolled, and the flags on the shipping put at half-mast.

The Parson's Cause

But formal defiance came first from Virginia. A year and a half before, a famous lawsuit, known as the "Parsons' Cause," had brought into public notice a young man who was destined to take high rank among modern orators. The lawsuit which made Patrick Henry's reputation was one of the straws which showed how the stream of tendency in America was then strongly setting toward independence. Tobacco had not yet ceased to be a legal currency in Virginia, and by virtue of an old statute each clergyman of the Established Church was entitled to sixteen thousand pounds of tobacco as his yearly salary.



SPEAKER'S CHAIR, HOUSE OF BURGESSES

In 1755 and 1758, under the severe pressure of the French war, the assembly had passed relief acts, allowing all public dues, including the salaries of the clergy, to be paid either in kind or in money, at a fixed rate of twopence for a pound of tobacco. The policy of these acts was thoroughly unsound, as they involved a partial repudiation of debts; but the extreme distress of the community was pleaded in excuse, and every one, clergy as well as laymen, at first acquiesced in them. But in 1759 tobacco was worth sixpence per pound, and the clergy became dissatisfied. Their complaints reached the ears of Sherlock, the Bishop of London, and the act of 1758 was summarily vetoed by the king in council. The clergy brought suits to recover the unpaid portions of their salaries; in the test case of Rev. James Maury, the court decided the point of the law in their favour, on the ground of the royal veto, and nothing remained but to settle before a jury the amount of the damages. On this occasion, Henry appeared for the first time in court, and after a few timid and awkward sentences burst forth with an eloquent speech, in which he asserted the indefeasible right of Virginia to make laws for herself, and declared that in annulling a salutary ordinance at the request of a favoured class in the community “a king, from being the father of his people, degenerates into a tyrant, and forfeits all right to obedience.” Cries of “Treason!” were heard in the court room, but the jury immediately returned a verdict of one penny in damages, and Henry became the popular idol of Virginia. The clergy tried in vain to have him indicted for treason, alleging that his crime was hardly less heinous

than that which had brought old Lord Lovat to the block. But the people of Louisa county replied, in 1765, by choosing him to represent them in the colonial assembly.



PATRICK HENRY MAKING HIS TARQUIN AND CÆSAR SPEECH

Patrick Henry's resolutions

Hardly had Henry taken his seat in the assembly when the news of the Stamp Act arrived. In a committee of the whole house, he drew up a series of resolutions, declaring that the colonists were entitled to all the liberties and privileges of natural-born subjects, and that "the taxation of the people by themselves, or by persons chosen by themselves to represent them, ... is the distinguishing characteristic of British freedom, without which the ancient constitution cannot exist." It was further

declared that any attempt to vest the power of taxation in any other body than the colonial assembly was a menace to British no less than to American freedom; that the people of Virginia were not bound to obey any law enacted in disregard of these fundamental principles; and that any one who should maintain the contrary should be regarded as a public enemy. It was in the lively debate which ensued upon these resolutions, that Henry uttered those memorable words commending the example of Tarquin and Cæsar and Charles I. to the attention of George III. Before the vote had been taken upon all the resolutions, Governor Fauquier dissolved the assembly; but the resolutions were printed in the newspapers, and hailed with approval all over the country.

S T A M P - O F F I C E , *Lincoln's-Inn, 1765.*

A

T A B L E

Of the Prices of Parchment and Paper for the Service of *America.*

Parchment.		Paper.	
Skins 18 Inch. by 13, at Four-pence	} each.	Hotn at Seven-pence	} each Quint.
22 — by 16, at Six-pence		Fools Cap at Nine-pence	
26 — by 20, at Eight-pence		D ^o with printed Notices } at	
28 — by 23, at Ten-pence		for Indentures } 1 s.	
31 — by 26, at Thirteen-pence		Folio Post at One Shilling	
		Demy — at Two Shillings	
		Medium at Three Shillings	
		Royal — at Four Shillings	
		Super Royal at Six Shillings	

Paper for Printing

News.		Almanacks.	
Double Crown at 14 s.	} each Ream.	Book—Crown Paper at 10 s. 6d.	} each Ream.
Double Demy at 19 s.		Book—Fools Cap at 6 s. 6d.	
		Pocket — Folio Post at 20 s.	
		Sheet—Demy at 13 s.	

[See Transcription](#)

The Stamp Act Congress

Meanwhile, the Massachusetts legislature, at the suggestion of Otis, had issued a circular letter to all the colonies, calling for a general congress, in order to concert measures of resistance to the Stamp Act. The first cordial response came from South Carolina, at the instance of Christopher Gadsden, a wealthy merchant of Charleston and a scholar learned in Oriental languages, a man of rare sagacity and most liberal spirit. On the 7th of October, the proposed congress assembled at New York, comprising delegates from Massachusetts, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York, in all nine colonies, which are here mentioned in the order of the dates at which they chose their delegates. In Virginia, the governor succeeded in preventing the meeting of the legislature, so that this great colony did not send delegates; and, for various reasons, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Georgia were likewise unrepresented at the congress. But the sentiment of all the thirteen colonies was none the less unanimous, and those which did not attend lost no time in declaring their full concurrence with what was done at New York. At this memorable meeting, held under the very guns of the British fleet and hard by the headquarters of General Gage, the commander-in-chief of the regular forces in America, a series of resolutions were adopted, echoing the spirit of Patrick Henry's resolves, though couched in language somewhat more conciliatory, and memorials were addressed to the king and to both Houses of Parliament. Of all the delegates present, Gadsden took the broadest ground, in behalf both of liberty and of united action among the colonies. He objected to sending petitions to Parliament, lest thereby its paramount authority should implicitly and unwittingly be acknowledged. "A confirmation of our essential and common rights as Englishmen," said he, "may be pleaded from charters safely enough; but any further dependence on them may be fatal. We should stand upon the broad common ground of those natural rights that we all feel and know as men and as descendants of Englishmen. I wish the charters may not ensnare us at last, by drawing different colonies to act differently in this great cause. Whenever that is the case, all will be over with the whole. There ought to be no New England man, no New Yorker, known on the continent; but all of us Americans." So thought and said this broad-minded South Carolinian.

Declaration of the Massachusetts assembly

While these things were going on at New York, the Massachusetts assembly, under the lead of Samuel Adams, who had just taken his seat in it, drew up a very able state paper, in which it was declared, among other things, that "the Stamp Act wholly cancels the very conditions upon which our ancestors, with much toil and blood and at their sole expense, settled this country and enlarged his majesty's dominions. It tends to destroy that mutual confidence and affection, as well as that equality, which ought ever to subsist among all his majesty's subjects in this wide and extended empire; and what is the worst of all evils, if his majesty's American subjects are not to be governed according to the known and stated rules of the constitution, their minds may in time become disaffected." This moderate and dignified statement was applauded by many in England and by others derided as the "raving of a parcel of wild enthusiasts," but from the position here taken Massachusetts never afterward receded.

Resistance to the Stamp Act in Boston

But it was not only in these formal and decorous proceedings that the spirit of resistance was exhibited. The first announcement of the Stamp Act had called into existence a group of secret

societies of workingmen known as “Sons of Liberty,” in allusion to a famous phrase in one of Colonel Barré’s speeches. These societies were solemnly pledged to resist the execution of the obnoxious law. On the 14th of August, the quiet town of Boston witnessed some extraordinary proceedings. At daybreak, the effigy of the stamp officer, Oliver, was seen hanging from a great elm-tree, while near it was suspended a boot, to represent the late prime minister, Lord Bute; and from the top of the boot-leg there issued a grotesque head, garnished with horns, to represent the devil. At nightfall the Sons of Liberty cut down these figures, and bore them on a bier through the streets until they reached King Street, where they demolished the frame of a house which was supposed to be erecting for a stamp office. Thence, carrying the beams of this frame to Fort Hill, where Oliver lived, they made a bonfire of them in front of his house, and in the bonfire they burned up the effigies.



Twelve days after, a mob sacked the splendid house of Chief Justice Hutchinson, threw his plate into the street, and destroyed the valuable library which he had been thirty years in collecting, and which contained many manuscripts, the loss of which was quite irreparable. As usual with mobs, the vengeance fell in the wrong place, for Hutchinson had done his best to prevent the passage of the Stamp Act. In most of the colonies, the stamp officers were compelled to resign their posts. Boxes of stamps arriving by ship were burned or thrown into the sea. Leading merchants agreed to import no more goods from England, and wealthy citizens set the example of dressing in homespun garments. Lawyers agreed to overlook the absence of the stamp on legal documents, while editors derisively issued their newspapers with a death's-head in the place where the stamp was required to be put.

and in New York

In New York, the presence of the troops for a moment encouraged the lieutenant-governor, Colden, to take a bold stand in behalf of the law. He talked of firing upon the people, but was warned that if he did so he would be speedily hanged on a lamp-post, like Captain Porteous of Edinburgh. A torchlight procession, carrying images of Colden and of the devil, broke into the governor's coach-house, and, seizing his best chariot, paraded it about town with the images upon it, and finally burned up chariot and images on the Bowling Green, in full sight of Colden and the garrison, who looked on from the Battery, speechless with rage, but afraid to interfere. Gage did not dare to have the troops used, for fear of bringing on a civil war; and the next day the discomfited Colden was obliged to surrender all the stamps to the common council of New York, by whom they were at once locked up in the City Hall.

Nothing more was needed to prove the impossibility of carrying the Stamp Act into effect. An act which could be thus rudely defied under the very eyes of the commander-in-chief plainly could never be enforced without a war. But nobody wanted a war, and the matter began to be reconsidered

in England. In July, the Grenville ministry had gone out of office, and the Marquis of Rockingham was now prime minister, while Conway, who had been one of the most energetic opponents of the Stamp Act, was secretary of state for the colonies. The new ministry would perhaps have been glad to let the question of taxing America remain in abeyance, but that was no longer possible.

Debate in the House of Commons

The debate on the proposed repeal of the Stamp Act was one of the keenest that has ever been heard in the House of Commons. Grenville and his friends, now in opposition, maintained in all sincerity that no demand could ever be more just, or more honourably intended, than that which had lately been made upon the Americans. Of the honest conviction of Grenville and his supporters that they were entirely in the right, and that the Americans were governed by purely sordid and vulgar motives in resisting the Stamp Act, there cannot be the slightest doubt. To refute this gross misconception of the American position, Pitt hastened from a sick-bed to the House of Commons, and delivered those speeches in which he avowed that he rejoiced in the resistance of the Americans, and declared that, had they submitted tamely to the measures of Grenville, they would have shown themselves only fit to be slaves. He pointed out distinctly that the Americans were upholding those eternal principles of political justice which should be to all Englishmen most dear, and that a victory over the colonies would be of ill-omen for English liberty, whether in the Old World or in the New. Beware, he said, how you persist in this ill-considered policy. "In such a cause your success would be hazardous. America, if she fell, would fall like the strong man with his arms around the pillars of the Constitution." There could be no sounder political philosophy than was contained in these burning sentences of Pitt. From all the history of the European world since the later days of the Roman Republic, there is no more important lesson to be learned than this, – that it is impossible for a free people to govern a dependent people despotically without endangering its own freedom. Pitt therefore urged that the Stamp Act should instantly be repealed, and that the reason for the repeal should be explicitly stated to be because the act "was founded on an erroneous principle." At the same time he recommended the passage of a Declaratory Act, in which the sovereign authority of Parliament over the colonies should be strongly asserted with respect to everything except direct taxation. Similar views were set forth in the House of Lords, with great learning and ability, by Lord Camden; but he was vehemently opposed by Lord Mansfield, and when the question came to a decision, the only peers who supported Camden were Lords Shelburne, Cornwallis, Paulet, and Torrington.

Repeal of the Stamp Act

The result finally reached was the unconditional repeal of the Stamp Act, and the simultaneous passage of a Declaratory Act, in which the views of Pitt and Camden were ignored and Parliament asserted its right to make laws binding on the colonies "in all cases whatsoever." By the people of London the repeal was received with enthusiastic delight, and Pitt and Conway, as they appeared on the street, were loudly cheered, while Grenville was greeted with a storm of hisses. In America the effect of the news was electric. There were bonfires in every town, while addresses of thanks to the king were voted in all the legislatures. Little heed was paid to the Declaratory Act, which was regarded merely as an artifice for saving the pride of the British government. There was a unanimous outburst of loyalty all over the country, and never did the people seem less in a mood for rebellion than at that moment.

The quarrel had now been made up. On the question of principle, the British had the last word. The government had got out of its dilemma remarkably well, and the plain and obvious course for British statesmanship was not to allow another such direct issue to come up between the colonies and the mother-country. To force on another such issue while the memory of this one was fresh in

everybody's mind was sheer madness. To raise the question wantonly, as Charles Townshend did in the course of the very next year, was one of those blunders that are worse than crimes.



FUNERAL PROCESSION OF THE STAMP ACT

In July, 1766, – less than six months after the repeal of the Stamp Act, – the Rockingham ministry fell, and the formation of a new ministry was entrusted to Pitt, the man who best appreciated the value of the American colonies. But the state of Pitt's health was not such as to warrant his taking upon himself the arduous duties of prime minister. He took the great seal, and, accepting the earldom of Chatham, passed into the House of Lords.

The Duke of Grafton's ministry

The Duke of Grafton became prime minister, under Pitt's guidance; Conway and Lord Shelburne were secretaries of state, and Camden became Lord Chancellor, – all three of them warm friends of America, and adopting the extreme American view of the constitutional questions lately at issue; and along with these was Charles Townshend, the evil spirit of the administration, as chancellor of the exchequer. From such a ministry, it might at first sight seem strange that a fresh quarrel with America should have proceeded. But Chatham's illness soon overpowered him, so that he was kept at home suffering excruciating pain, and could neither guide nor even pay due attention to the proceedings of his colleagues. Of the rest of the ministry, only Conway and Townshend were in the House of Commons, where the real direction of affairs rested; and when Lord Chatham was out of the way, as the Duke of Grafton counted for nothing, the strongest man in the cabinet was

unquestionably Townshend. Now when an act for raising an American revenue was proposed by Townshend, a prejudice against it was sure to be excited at once, simply because every American knew well what Townshend's views were. It would have been difficult for such a man even to assume a conciliatory attitude without having his motives suspected; and if the question with Great Britain had been simply that of raising a revenue on statesmanlike principles, it would have been well to entrust the business to some one like Lord Shelburne, in whom the Americans had confidence.



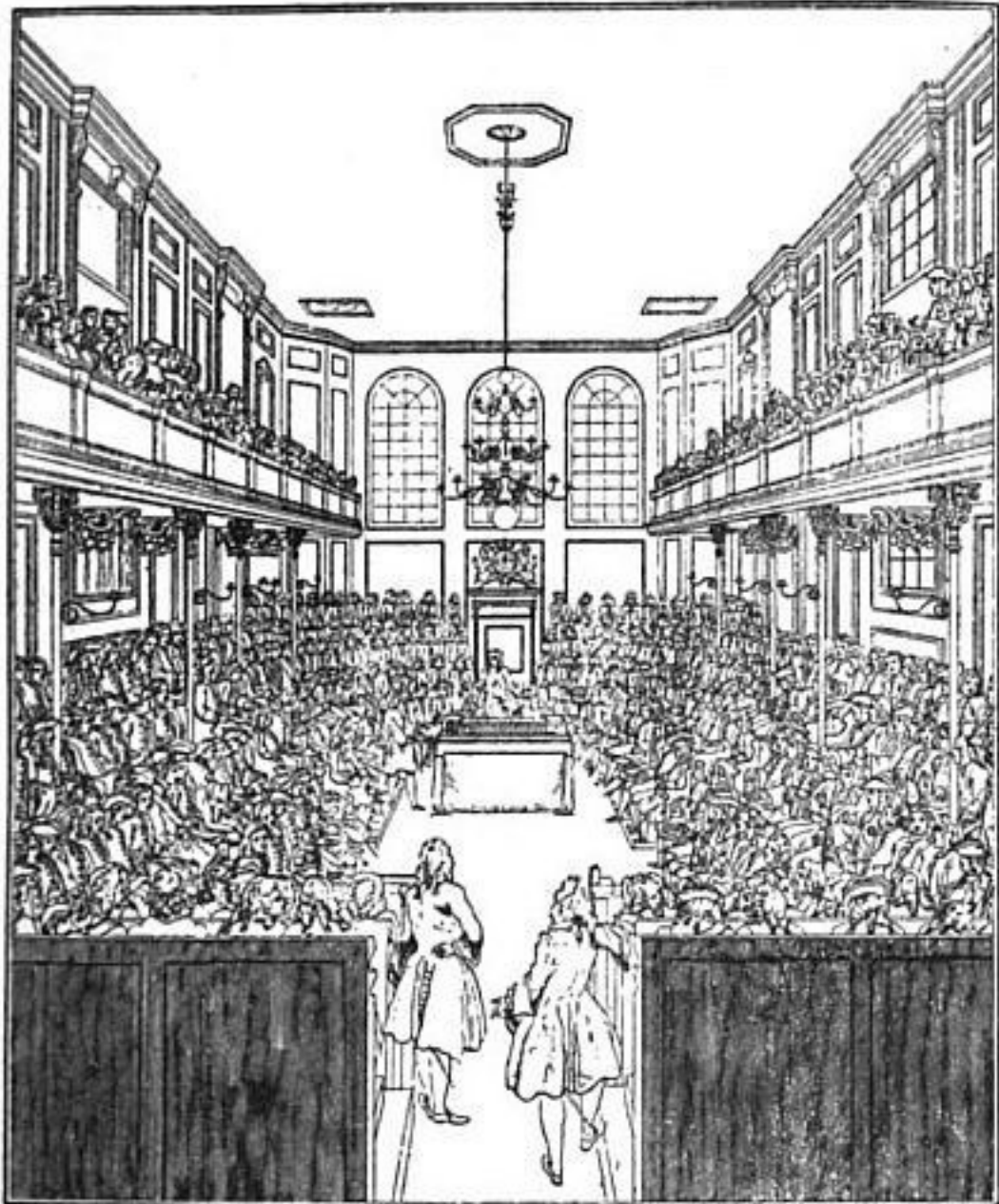
Townshend

In 1767, Townshend ventured to do what in any English ministry of the present day would be impossible. In flat opposition to the policy of Chatham and the rest of his colleagues, trusting in the favour of the king and in his own ability to coax or browbeat the House of Commons, he brought in a series of new measures for taxing America. "I expect to be dismissed for my pains," he said in the House, with flippant defiance; and indeed he came very near it. As soon as he heard what was going on, Chatham mustered up strength enough to go to London and insist upon Townshend's dismissal. But Lord North was the only person that could be thought of to take Townshend's place, and Lord North, who never liked to offend the king, declined the appointment. Before Chatham could devise a way out of his quandary, his malady again laid him prostrate, and Townshend was not only not

turned out, but was left practically supreme in the cabinet. The new measures for taxing America were soon passed. In the debates on the Stamp Act, it had been argued that while Parliament had no right to impose a direct tax upon the Americans, it might still properly regulate American trade by port duties. The distinction had been insisted upon by Pitt, and had been virtually acknowledged by the Americans; who had from time to time submitted to acts of Parliament imposing duties upon merchandise imported into the colonies.

The Townshend Acts

Nay, more, when charged with inconsistency for submitting to such acts while resisting the Stamp Act, several leading Americans had explicitly adopted the distinction between internal and external taxation, and declared themselves ready to submit to the latter while determined to resist the former. Townshend was now ready, as he declared, to take them at their word. By way of doing so, he began by laughing to scorn the distinction between internal and external taxation, and declaring that Parliament possessed the undoubted right of taxing the Americans without their own consent; but since objections had been raised to a direct tax, he was willing to resort to port duties, – a measure to which the Americans were logically bound to assent. Duties were accordingly imposed on wine, oil, and fruits, if carried directly to America from Spain or Portugal; on glass, paper, lead, and painters' colours; and lastly on tea. The revenue to be derived from these duties was to be devoted to paying a fixed salary to the royal governors and to the justices appointed at the king's pleasure. The Crown was also empowered to create a general civil list in every colony, and to grant salaries and pensions at its arbitrary will. A board of revenue commissioners for the whole country was to be established at Boston, armed with extraordinary powers; and general writs of assistance were expressly legalized and permitted.

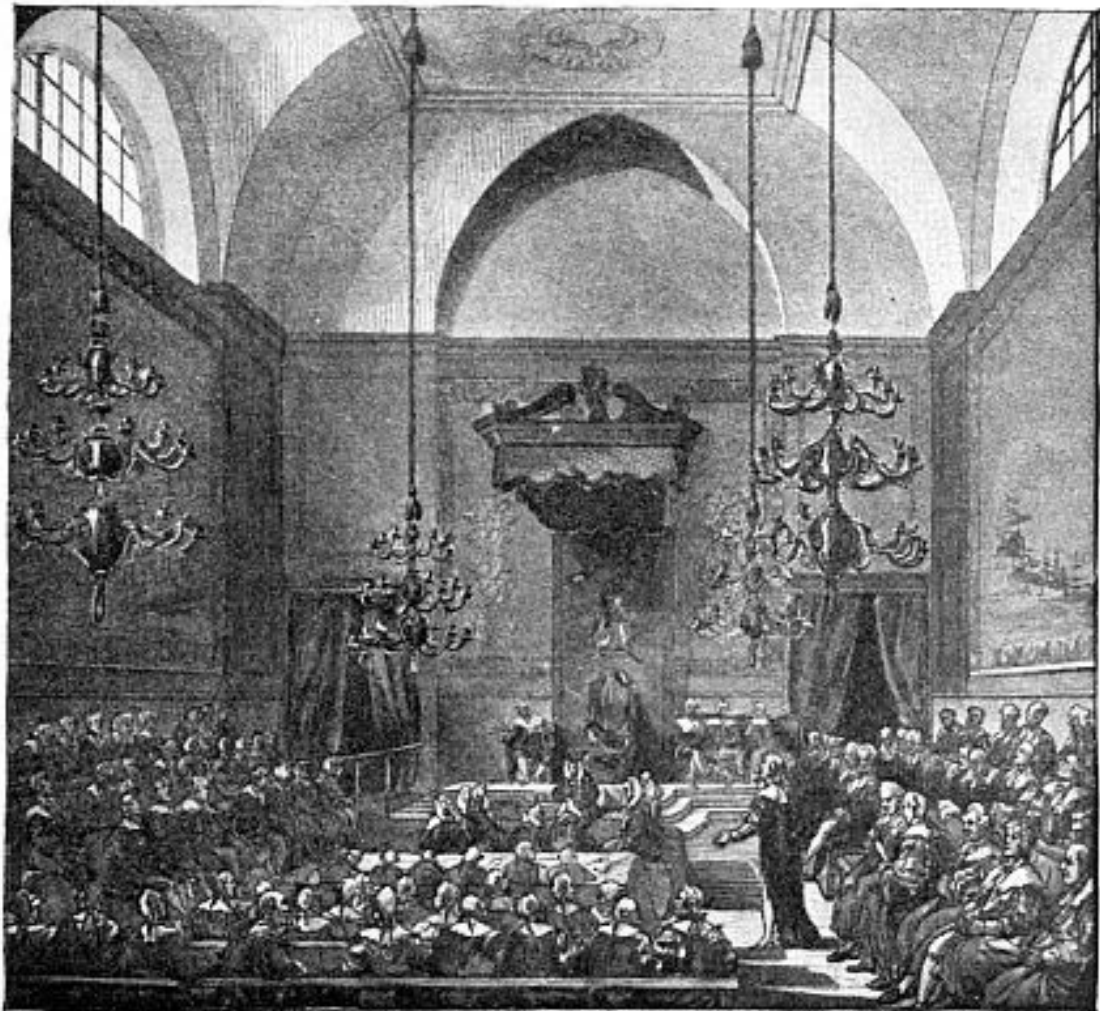


HOUSE OF COMMONS

Such was the way in which Townshend proceeded to take the Americans at their word. His course was a distinct warning to the Americans that, if they yielded now, they might expect some new Stamp Act or other measures of direct taxation to follow; and so it simply invited resistance. That no doubt might be left on this point, the purpose for which the revenue was to be used showed clearly that the object of the legislation was not to regulate trade, but to assert British supremacy over the colonies at the expense of their political freedom. By providing for a civil list in each colony, to be responsible only to the Crown, it aimed at American self-government even a more deadly blow than had been aimed at it by the Stamp Act.

Attack on the New York assembly

It meddled with the “internal police” of every colony, and would thus have introduced a most vexatious form of tyranny as soon as it had taken effect. A special act by which the Townshend revenue acts were accompanied still further revealed the temper and purposes of the British government. The colony of New York had been required to provide certain supplies for the regular troops quartered in the city, under command of General Gage; and the colonial assembly had insisted upon providing these supplies in its own way, and in disregard of special instructions from England. For this offence, Parliament now passed an act suspending the New York assembly from its legislative functions until it should have complied with the instructions regarding the supplies to the army. It need not be said that the precedent involved in this act, if once admitted, would have virtually annulled the legislative independence of every one of the colonial assemblies.



HOUSE OF LORDS

Parliament did not properly represent the British people

We may perhaps wonder that a British Parliament should have been prevailed on to pass such audacious acts as these, and by large majorities. But we must remember that in those days the English

system of representation was so imperfect, and had come to be so overgrown with abuses, that an act of Parliament was by no means sure to represent the average judgment of the people. The House of Commons was so far under the corrupt influence of the aristocracy, and was so inadequately controlled by popular opinion, that at almost any time it was possible for an eloquent, determined, and unscrupulous minister to carry measures through it such as could never have been carried through any of the reformed Parliaments since 1832. It is not easy, perhaps, to say with confidence what the popular feeling in England was in 1767 with reference to the policy of Charles Townshend. The rural population was much more ignorant than it is to-day, and its political opinions were strongly influenced by the country squires, – a worthy set of men, but not generally distinguished for the flexibility of their minds or the breadth of their views. But as a sample of the most intelligent popular feeling in England at that time, it will probably not be unfair to cite that of the city of London, which was usually found arrayed on the side of free government. No wiser advice was heard in Parliament, on the subject of the New York dispute, than was given by Alderman Beckford, father of the illustrious author of *Vathek*, when he said, “Do like the best of physicians, and heal the disease by doing nothing.” On many other important occasions in the course of this unfortunate quarrel, the city of London gave expression to opinions which the king and Parliament would have done well to heed. But even if the House of Commons had reflected popular feeling in 1767 as clearly as it has done since 1832, it is by no means sure that it would have known how to deal successfully with the American question. The problem was really a new one in political history; and there was no adequate precedent to guide the statesmen in dealing with the peculiar combination of considerations it involved. As far as concerned the relations of Englishmen in England to the Crown and to Parliament, the British Constitution had at last reached a point where it worked quite smoothly. All contingencies likely to arise seemed to have been provided for. But when it came to the relations of Englishmen in America to the Crown and to Parliament, the case was very different. The case had its peculiar conditions, which the British Constitution in skilful hands would no doubt have proved elastic enough to satisfy; but just at this time the British Constitution happened to be in very unskilful hands, and wholly failed to meet the exigencies of the occasion.

Difficulty of the problem

The chief difficulty lay in the fact that while on the one hand the American principle of no taxation without representation was unquestionably sound and just, on the other hand the exemption of any part of the British Empire from the jurisdiction of Parliament seemed equivalent to destroying the political unity of the empire. This could not but seem to any English statesman a most lamentable result, and no English statesman felt this more strongly than Lord Chatham.

There were only two possible ways in which the difference could be accommodated. Either the American colonies must elect representatives to the Parliament at Westminster; or else the right of levying taxes must be left where it already resided, in their own legislative bodies. The first alternative was seriously considered by eminent political thinkers, both in England and America. In England it was favourably regarded by Adam Smith, and in America by Benjamin Franklin and James Otis. In 1774, some of the loyalists in the first Continental Congress recommended such a scheme.

Representation of Americans in Parliament

In 1778, after the overthrow of Burgoyne, the king himself began to think favourably of such a way out of the quarrel. But this alternative was doubtless from the first quite visionary and unpractical. The difficulties in the way of securing anything like equality of representation would probably have been insuperable; and the difficulty in dividing jurisdiction fairly between the local colonial legislature and the American contingent in the Parliament at Westminster would far have

exceeded any of the difficulties that have arisen in the attempt to adjust the relations of the several States to the general government in our Federal Union. Mere distance, too, which even to-day would go far toward rendering such a scheme impracticable, would have been a still more fatal obstacle in the days of Chatham and Townshend. If, even with the vast enlargement of the political horizon which our hundred years' experience of federalism has effected, the difficulty of such a union still seems so great, we may be sure it would have proved quite insuperable then. The only practicable solution would have been the frank and cordial admission, by the British government, of the essential soundness of the American position, that, in accordance with the entire spirit of the English Constitution, the right of levying taxes in America resided only in the colonial legislatures, in which alone could American freemen be adequately represented. Nor was there really any reason to fear that such a step would imperil the unity of the empire. How mistaken this fear was, on the part of English statesmen, is best shown by the fact that, in her liberal and enlightened dealings with her colonies at the present day, England has consistently adopted the very course of action which alone would have conciliated such men as Samuel Adams in the days of the Stamp Act. By pursuing such a policy, the British government has to-day a genuine hold upon the affections of its pioneers in Australia and New Zealand and Africa. If such a statesman as Gladstone could have dealt freely with the American question during the twelve years following the Peace of Paris, the history of that time need not have been the pitiable story of a blind and obstinate effort to enforce submission to an ill-considered and arbitrary policy on the part of the king and his ministers. The feeling by which the king's party was guided, in the treatment of the American question, was very much the same as the feeling which lately inspired the Tory criticisms upon Gladstone's policy in South Africa.

Mr. Gladstone and the Boers

Lord Beaconsfield, a man in some respects not unlike Charles Townshend, bequeathed to his successor a miserable quarrel with the Dutch farmers of the Transvaal; and Mr. Gladstone, after examining the case on its merits, had the moral courage to acknowledge that England was wrong, and to concede the demands of the Boers, even after serious military defeat at their hands. Perhaps no other public act of England in the nineteenth century has done her greater honour than this. But said the Jingo, All the world will now laugh at Englishmen, and call them cowards. In order to vindicate the military prestige of England, the true policy would be, forsooth, to prolong the war until the Boers had been once thoroughly defeated, and then acknowledge the soundness of their position. Just as if the whole world did not know, as well as it can possibly know anything, that whatever qualities the English nation may lack, it certainly does not lack courage, or the ability to win victories in a good cause! All honour to the Christian statesman who dares to leave England's military prestige to be vindicated by the glorious records of a thousand years, and even in the hour of well-merited defeat sets a higher value on political justice than on a reputation for dealing hard blows! Such incidents as this are big with hope for the future. They show us what sort of political morality our children's children may expect to see, when mankind shall have come somewhat nearer toward being truly civilized.

In the eighteenth century, no such exhibition of good sense and good feeling, in the interest of political justice, could have been expected from any European statesman, unless from a Turgot or a Chatham. But Charles Townshend was not even called upon to exercise any such self-control. Had he simply taken Alderman Beckford's advice, and done nothing, all would have been well; but his meddling had now put the government into a position which it was ruinous to maintain, but from which it was difficult to retreat. American tradition rightly lays the chief blame for the troubles which brought on the Revolutionary War to George III.; but, in fairness, it is well to remember that he did not suggest Townshend's measures, though he zealously adopted and cherished them when once propounded. The blame for wantonly throwing the apple of discord belongs to Townshend more than to any one else.

Death of Townshend

After doing this, within three months from the time his bill had passed the House of Commons, Townshend was seized with a fever and died at the age of forty-one. A man of extraordinary gifts, but without a trace of earnest moral conviction, he had entered upon a splendid career; but his insincere nature, which turned everything into jest, had stamped itself upon his work. He bequeathed to his country nothing but the quarrel which was soon to deprive her of the grandest part of that empire upon which the sun shall never set.



GEORGE III

If Townshend's immediate object in originating these measures was to curry favour with George III., and get the lion's share in the disposal of the king's ample corruption-fund, he had doubtless gone to work in the right way.

His political legacy to George III

The king was delighted with Townshend's measures, and after the sudden death of his minister he made them his own, and staked his whole political career as a monarch upon their success. These measures were the fatal legacy which the brighter political charlatan left to the duller political fanatic. The fierce persistency with which George now sought to force Townshend's measures upon the Americans partook of the nature of fanaticism, and we shall not understand it unless we bear in mind the state of political parties in England between 1760 and 1784. When George III. came to the throne, in 1760, England had been governed for more than half a century by the great Whig families which had been brought into the foreground by the revolution of 1688. The Tories had been utterly discredited and cast out of political life by reason of their willingness to conspire with the Stuart pretenders in disturbing the peace of the country. Cabinet government, in its modern form, had begun to grow up during the long and prosperous administration of Sir Robert Walpole, who was the first English prime minister in the full sense. Under Walpole's wise and powerful sway, the first two Georges had possessed scarcely more than the shadow of sovereignty. It was the third George's ambition to become a real king, like the king of France or the king of Spain. From earliest babyhood, his mother had forever been impressing upon him the precept, "George, be king!" and this simple lesson had constituted pretty much the whole of his education.

Character of George III

Popular tradition regards him as the most ignorant king that ever sat upon the English throne; and so far as general culture is concerned, this opinion is undoubtedly correct. He used to wonder what people could find to admire in such a wretched driveller as Shakespeare, and he never was capable of understanding any problem which required the slightest trace of imagination or of generalizing power. Nevertheless, the popular American tradition undoubtedly errs in exaggerating his stupidity and laying too little stress upon the worst side of his character. George III. was not destitute of a certain kind of ability, which often gets highly rated in this not too clear-sighted world. He could see an immediate end very distinctly, and acquired considerable power from the dogged industry with which he pursued it.



In an age when some of the noblest English statesmen drank their gallon of strong wine daily, or sat late at the gambling-table, or lived in scarcely hidden concubinage, George III. was decorous in personal habits and pure in domestic relations, and no banker's clerk in London applied himself to the details of business more industriously than he. He had a genuine talent for administration, and he devoted this talent most assiduously to selfish ends. Scantly endowed with human sympathy, and almost boorishly stiff in his ordinary unstudied manner, he could be smooth as oil whenever he liked. He was an adept in gaining men's confidence by a show of interest, and securing their aid by dint of fair promises; and when he found them of no further use, he could turn them adrift with wanton

insult. Any one who dared to disagree with him upon even the slightest point of policy he straightway regarded as a natural enemy, and pursued him ever afterward with vindictive hatred. As a natural consequence, he surrounded himself with weak and short-sighted advisers, and toward all statesmen of broad views and independent character he nursed the bitterest rancour. He had little faith in human honour or rectitude, and in pursuing an end he was seldom deterred by scruples.

Such was the man who, on coming to the throne in 1760, had it for his first and chiefest thought to break down the growing system of cabinet government in England. For the moment circumstances seemed to favour him. The ascendancy of the great Whig families was endangered on two sides. On the one hand, the Tory party had outlived that idle, romantic love for the Stuarts upon which it found it impossible to thrive.

English parties between 1760 and 1784

The Tories began coming to court again, and they gave the new king all the benefit of their superstitious theories of high prerogative and divine right. On the other hand, a strong popular feeling was beginning to grow up against parliamentary government as conducted by the old Whig families. The House of Commons no longer fairly represented the people. Ancient boroughs, which possessed but a handful of population, or, like Old Sarum, had no inhabitants at all, still sent their representatives to Parliament, while great cities of recent growth, such as Birmingham and Leeds, were unrepresented. To a great extent, it was the most progressive parts of the kingdom which were thus excluded from a share in the government, while the rotten boroughs were disposed of by secret lobbying, or even by open bargain and sale. A few Whig families, the heads of which sat in the House of Lords, thus virtually owned a considerable part of the House of Commons; and, under such circumstances, it was not at all strange that Parliament should sometimes, as in the Wilkes case, array itself in flat opposition to the will of the people. The only wonder is that there were not more such scandals. The party of "Old Whigs," numbering in its ranks some of the ablest and most patriotic men in England, was contented with this state of things, upon which it had thrived for two generations, and could not be made to understand the iniquity of it, – any more than an old cut-and-dried American politician in our time can be made to understand the iniquity of the "spoils system." Of this party the Marquis of Rockingham was the political leader, and Edmund Burke was the great representative statesman. In strong opposition to the Old Whig policy there had grown up the party of New Whigs, bent upon bringing about some measure of parliamentary reform, whereby the House of Commons might truly represent the people of Great Britain. In Parliament this party was small in numbers, but weighty in character, and at its head was the greatest Englishman of the eighteenth century, the elder William Pitt, under whose guidance England had won her Indian empire and established her dominion over the seas, while she had driven the French from America, and enabled Frederick the Great to lay the foundations of modern Germany.



George III. as a politician

Now when George III. came to the throne, he took advantage of this division in the two parties in order to break down the power of the Old Whig families, which so long had ruled the country. To this end he used the revived Tory party with great effect, and bid against the Old Whigs for the rotten boroughs; and in playing off one set of prejudices and interests against another, he displayed in the highest degree the cunning and craft of a self-seeking politician. His ordinary methods would have aroused the envy of Tammany. While engaged in such work, he had sense enough to see that the party from which he had most to fear was that of the New Whigs, whose scheme of parliamentary reform, if ever successful, would deprive him of the machinery of corruption upon which he relied. Much as he hated the Old Whig families, he hated Pitt and his followers still more heartily. He was perpetually denouncing Pitt as a “trumpeter of sedition,” and often vehemently declared in public, and in the most offensive manner, that he wished that great man were dead. Such had been his eagerness to cast discredit upon Pitt’s policy that he had utterly lost sight of the imperial interests of England, which indeed his narrow intelligence was incapable of comprehending. One of the first acts of his reign had been to throw away Cuba and the Philippine Islands, which Pitt had just conquered from Spain; while at the same time, by leaving Prussia in the lurch before the Seven Years’ War had fairly closed, he converted the great Frederick from one of England’s warmest friends into one of her bitterest enemies.

His chief reason for quarrelling with the Americans

This political attitude of George III. toward the Whigs in general, and toward Pitt in particular, explains the fierce obstinacy with which he took up and carried on Townshend’s quarrel with the American colonies. For if the American position, that there should be no taxation without representation, were once to be granted, then it would straightway become necessary to admit the principles of parliamentary reform. The same principle that applied to such commonwealths as Massachusetts and Virginia would be forthwith applied to such towns as Birmingham and Leeds. The system of rotten boroughs would be swept away; the chief engine of kingly corruption would thus be destroyed; a reformed House of Commons, with the people at its back, would curb forever the pretensions of the Crown; and the detested Lord Chatham would become the real ruler of a renovated England, in which George III. would be a personage of very little political importance.

In these considerations we find the explanation of the acts of George III. which brought on the American Revolution, and we see why it is historically correct to regard him as the person chiefly responsible for the quarrel. The obstinacy with which he refused to listen to a word of reason from

America was largely due to the exigencies of the political situation in which he found himself. For him, as well as for the colonies, it was a desperate struggle for political existence. He was glad to force on the issue in America rather than in England, because it would be comparatively easy to enlist British local feeling against the Americans as a remote set of “rebels,” with whom Englishmen had no interests in common, and thus obscure the real nature of the issue. Herein he showed himself a cunning politician, though an ignoble statesman. By playing off against each other the two sections of the Whig party, he continued for a while to carry his point; and had he succeeded in overcoming the American resistance and calling into England a well-trained army of victorious mercenaries, the political quarrel there could hardly have failed to develop into a civil war. A new rebellion would perhaps have overthrown George III. as James II. had been overthrown a century before. As it was, the victory of the Americans put an end to the personal government of the king in 1784, so quietly that the people scarcely realized the change.¹ A peaceful election accomplished what otherwise could hardly have been effected without bloodshed. So while George III. lost the fairest portion of the British Empire, it was the sturdy Americans who, fighting the battle of freedom at once for the Old World and for the New, ended by overwhelming his paltry schemes for personal aggrandizement in hopeless ruin, leaving him for posterity to contemplate as one of the most instructive examples of short-sighted folly that modern history affords.

¹ See my *Critical Period of American History*, chap. i.

CHAPTER II THE CRISIS



LORD NORTH

Townshend was succeeded in the exchequer by Lord North, eldest son of the Earl of Guildford, a young man of sound judgment, wide knowledge, and rare sweetness of temper, but wholly lacking in sympathy with popular government. As leader of the House of Commons, he was sufficiently able in debate to hold his ground against the fiercest attacks of Burke and Fox, but he had no strength of will. His lazy good-nature and his Tory principles made him a great favourite with the king, who, through his influence over Lord North, began now to exercise the power of a cabinet minister, and to take a more important part than hitherto in the direction of affairs. Soon after North entered the cabinet, colonial affairs were taken from Lord Shelburne and put in charge of Lord Hillsborough, a man after the king's own heart. Conway was dismissed from the cabinet, and his place was taken by Lord Weymouth, who had voted against the repeal of the Stamp Act. The Earl of Sandwich, who never spoke of the Americans but in terms of abuse, was at the same time made postmaster-general; and in the following year Lord Chatham resigned the privy seal.

While the ministry, by these important changes, was becoming more and more hostile to the just claims of the Americans, those claims were powerfully urged in America, both in popular literature and in well-considered state papers. John Dickinson, at once a devoted friend of England and an ardent American patriot, published his celebrated Farmer's Letters, which were greatly admired in both countries for their temperateness of tone and elegance of expression.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to John Dickinson, featuring a large, sweeping initial 'J' and 'D'.

John Dickinson

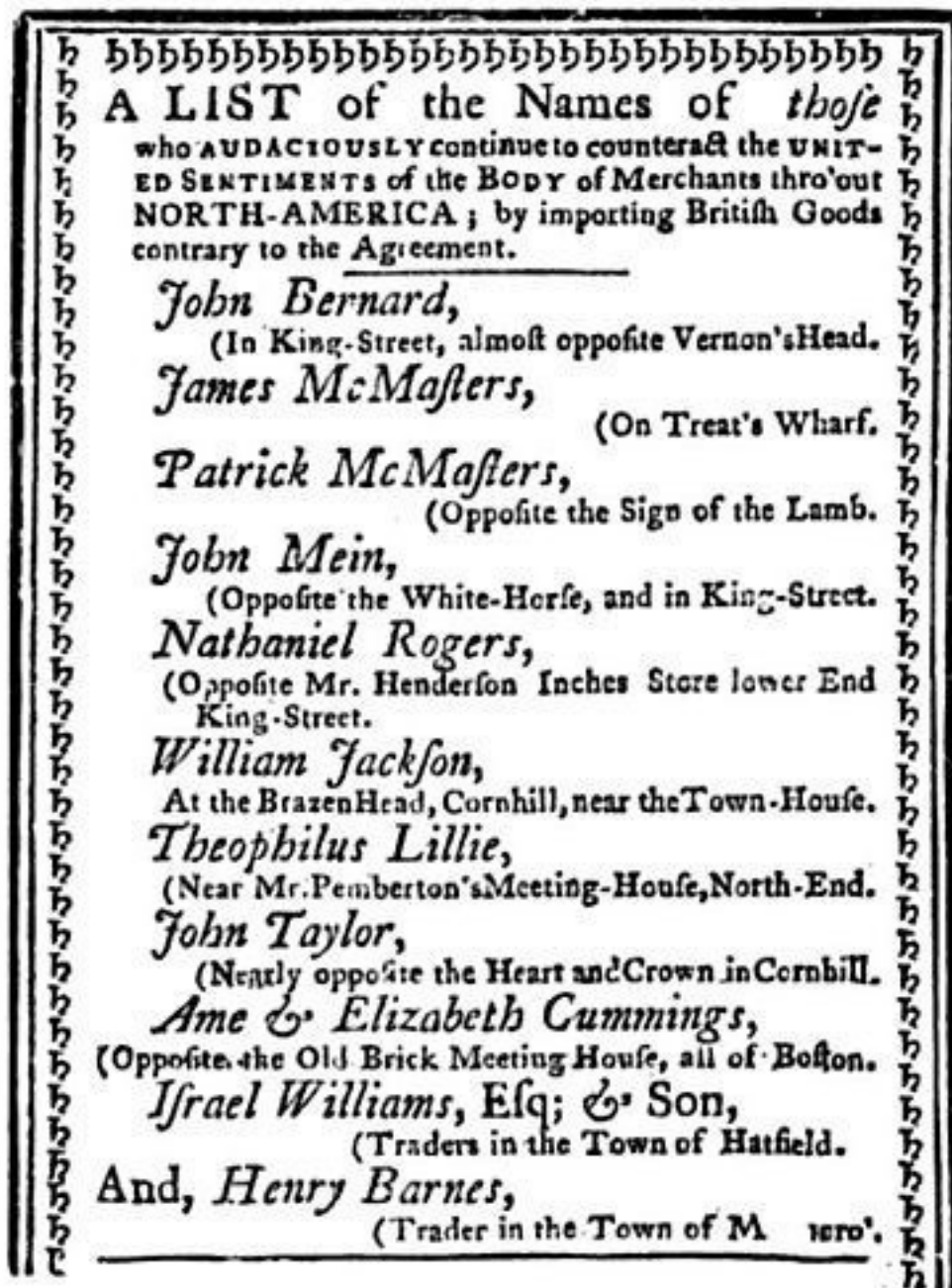
In these letters, Dickinson held a position quite similar to that occupied by Burke. Recognizing that the constitutional relations of the colonies to the mother-country had always been extremely vague and ill-defined, he urged that the same state of things be kept up forever through a genuine English feeling of compromise, which should refrain from pushing any abstract theory of sovereignty to its extreme logical conclusions. At the same time, he declared that the Townshend revenue acts were “a most dangerous innovation” upon the liberties of the people, and significantly hinted, that, should the ministry persevere in its tyrannical policy, “English history affords examples of resistance by force.”

The Massachusetts circular letter

While Dickinson was publishing these letters, Samuel Adams wrote for the Massachusetts assembly a series of addresses to the ministry, a petition to the king, and a circular letter to the assemblies of the other colonies. In these very able state papers, Adams declared that a proper representation of American interests in the British Parliament was impracticable, and that, in accordance with the spirit of the English Constitution, no taxes could be levied in America except by the colonial legislatures. He argued that the Townshend acts were unconstitutional, and asked that they should be repealed, and that the colonies should resume the position which they had occupied before the beginning of the present troubles.



The petition to the king was couched in beautiful and touching language, but the author seems to have understood very well how little effect it was likely to produce. His daughter, Mrs. Wells, used to tell how one evening, as her father had just finished writing this petition, and had taken up his hat to go out, she observed that the paper would soon be touched by the royal hand. "More likely, my dear," he replied, "it will be spurned by the royal foot!" Adams rightly expected much more from the circular letter to the other colonies, in which he invited them to coöperate with Massachusetts in resisting the Townshend acts, and in petitioning for their repeal. The assembly, having adopted all these papers by a large majority, was forthwith prorogued by Governor Bernard, who, in a violent speech, called them demagogues to whose happiness "everlasting contention was necessary." But the work was done. The circular letter brought encouraging replies from the other colonies. The condemnation of the Townshend acts was unanimous, and leading merchants in most of the towns entered into agreements not to import any more English goods until the acts should be repealed. Ladies formed associations, under the name of Daughters of Liberty, pledging themselves to wear homespun clothes and to abstain from drinking tea. The feeling of the country was thus plainly enough expressed, but nowhere as yet was there any riot or disorder, and no one as yet, except, perhaps, Samuel Adams, had begun to think of a political separation from England. Even he did not look upon such a course as desirable, but the treatment of his remonstrances by the king and the ministry soon led him to change his opinion.



The petition of the Massachusetts assembly was received by the king with silent contempt, but the circular letter threw him into a rage. In cabinet meeting, it was pronounced to be little better than an overt act of rebellion, and the ministers were encouraged in this opinion by letters from Bernard, who represented the whole affair as the wicked attempt of a few vile demagogues to sow the seeds of dissension broadcast over the continent. We have before had occasion to observe the extreme jealousy with which the Crown had always regarded any attempt at concerted action among the colonies which did not originate with itself.

Lord Hillsborough's instructions to Bernard

But here was an attempt at concerted action in flagrant opposition to the royal will. Lord Hillsborough instructed Bernard to command the assembly to rescind their circular letter, and, in case of their refusal, to send them home about their business. This was to be repeated year after year, so that, until Massachusetts should see fit to declare herself humbled and penitent, she must go without a legislature. At the same time, Hillsborough ordered the assemblies in all the other colonies to treat the Massachusetts circular with contempt, – and this, too, under penalty of instant dissolution. From a constitutional point of view, these arrogant orders deserve to be ranked among the curiosities of political history. They serve to mark the rapid progress the ministry was making in the art of misgovernment. A year before, Townshend had suspended the New York legislature by an act of Parliament. Now, a secretary of state, by a simple royal order, threatened to suspend all the legislative bodies of America unless they should vote according to his dictation.

When Hillsborough's orders were laid before the Massachusetts assembly, they were greeted with scorn. "We are asked to rescind," said Otis. "Let Britain rescind her measures, or the colonies are lost to her forever."

The "Illustrious Ninety-Two"

Nevertheless, it was only after nine days of discussion that the question was put, when the assembly decided, by a vote of ninety-two to seventeen, that it would not rescind its circular letter. Bernard immediately dissolved the assembly, but its vote was hailed with delight throughout the country, and the "Illustrious Ninety-Two" became the favourite toast on all convivial occasions. Nor were the other colonial assemblies at all readier than that of Massachusetts to yield to the secretary's dictation. They all expressed the most cordial sympathy with the recommendations of the circular letter; and in several instances they were dissolved by the governors, according to Hillsborough's instructions.



FANEUIL HALL, THE CRADLE OF LIBERTY

While these fruitless remonstrances against the Townshend acts had been preparing, the commissioners of the customs, in enforcing the acts, had not taken sufficient pains to avoid irritating the people.

Impressment of citizens

In the spring of 1768, the fifty-gun frigate Romney had been sent to mount guard in the harbour of Boston, and while she lay there several of the citizens were seized and impressed as seamen, — a lawless practice long afterward common in the British navy, but already stigmatized as barbarous by public opinion in America. As long ago as 1747, when the relations between the colonies and the home government were quite harmonious, resistance to the press-gang had resulted in a riot in the streets of Boston. Now while the town was very indignant over this lawless kidnapping of its citizens, on the 10th of June, 1768, John Hancock's sloop Liberty was seized at the wharf by a boat's crew from the Romney, for an alleged violation of the revenue laws, though without official warrant. Insults and recriminations ensued between the officers and the citizens assembled on the wharf, until after a while the excitement grew into a mild form of riot, in which a few windows were broken, some of the officers were pelted, and finally a pleasure boat, belonging to the collector, was pulled up out of the water, carried to the Common, and burned there, when Hancock and Adams, arriving upon the scene, put a stop to the commotion. A few days afterward, a town meeting was held in Faneuil Hall; but as the crowd was too great to be contained in the building, it was adjourned to the Old South Meeting-House, where Otis addressed the people from the pulpit. A petition to the governor was prepared, in which it was set forth that the impressment of peaceful citizens was an illegal act, and that the state of the town was as if war had been declared against it; and the governor was requested to order the instant

removal of the frigate from the harbour. A committee of twenty-one leading citizens was appointed to deliver this petition to the governor at his house in Jamaica Plain. In his letters to the secretary of state Bernard professed to live in constant fear of assassination, and was always begging for troops to protect him against the incendiary and blackguard mob of Boston. Yet as he looked down the beautiful road from his open window, that summer afternoon, what he saw was not a ragged mob, armed with knives and bludgeons, shouting "Liberty, or death!" and bearing the head of a revenue collector aloft on the point of a pike, but a quiet procession of eleven chaises, from which there alighted at his door twenty-one gentlemen, as sedate and stately in demeanour as those old Roman senators at whom the Gaulish chief so marvelled. There followed a very affable interview, during which wine was passed around. The next day the governor's answer was read in town meeting, declining to remove the frigate, but promising that in future there should be no impressment of Massachusetts citizens; and with this compromise the wrath of the people was for a moment assuaged.



Fra. Bernard

Affairs of this sort, reported with gross exaggeration by the governor and revenue commissioners to the ministry, produced in England the impression that Boston was a lawless and

riotous town, full of cutthroats and blacklegs, whose violence could be held in check only by martial law. Of all the misconceptions of America by England which brought about the American Revolution, perhaps this notion of the turbulence of Boston was the most ludicrous. During the ten years of excitement which preceded the War of Independence there was one disgraceful riot in Boston, – that in which Hutchinson’s house was sacked; but in all this time not a drop of blood was shed by the people, nor was anybody’s life for a moment in danger at their hands. The episode of the sloop Liberty, as here described, was a fair sample of the disorders which occurred at Boston at periods of extreme excitement; and in any European town in the eighteenth century it would hardly have been deemed worthy of mention.

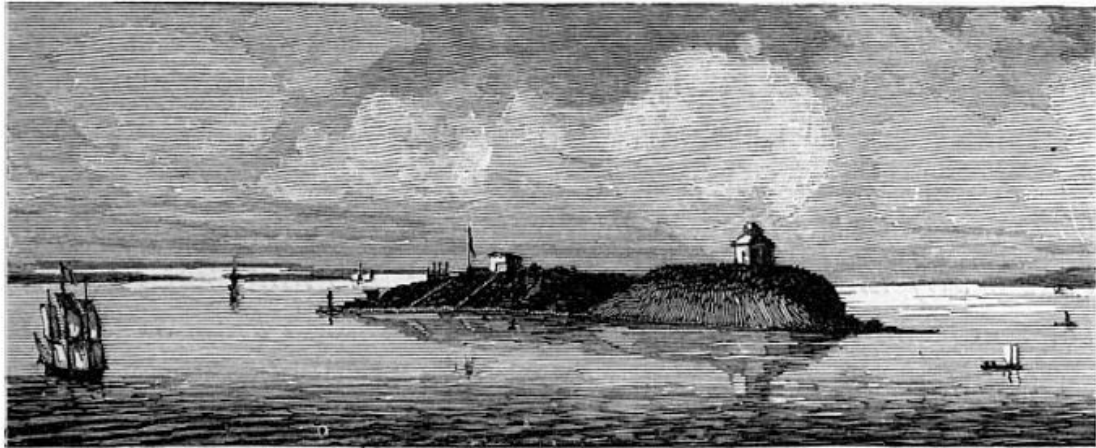
Even before the affair of the Liberty, the government had made up its mind to send troops to Boston, in order to overawe the popular party and show them that the king and Lord Hillsborough were in earnest. The news of the Liberty affair, however, served to remove any hesitation that might hitherto have been felt.

Statute of Henry VIII. concerning “treason committed abroad”

Vengeance was denounced against the insolent town of Boston. The most seditious spirits, such as Otis and Adams, must be made an example of, and thus the others might be frightened into submission. With such intent, Lord Hillsborough sent over to inquire “if any person had committed any acts which, under the statutes of Henry VIII. against treason committed abroad, might justify their being brought to England for trial.” This raking-up of an obsolete statute, enacted at one of the worst periods of English history, and before England had any colonies at all, was extremely injudicious. But besides all this, continued Hillsborough, the town meeting, that nursery of sedition, must be put down or overawed; and in pursuance of this scheme, two regiments of soldiers and a frigate were to be sent over to Boston at the ministry’s earliest convenience. To make an example of Boston, it was thought, would have a wholesome effect upon the temper of the Americans.



LANDING OF THE TROOPS IN BOSTON, 1768



CASTLE WILLIAM, BOSTON HARBOUR

It was now, in the summer of 1768, that Samuel Adams made up his mind that there was no hope of redress from the British government, and that the only remedy was to be found in the assertion of political independence by the American colonies.

Samuel Adams makes up his mind, 1768

The courteous petitions and temperate remonstrances of the American assemblies had been met, not by rational arguments, but by insulting and illegal royal orders; and now at last an army was on the way from England to enforce the tyrannical measures of government, and to terrify the people into submission. Accordingly, Adams came to the conclusion that the only proper course for the colonies was to declare themselves independent of Great Britain, to unite together in a permanent confederation, and to invite European alliances. We have his own word for the fact that from this moment until the Declaration of Independence, in 1776, he consecrated all his energies, with burning enthusiasm, upon the attainment of that great object. Yet in 1768 no one knew better than Samuel Adams that the time had not yet come when his bold policy could be safely adopted, and that any premature attempt at armed resistance on the part of Massachusetts might prove fatal. At this time, probably no other American statesman had thought the matter out so far as to reach Adams's conclusions. No American had as yet felt any desire to terminate the political connection with England. Even those who most thoroughly condemned the measures of the government did not consider the case hopeless, but believed that in one way or another a peaceful solution was still attainable. For a long time this attitude was sincerely and patiently maintained. Even Washington, when he came to take command of the army at Cambridge, after the battle of Bunker Hill, had not made up his mind that the object of the war was to be the independence of the colonies. In the same month of July, 1775, Jefferson said expressly, "We have not raised armies with designs of separating from Great Britain and establishing independent states. Necessity has not yet driven us into that desperate measure." The Declaration of Independence was at last brought about only with difficulty and after prolonged discussion. Our great-great-grandfathers looked upon themselves as Englishmen, and felt proud of their connection with England. Their determination to resist arbitrary measures was at first in no way associated in their minds with disaffection toward the mother-country. Besides this, the task of effecting a separation by military measures seemed to most persons quite hopeless. It was not until after Bunker Hill had shown that American soldiers were a match for British soldiers in the field, and after Washington's capture of Boston had shown that the enemy really could be dislodged from a whole section of the country, that the more hopeful patriots began to feel confident

of the ultimate success of a war for independence. It is hard for us now to realize how terrible the difficulties seemed to the men who surmounted them. Throughout the war, beside the Tories who openly sympathized with the enemy, there were many worthy people who thought we were “going too far,” and who magnified our losses and depreciated our gains, – quite like the people who, in the War of Secession, used to be called “croakers.” The depression of even the boldest, after such defeats as that of Long Island, was dreadful. How inadequate was the general sense of our real strength, how dim the general comprehension of the great events that were happening, may best be seen in the satirical writings of some of the loyalists. At the time of the French alliance, there were many who predicted that the result of this step would be to undo the work of the Seven Years’ War, to reinstate the French in America with full control over the thirteen colonies, and to establish despotism and popery all over the continent. A satirical pamphlet, published in 1779, just ten years before the Bastille was torn down in Paris, drew an imaginary picture of a Bastille which ten years later was to stand in New York, and, with still further license of fantasy, portrayed Samuel Adams in the garb of a Dominican friar. Such nonsense is of course no index to the sentiments or the beliefs of the patriotic American people, but the mere fact that it could occur to anybody shows how hard it was for people to realize how competent America was to take care of herself. The more we reflect upon the slowness with which the country came to the full consciousness of its power and importance, the more fully we bring ourselves to realize how unwilling America was to tear herself asunder from England, and how the Declaration of Independence was only at last resorted to when it had become evident that no other course was compatible with the preservation of our self-respect; the more thoroughly we realize all this, the nearer we shall come toward duly estimating the fact that in 1768, seven years before the battle of Lexington, the master mind of Samuel Adams had fully grasped the conception of a confederation of American states independent of British control. The clearness with which he saw this, as the inevitable outcome of the political conditions of the time, gave to his views and his acts, in every emergency that arose, a commanding influence throughout the land.

In September, 1768, it was announced in Boston that the troops were on their way, and would soon be landed. There happened to be a legal obstacle, unforeseen by the ministry, to their being quartered in the town. In accordance with the general act of Parliament for quartering troops, the regular barracks at Castle William in the harbour would have to be filled before the town could be required to find quarters for any troops. Another clause of the act provided that if any military officer should take upon himself to quarter soldiers in any of his Majesty’s dominions otherwise than as allowed by the act, he should be straightway dismissed the service.

Arrival of troops in Boston

At the news that the troops were about to arrive, the governor was asked to convene the assembly, that it might be decided how to receive them. On Bernard’s refusal, the selectmen of Boston issued a circular, inviting all the towns of Massachusetts to send delegates to a general convention, in order that deliberate action might be taken upon this important matter. In answer to the circular, delegates from ninety-six towns assembled in Faneuil Hall, and, laughing at the governor’s order to “disperse,” proceeded to show how, in the exercise of the undoubted right of public meeting, the colony could virtually legislate for itself, in the absence of its regular legislature. The convention, finding that nothing was necessary for Boston to do but insist upon strict compliance with the letter of the law, adjourned. In October, two regiments arrived, and were allowed to land without opposition, but no lodging was provided for them. Bernard, in fear of an affray, had gone out into the country; but nothing could have been farther from the thoughts of the people. The commander, Colonel Dalrymple, requested shelter for his men, but was told that he must quarter them in the barracks at Castle William. As the night was frosty, however, the Sons of Liberty allowed them to sleep in Faneuil Hall. Next day, the governor, finding everything quiet, came back, and heard Dalrymple’s

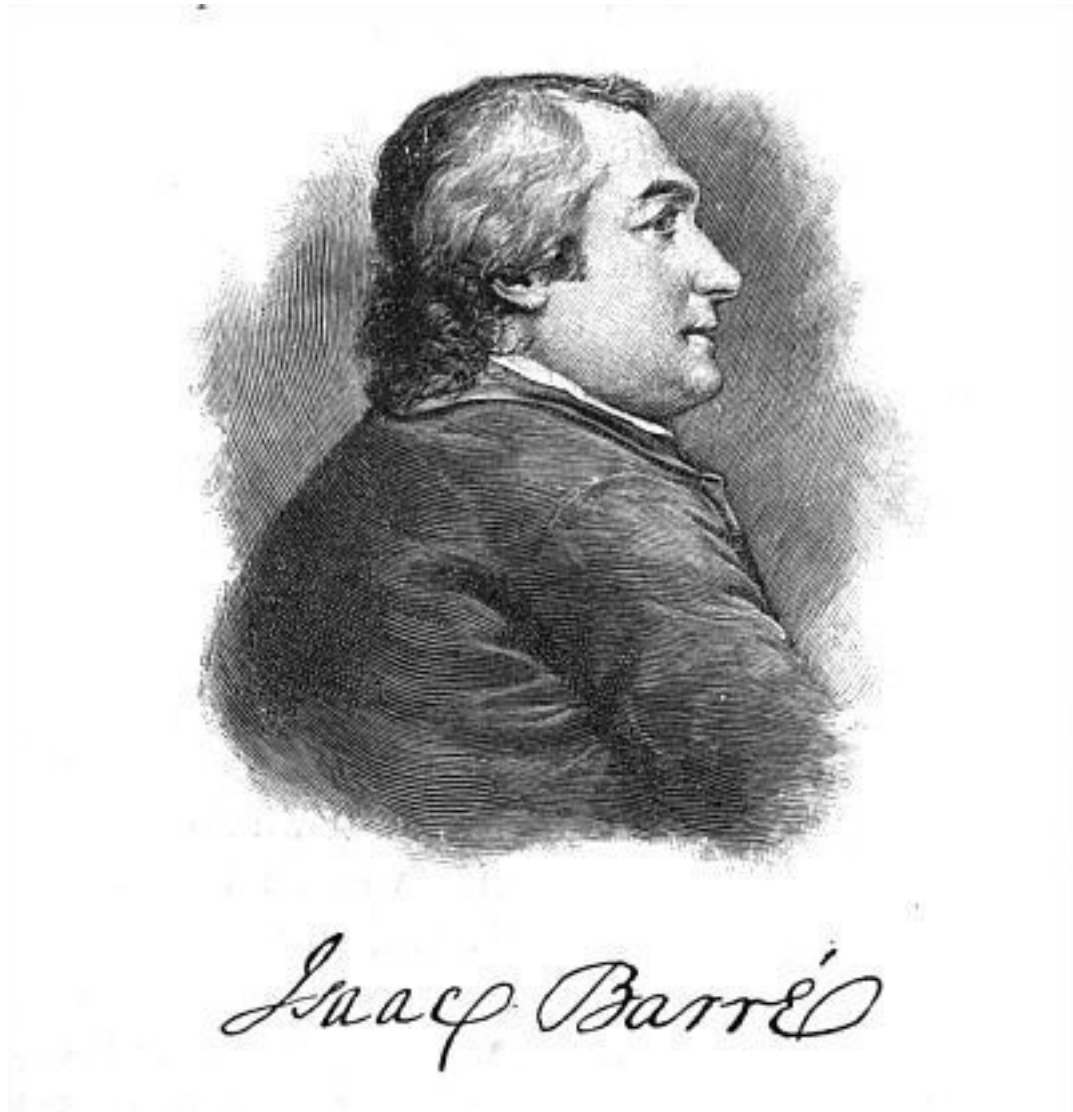
complaint. But in vain did he apply in turn to the council, to the selectmen, and to the justices of the peace, to grant quarters for the troops; he was told that the law was plain, and that the Castle must first be occupied. The governor then tried to get possession of an old dilapidated building which belonged to the colony; but the tenants had taken legal advice, and told him to turn them out if he dared. Nothing could be more provoking. General Gage was obliged to come on from his headquarters at New York; but not even he, the commander-in-chief of his Majesty's forces in America, could quarter the troops in violation of the statute without running the risk of being cashiered, on conviction before two justices of the peace. So the soldiers stayed at night in tents on the Common, until the weather grew so cold that Dalrymple was obliged to hire some buildings for them at exorbitant rates, and at the expense of the Crown. By way of insult to the people, two cannon were planted on King Street, with their muzzles pointing toward the Town House. But as the troops could do nothing without a requisition from a civil magistrate, and as the usual strict decorum was preserved throughout the town, there was nothing in the world for them to do. In case of an insurrection, the force was too small to be of any use; and so far as the policy of overawing the town was concerned, no doubt the soldiers were more afraid of the people than the people of the soldiers.

Letters of "Vindex"

No sooner were the soldiers thus established in Boston than Samuel Adams published a series of letters signed "Vindex," in which he argued that to keep up "a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, without the consent of Parliament, was against the law; that the consent of Parliament necessarily implied the consent of the people, who were always present in Parliament, either by themselves or by their representatives; and that the Americans, as they were not and could not be represented in Parliament, were therefore suffering under military tyranny over which they were allowed to exercise no control." The only notice taken of this argument by Bernard and Hillsborough was an attempt to collect evidence upon the strength of which its author might be indicted for treason, and sent over to London to be tried; but Adams had been so wary in all his proceedings that it was impossible to charge him with any technical offence, and to have seized him otherwise than by due process of law would have been to precipitate rebellion in Massachusetts.



GENERAL HENRY CONWAY



In Parliament, the proposal to extend the act of Henry VIII. to America was bitterly opposed by Burke, Barré, Pownall, and Dowdeswell, as well as by Grenville, who characterized it as sheer madness; but the measure was carried, nevertheless.

Debate in Parliament

Burke further maintained, in an eloquent speech, that the royal order requiring Massachusetts to rescind her circular letter was unconstitutional; and here again Grenville agreed with him. The attention of Parliament, during the spring of 1769, was occupied chiefly with American affairs. Pownall moved that the Townshend acts should be repealed, and in this he was earnestly seconded by a petition of the London merchants; for the non-importation policy of Americans had begun to bear hard upon business in London. After much debate, Lord North proposed a compromise, repealing all the Townshend acts except that which laid duty on tea. The more clear-headed members saw that such a compromise, which yielded nothing in the matter of principle, would do no good. Beckford pointed out the fact that the tea-duty did not bring in £300 to the government; and Lord Beauchamp pertinently asked whether it were worth while, for such a paltry revenue, to make enemies of three millions of people. Grafton, Camden, Conway, Burke, Barré, and Dowdeswell wished to have the tea-duty repealed also, and the whole principle of parliamentary taxation given up; and Lord North

agreed with them in his secret heart, but could not bring himself to act contrary to the king's wishes. "America must fear you before she can love you," said Lord North... "I am against repealing the last act of Parliament, securing to us a revenue out of America; I will never think of repealing it until I see America prostrate at my feet." "To effect this," said Barré, "is not so easy as some imagine; the Americans are a numerous, a respectable, a hardy, a free people.

Colonel Barré's speech

But were it ever so easy, does any friend to his country really wish to see America thus humbled? In such a situation, she would serve only as a monument of your arrogance and your folly. For my part, the America I wish to see is America increasing and prosperous, raising her head in graceful dignity, with freedom and firmness asserting her rights at your bar, vindicating her liberties, pleading her services, and conscious of her merit. This is the America that will have spirit to fight your battles, to sustain you when hard pushed by some prevailing foe, and by her industry will be able to consume your manufactures, support your trade, and pour wealth and splendour into your towns and cities. If we do not change our conduct towards her, America will be torn from our side... Unless you repeal this law, you run the risk of losing America." But the ministers were deaf to Barré's sweet reasonableness. "We shall grant nothing to the Americans," said Lord Hillsborough, "except what they may ask with a halter round their necks." "They are a race of convicted felons," echoed poor old Dr. Johnson, – who had probably been reading *Moll Flanders*, – "and they ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging."



Tho. Hutchinson

As the result of the discussion, Lord North's so-called compromise was adopted, and a circular was sent to America, promising that all the obnoxious acts, except the tea duty, should be repealed. At the same time, Bernard was recalled from Massachusetts to appease the indignation of the people, and made a baronet to show that the ministry approved of his conduct as governor.

Thomas Hutchinson

His place was filled by the lieutenant-governor, Thomas Hutchinson, a man of great learning and brilliant talent, whose "History of Massachusetts Bay" entitles him to a high rank among the worthies of early American literature. The next year Hutchinson was appointed governor. As a native of Massachusetts, it was supposed by Lord North that he would be less likely to irritate the people than his somewhat arrogant predecessor. But in this the government turned out to be mistaken. As to

Hutchinson's sincere patriotism there can now be no doubt whatever. There was something pathetic in the intensity of his love for New England, which to him was the goodliest of all lands, the paradise of this world. He had been greatly admired for his learning and accomplishments, and the people of Massachusetts had elected him to one office after another, and shown him every mark of esteem until the evil days of the Stamp Act. It then began to appear that he was a Tory on principle, and a thorough believer in the British doctrine of the absolute supremacy of Parliament, and popular feeling presently turned against him. He was called a turncoat and traitor, and a thankless dog withal, whose ruling passion was avarice. His conduct and his motives were alike misjudged. He had tried to dissuade the Grenville ministry from passing the Stamp Act; but when once the obnoxious measure had become law, he thought it his duty to enforce it like other laws. For this he was charged with being recreant to his own convictions, and in the shameful riot of August, 1765, he was the worst sufferer. No public man in America has ever been the object of more virulent hatred. None has been more grossly misrepresented by historians. His appointment as governor, however well meant, turned out to be anything but a wise measure.



CAPITOL AT WILLIAMSBURGH, VIRGINIA

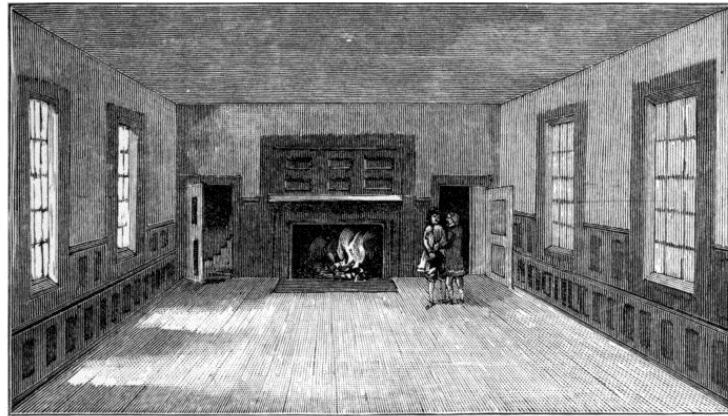
While these things were going on, a strong word of sympathy came from Virginia. When Hillsborough made up his mind to browbeat Boston, he thought it worth while to cajole the Virginians, and try to win them from the cause which Massachusetts was so boldly defending. So Lord Botetourt, a genial and conciliatory man, was sent over to be governor of Virginia, to beguile the people with his affable manner and sweet discourse. But between a quarrelsome Bernard and a gracious Botetourt the practical difference was little, where grave questions of constitutional right were involved.



STOVE USED IN THE HOUSE OF BURGESSES

Virginia resolutions, 1769

In May, 1769, the House of Burgesses assembled at Williamsburgh. Among its members were Patrick Henry, Washington, and Jefferson. The assembly condemned the Townshend acts, asserted that the people of Virginia could be taxed only by their own representatives, declared that it was both lawful and expedient for all the colonies to join in a protest against any violation of the rights of Americans, and especially warned the king of the dangers that might ensue if any American citizen were to be carried beyond sea for trial. Finally, it sent copies of these resolutions to all the other colonial assemblies, inviting their concurrence. At this point Lord Botetourt dissolved the assembly; but the members straightway met again in convention at the famous Apollo room of the Raleigh tavern, and adopted a series of resolutions prepared by Washington, in which they pledged themselves to continue the policy of non-importation until all the obnoxious acts of 1767 should be repealed. These resolutions were adopted by all the southern colonies.



APOLLO ROOM IN THE RALEIGH TAVERN

All through the year 1769, the British troops remained quartered in Boston at the king's expense. According to Samuel Adams, their principal employment seemed to be to parade in the streets, and by their merry-andrew tricks to excite the contempt of women and children. But the soldiers did much to annoy the people, to whom their very presence was an insult. They led brawling, riotous lives, and made the quiet streets hideous by night with their drunken shouts. Scores of loose women, who had followed the regiments across the ocean, came to scandalize the town for a while, and then to encumber the almshouse. On Sundays the soldiers would race horses on the Common, or play Yankee Doodle just outside the church-doors during the services. Now and then oaths, or fisticuffs, or blows with sticks, were exchanged between soldiers and citizens, and once or twice a more serious affair occurred.

Assault on James Otis

One evening in September, a dastardly assault was made upon James Otis, in the British Coffee House, by one Robinson, a commissioner of customs, assisted by half a dozen army officers. It reminds one of the assault upon Charles Sumner by Brooks of South Carolina, shortly before the War of Secession. Otis was savagely beaten, and received a blow on the head with a sword, from the effects of which he never recovered, but finally lost his reason. The popular wrath at this outrage was intense, but there was no disturbance. Otis brought suit against Robinson, and recovered £2,000 in damages, but refused to accept a penny of it when Robinson confessed himself in the wrong, and humbly asked pardon for his irreparable offence.



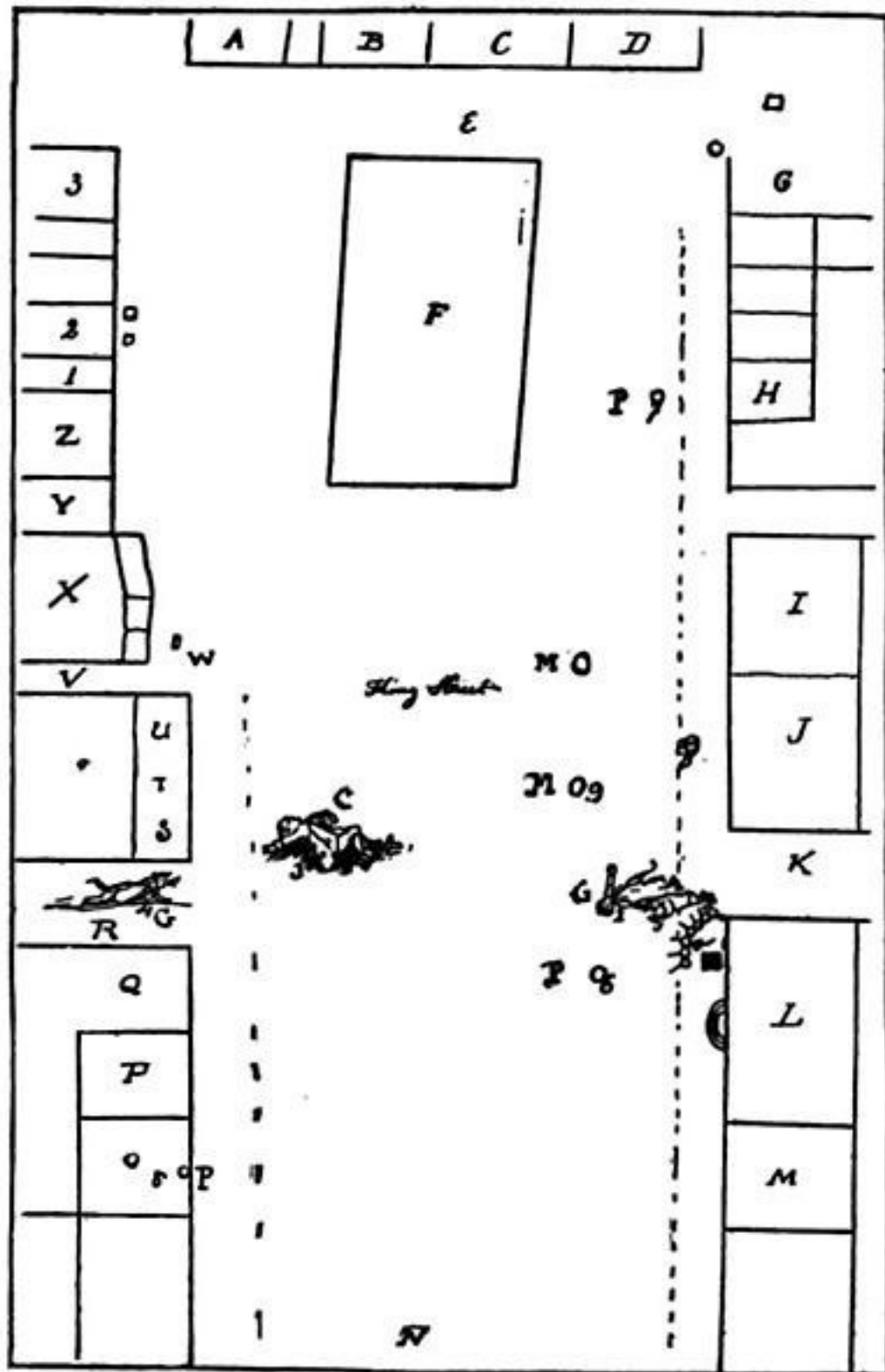
OLD BRICK MEETING-HOUSE

On the 22d of February, 1770, an informer named Richardson, being pelted by a party of schoolboys, withdrew into his house, opened a window, and fired at random into the crowd, killing one little boy and severely wounding another. He was found guilty of murder, but was pardoned. At last, on the 2d of March, an angry quarrel occurred between a party of soldiers and some of the workmen at a ropewalk, and for two or three days there was considerable excitement in the town, and people talked together, standing about the streets in groups; but Hutchinson did not even take the precaution of ordering the soldiers to be kept within their barracks, for he did not believe that the people intended a riot, nor that the troops would dare to fire on the citizens without express permission from himself. On the evening of March 5th, at about eight o'clock, a large crowd collected near the barracks, on Brattle Street, and from bandying abusive epithets with the soldiers began pelting them with snow-balls and striking at them with sticks, while the soldiers now and then dealt blows with their muskets.

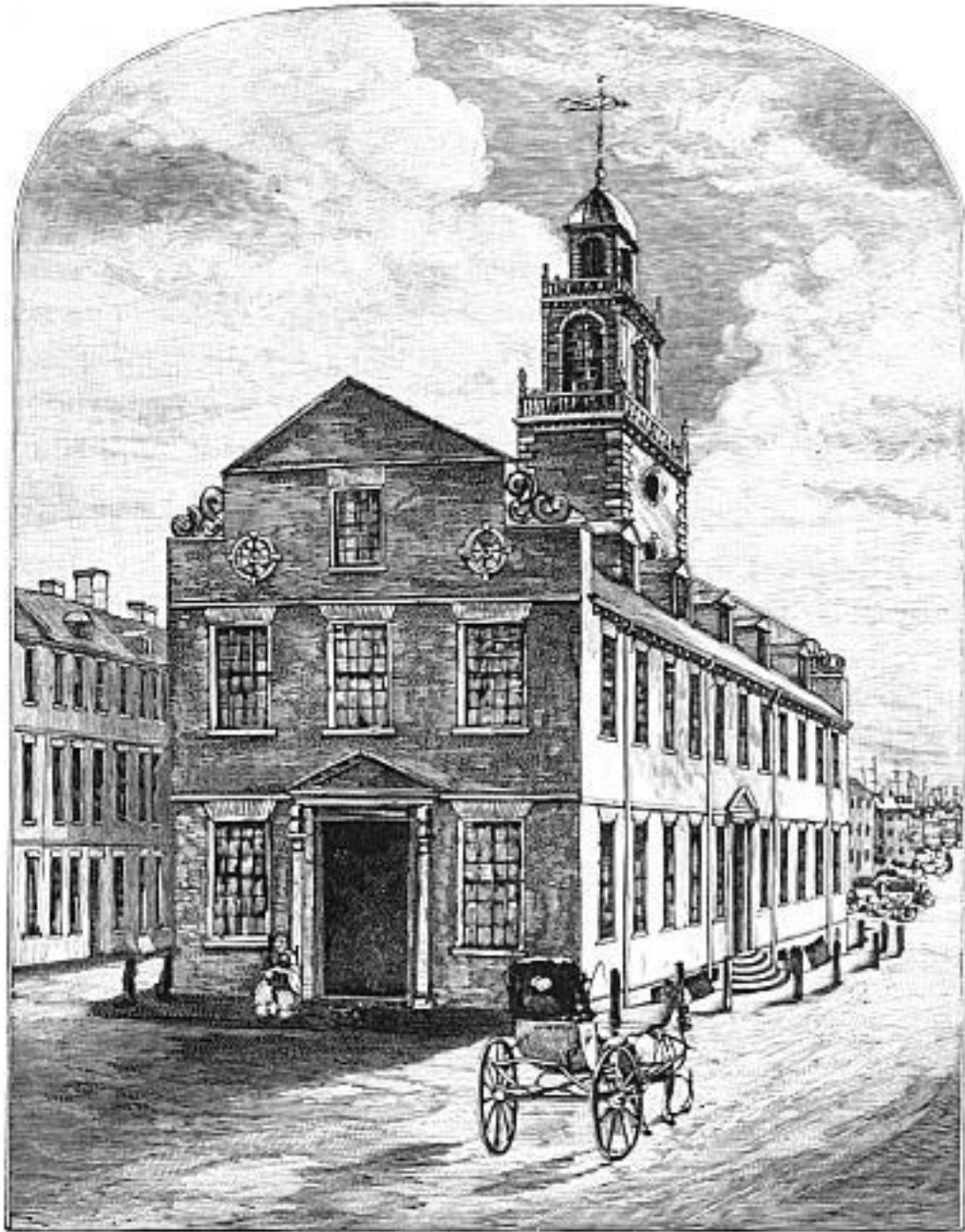
The “Boston Massacre”

Presently Captain Goldfinch, coming along, ordered the men into their barracks for the night, and thus stopped the affray. But meanwhile some one had got into the Old Brick Meeting-House, opposite the head of King Street, and rung the bell; and this, being interpreted as an alarm of fire, brought out many people into the moonlit streets. It was now a little past nine. The sentinel who was pacing in front of the Custom House had a few minutes before knocked down a barber's boy for

calling names at the captain, as he went up to stop the affray on Brattle Street. The crowd in King Street now began to pelt the sentinel, and some shouted, "Kill him!" when Captain Preston and seven privates from the twenty-ninth regiment crossed the street to his aid: and thus the file of nine soldiers confronted an angry crowd of fifty or sixty unarmed men, who pressed up to the very muzzles of their guns, threw snow at their faces, and dared them to fire. All at once, but quite unexpectedly and probably without orders from Preston, seven of the levelled pieces were discharged, instantly killing four men and wounding seven others, of whom two afterwards died. Immediately the alarm was spread through the town, and it might have gone hard with the soldiery, had not Hutchinson presently arrived on the scene, and quieted the people by ordering the arrest of Preston and his men. Next morning the council advised the removal of one of the regiments, but in the afternoon an immense town meeting, called at Faneuil Hall, adjourned to the Old South Meeting-House; and as they passed by the Town House (or what we now call the Old State House), the lieutenant-governor, looking out upon their march, judged "their spirit to be as high as was the spirit of their ancestors when they imprisoned Andros, while they were four times as numerous." All the way from the church to the Town House the street was crowded with the people, while a committee, headed by Samuel Adams, waited upon the governor, and received his assurance that one regiment should be removed. As the committee came out from the Town House, to carry the governor's reply to the meeting in the church, the people pressed back on either side to let them pass; and Adams, leading the way with uncovered head through the lane thus formed, and bowing first to one side and then to the other, passed along the watchword, "Both regiments, or none!" When, in the church, the question was put to vote, three thousand voices shouted, "Both regiments, or none!" and armed with this ultimatum the committee returned to the Town House, where the governor was seated with Colonel Dalrymple and the members of the council. Then Adams, in quiet but earnest tones, stretching forth his arm and pointing his finger at Hutchinson, said that if as acting governor of the province he had the power to remove one regiment he had equally the power to remove both, that the voice of three thousand freemen demanded that all soldiery be forthwith removed from the town, and that if he failed to heed their just demand, he did so at his peril. "I observed his knees to tremble," said the old hero afterward, "I saw his face grow pale, – and I enjoyed the sight!" That Hutchinson was agitated we may well believe; not from fear, but from a sudden sickening sense of the odium of his position as king's representative at such a moment. He was a man of invincible courage, and surely would never have yielded to Adams, had he not known that the law was on the side of the people and that the soldiers were illegal trespassers in Boston. Before sundown the order had gone forth for the removal of both regiments to Castle William, and not until then did the meeting in the church break up. From that day forth the fourteenth and twenty-ninth regiments were known in Parliament as "the Sam Adams regiments."



PAUL REVERE'S PLAN OF KING STREET IN 1770
(Used in the trial of the soldiers)



OLD STATE HOUSE, WEST FRONT

Such was the famous Boston Massacre. All the mildness of New England civilization is brought most strikingly before us in that truculent phrase. The careless shooting of half a dozen townsmen is described by a word which historians apply to such events as Cawnpore or the Sicilian Vespers. Lord Sherbrooke, better known as Robert Lowe, declared a few years ago, in a speech on the uses of a classical education, that the battle of Marathon was really of less account than a modern colliery explosion, because only one hundred and ninety-two of the Greek army lost their lives! From such a point of view, one might argue that the Boston Massacre was an event of far less importance than an ordinary free fight among Colorado gamblers. It is needless to say that this is not the historical point of view. Historical events are not to be measured with a foot-rule.

Some lessons of the “Massacre”

This story of the Boston Massacre is a very trite one, but it has its lessons. It furnishes an instructive illustration of the high state of civilization reached by the people among whom it happened, – by the oppressors as well as those whom it was sought to oppress. The quartering of troops in a peaceful town is something that has in most ages been regarded with horror. Under the senatorial government of Rome, it used to be said that the quartering of troops, even upon a friendly province and for the purpose of protecting it, was a visitation only less to be dreaded than an inroad of hostile barbarians. When we reflect that the British regiments were encamped in Boston during seventeen months, among a population to whom they were thoroughly odious, the fact that only half a dozen persons lost their lives, while otherwise no really grave crimes seem to have been committed, is a fact quite as creditable to the discipline of the soldiers as to the moderation of the people. In most ages and countries, the shooting of half a dozen citizens under such circumstances would either have produced but a slight impression, or, on the other hand, would perhaps have resulted on the spot in a wholesale slaughter of the offending soldiers. The fact that so profound an impression was made in Boston and throughout the country, while at the same time the guilty parties were left to be dealt with in the ordinary course of law, is a striking commentary upon the general peacefulness and decorum of American life, and it shows how high and severe was the standard by which our forefathers judged all lawless proceedings. And here it may not be irrelevant to add that, throughout the constitutional struggles which led to the Revolution, the American standard of political right and wrong was so high that contemporary European politicians found it sometimes difficult to understand it. And for a like reason, even the most fair-minded English historians sometimes fail to see why the Americans should have been so quick to take offence at acts of the British government which doubtless were not meant to be oppressive. If George III. had been a bloodthirsty despot, like Philip II. of Spain; if General Gage had been another Duke of Alva; if American citizens by the hundred had been burned alive or broken on the wheel in New York and Boston; if whole towns had been given up to the cruelty and lust of a beastly soldiery, then no one – not even Dr. Johnson – would have found it hard to understand why the Americans should have exhibited a rebellious temper. But it is one signal characteristic of the progress of political civilization that the part played by sheer brute force in a barbarous age is fully equalled by the part played by a mere covert threat of injustice in a more advanced age. The effect which a blow in the face would produce upon a barbarian will be wrought upon a civilized man by an assertion of some far-reaching legal principle, which only in a subtle and ultimate analysis includes the possibility of a blow in the face. From this point of view, the quickness with which such acts as those of Charles Townshend were comprehended in their remotest bearings is the most striking proof one could wish of the high grade of political culture which our forefathers had reached through their system of perpetual free discussion in town meeting. They had, moreover, reached a point where any manifestation of brute force in the course of a political dispute was exceedingly disgusting and shocking to them. To their minds, the careless slaughter of six citizens conveyed as much meaning as a St. Bartholomew massacre would have conveyed to the minds of men in a lower stage of political development. It was not strange, therefore, that Samuel Adams and his friends should have been ready to make the Boston Massacre the occasion of a moral lesson to their contemporaries. As far as the poor soldiers were concerned, the most significant fact is that there was no attempt to wreak a paltry vengeance on them. Brought to trial on a charge of murder, after a judicious delay of seven months, they were ably defended by John Adams and Josiah Quincy, and all were acquitted save two, who were convicted of manslaughter, and let off with slight punishment. There were some hotheads who grumbled at the verdict, but the people of Boston generally acquiesced in it, as they showed by immediately choosing John Adams for their representative in the assembly – a fact which Mr. Lecky calls very remarkable. Such an event as the Boston Massacre could not fail for a long time to

point a moral among a people so unused to violence and bloodshed. One of the earliest of American engravers, Paul Revere, published a quaint coloured engraving of the scene in King Street, which for a long time was widely circulated, though it has now become very scarce. At the same time, it was decided that the fatal Fifth of March should be solemnly commemorated each year by an oration to be delivered in the Old South Meeting-House; and this custom was kept up until the recognition of American independence in 1783, when the day for the oration was changed to the Fourth of July.

Lord North's ministry

Five weeks before the Boston Massacre the Duke of Grafton had resigned, and Lord North had become prime minister of England. The colonies were kept under , and that great friend of arbitrary government, Lord Thurlow, as solicitor-general, became the king's chief legal adviser. George III was now, to all intents and purposes, his own prime minister, and remained so until after the overthrow at Yorktown. The colonial policy of the government soon became more vexatious than ever. The promised repeal of all the Townshend acts, except the act imposing the tea-duty, was carried through Parliament in April, and its first effect in America, as Lord North had foreseen, was to weaken the spirit of opposition, and to divide the more complaisant colonies from those that were most staunch. The policy of non-importation had pressed with special severity upon the commerce of New York, and the merchants there complained that the fire-eating planters of Virginia and farmers of Massachusetts were growing rich at the expense of their neighbours.

The merchants of New York

In July, the New York merchants broke the non-importation agreement, and sent orders to England for all sorts of merchandise except tea. Such a measure, on the part of so great a seaport, virtually overthrew the non-importation policy, upon which the patriots mainly relied to force the repeal of the Tea Act. The wrath of the other colonies was intense. At the Boston town meeting the letter of the New York merchants was torn in pieces. In New Jersey, the students of Princeton College, James Madison being one of the number, assembled on the green in their black gowns and solemnly burned the letter, while the church-bells were tolled. The offending merchants were stigmatized as "Revolters," and in Charleston their conduct was vehemently denounced. "You had better send us your old liberty-pole," said Philadelphia to New York, with bitter sarcasm, "for you clearly have no further use for it."

This breaking of the non-importation agreement by New York left no general issue upon which the colonies could be sure to unite unless the ministry should proceed to force an issue upon the Tea Act. For the present, Lord North saw the advantage he had gained, and was not inclined to take any such step. Nevertheless, as just observed, the policy of the government soon became more vexatious than ever.

Assemblies convened at strange places

In the summer of 1770, the king entered upon a series of local quarrels with the different colonies, taking care not to raise any general issue. Royal instructions were sent over to the different governments, enjoining courses of action which were unconstitutional and sure to offend the people. The assemblies were either dissolved, or convened at strange places, as at Beaufort in South Carolina, more than seventy miles from the capital, or at Cambridge in Massachusetts. The local governments were as far as possible ignored, and local officers were appointed, with salaries to be paid by the Crown. In Massachusetts, these officers were illegally exempted from the payment of taxes.

Taxes in Maryland

In Maryland, where the charter had expressly provided that no taxes could ever be levied by the British Crown, the governor was ordered to levy taxes indirectly by reviving a law regulating officers' fees, which had expired by lapse of time.

The North Carolina “Regulators”

In North Carolina, excessive fees were extorted, and the sheriffs in many cases collected taxes of which they rendered no account. The upper counties of both the Carolinas were peopled by a hardy set of small farmers and herdsmen, Presbyterians, of Scotch-Irish pedigree, who were known by the name of “Regulators,” because, under the exigencies of their rough frontier life, they formed voluntary associations for the regulation of their own police and the condign punishment of horse-thieves and other criminals.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Wm Tryon". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

In 1771, the North Carolina Regulators, goaded by repeated acts of extortion and of unlawful imprisonment, rose in rebellion. A battle was fought at Alamance, near the headwaters of the Cape Fear river, in which the Regulators were totally defeated by Governor Tryon, leaving more than a hundred of their number dead and wounded upon the field: and six of their leaders, taken prisoners, were summarily hanged for treason. After this achievement Tryon was promoted to the governorship of New York, where he left his name for a time upon the vaguely defined wilderness beyond Schenectady, known in the literature of the Revolutionary War as Tryon County.



Stephen Hopkins

Affair of the Gaspee

In Rhode Island, the eight-gun schooner Gaspee, commanded by Lieutenant Duddington, was commissioned to enforce the revenue acts along the coasts of Narragansett Bay, and she set about the work with reckless and indiscriminating zeal. "Thorough" was Duddington's motto, as it was Lord Stafford's. He not only stopped and searched every vessel that entered the bay, and seized whatever goods he pleased, whether there was any evidence of their being contraband or not, but, besides this, he stole the sheep and hogs of the farmers near the coast, cut down their trees, fired upon market-boats, and behaved in general with unbearable insolence. In March, 1772, the people of Rhode Island complained of these outrages. The matter was referred to Rear-Admiral Montagu, commanding the little fleet in Boston harbour. Montagu declared that the lieutenant was only doing his duty, and

threatened the Rhode Island people in case they should presume to interfere. For three months longer the Gaspee kept up her irritating behaviour, until one evening in June, while chasing a swift American ship, she ran aground. The following night she was attacked by a party of men in eight boats, and captured after a short skirmish, in which Duddington was severely wounded. The crew was set on shore, and the schooner was burned to the water's edge. This act of reprisal was not relished by the government, and large rewards were offered for the arrest of the men concerned in it; but although probably everybody knew who they were, it was impossible to obtain any evidence against them. By a royal order in council, the Rhode Island government was commanded to arrest the offenders and deliver them to Rear-Admiral Montagu, to be taken over to England for trial; but Stephen Hopkins, the venerable chief justice of Rhode Island, flatly refused to take cognizance of any such arrest if made within the colony.



The black thunder clouds of war now gathered quickly. In August, 1772, the king ventured upon an act which went further than anything that had yet occurred toward hastening on the crisis.

The salaries of the judges

It was ordered that all the Massachusetts judges, holding their places during the king's pleasure, should henceforth have their salaries paid by the Crown, and not by the colony. This act, which aimed directly at the independence of the judiciary, aroused intense indignation. The people of Massachusetts were furious, and Samuel Adams now took a step which contributed more than anything that had yet been done toward organizing the opposition to the king throughout the whole country. The idea of establishing committees of correspondence was not wholly new.

Jonathan Mayhew's suggestion

The great preacher Jonathan Mayhew had recommended such a step to James Otis in 1766, and he was led to it through his experience of church matters. Writing in haste, on a Sunday morning, he said, "To a good man all time is holy enough; and none is too holy to do good, or to think upon it. Cultivating a good understanding and hearty friendship between these colonies appears to me so necessary a part of prudence and good policy that no favourable opportunity for that purpose should be omitted... You have heard of the *communion of churches*: ... while I was thinking of this in my bed, the great use and importance of a *communion of colonies* appeared to me in a strong light, which led me immediately to set down these hints to transmit to you." The plan which Mayhew had in mind was the establishment of a regular system of correspondence whereby the colonies could take combined action in defence of their liberties. In the grand crisis of 1772, Samuel Adams saw how much might be effected through committees of correspondence that could not well be effected through the ordinary governmental machinery of the colonies. At the October town meeting in Boston, a committee was appointed to ask the governor whether the judges' salaries were to be paid in conformity to the royal order; and he was furthermore requested to convoke the assembly, in order that the people might have a chance to express their views on so important a matter. But Hutchinson told the committee to mind its own business: he refused to say what would be done about the salaries, and denied the right of the town to petition for a meeting of the assembly. Massachusetts was thus virtually without a general government at a moment when the public mind was agitated by a question of supreme importance.

The committees of correspondence in Massachusetts

Samuel Adams thereupon in town meeting moved the appointment of a committee of correspondence, "to consist of twenty-one persons, to state the rights of the colonists and of this province in particular, as men and Christians and as subjects; and to communicate and publish the same to the several towns and to the world as the sense of this town, with the infringements and violations thereof that have been, or from time to time may be, made." The adoption of this measure at first excited the scorn of Hutchinson, who described the committee as composed of "deacons," "atheists," and "black-hearted fellows," whom one would not care to meet in the dark. He predicted that they would only make themselves ridiculous, but he soon found reason to change his mind. The response to the statements of the Boston committee was prompt and unanimous, and before the end of the year more than eighty towns had already organized their committees of correspondence. Here was a new legislative body, springing directly from the people, and competent, as events soon showed, to manage great affairs. Its influence reached into every remotest corner of Massachusetts, it was always virtually in session, and no governor could dissolve or prorogue it. Though unknown to the law, the creation of it involved no violation of law. The right of the towns of Massachusetts to ask

one another's advice could no more be disputed than the right of the freemen of any single town to hold a town meeting. The power thus created was omnipresent, but intangible.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Leonard". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a large, stylized 'D' and 'L'.

"This," said Daniel Leonard, the great Tory pamphleteer, two years afterwards, "is the foulest, subtlest, and most venomous serpent ever issued from the egg of sedition. It is the source of the rebellion. I saw the small seed when it was planted: it was a grain of mustard. I have watched the plant until it has become a great tree. The vilest reptiles that crawl upon the earth are concealed at the root; the foulest birds of the air rest upon its branches. I would now induce you to go to work immediately with axes and hatchets and cut it down, for a twofold reason, – because it is a pest to society, and lest it be felled suddenly by a stronger arm, and crush its thousands in its fall."

Intercolonial committees of correspondence

The system of committees of correspondence did indeed grow into a mighty tree; for it was nothing less than the beginning of the American Union. Adams himself by no means intended to confine his plan to Massachusetts, for in the following April he wrote to Richard Henry Lee of Virginia urging the establishment of similar committees in every colony. But Virginia had already acted in the matter. When its assembly met in March, 1773, the news of the refusal of Hopkins to obey the royal order, of the attack upon the Massachusetts judiciary, and of the organization of the committees of correspondence was the all-exciting subject of conversation. The motion to establish a system of intercolonial committees of correspondence was made by the youthful Dabney Carr, and eloquently supported by Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee. It was unanimously adopted, and very soon several other colonies elected committees, in response to the invitation from Virginia.

This was the most decided step toward revolution that had yet been taken by the Americans. It only remained for the various intercolonial committees to assemble together, and there would be a Congress speaking in the name of the continent. To bring about such an act of union, nothing more was needed than some fresh course of aggression on the part of the British government which should raise a general issue in all the colonies; and, with the rare genius for blundering which had possessed it ever since the accession of George III., the government now went on to provide such an issue. It was preëminently a moment when the question of taxation should have been let alone. Throughout the American world there was a strong feeling of irritation, which might still have been allayed had the ministry shown a yielding temper. The grounds of complaint had come to be different in the different colonies, and in some cases, in which we can clearly see the good sense of Lord North prevailing over the obstinacy of the king, the ministry had gained a point by yielding. In the Rhode Island case, they had seized a convenient opportunity and let the matter drop, to the manifest advantage of their position.

The question of taxation revived

In Massachusetts, the discontent had come to be alarming, and it was skilfully organized. The assembly had offered the judges their salaries in the usual form, and had threatened to impeach them if they should dare to accept a penny from the Crown. The recent action of Virginia had shown that

these two most powerful of the colonies were in strong sympathy with one another. It was just this moment that George III. chose for reviving the question of taxation, upon which all the colonies would be sure to act as a unit, and sure to withstand him to his face. The duty on tea had been retained simply as a matter of principle. It did not bring three hundred pounds a year into the British exchequer. But the king thought this a favourable time for asserting the obnoxious principle which the tax involved.

Thus, as in Mrs. Gamp's case, a teapot became the cause or occasion of a division between friends. The measures now taken by the government brought matters at once to a crisis. None of the colonies would take tea on its terms.



Lord Hillsborough had lately been superseded as colonial secretary by Lord Dartmouth, an amiable man like the prime minister, but like him wholly under the influence of the king. Lord Dartmouth's appointment was made the occasion of introducing a series of new measures. The affairs of the East India Company were in a bad condition, and it was thought that the trouble was partly due to the loss of the American trade in tea. The Americans would not buy tea shipped from England, but they smuggled it freely from Holland, and the smuggling could not be stopped by mere force. The best way to obviate the difficulty, it was thought, would be to make English tea cheaper in America than foreign tea, while still retaining the duty of threepence on a pound. If this could be achieved, it was supposed that the Americans would be sure to buy English tea by reason of its cheapness, and would thus be ensnared into admitting the principle involved in the duty.

The king's ingenious scheme

This ingenious scheme shows how unable the king and his ministers were to imagine that the Americans could take a higher view of the matter than that of pounds, shillings, and pence. In order to enable the East India Company to sell its tea cheap in America, a drawback was allowed of all the duties which such tea had been wont to pay on entering England on its way from China. In this way, the Americans would now find it actually cheaper to buy the English tea with the duty on it than to smuggle their tea from Holland. To this scheme, Lord North said, it was of no use for any one to offer objections, for the king would have it so. "The king meant to try the question with America." In accordance with this policy, several ships loaded with tea set sail in the autumn of 1773 for the four principal ports, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. Agents or consignees of the East India Company were appointed by letter to receive the tea in these four towns.

As soon as the details of this scheme were known in America, the whole country was in a blaze, from Maine to Georgia. Nevertheless, only legal measures of resistance were contemplated. In Philadelphia, a great meeting was held in October at the State House, and it was voted that whosoever should lend countenance to the receiving or unloading of the tea would be regarded as an enemy to his country. The consignees were then requested to resign their commissions, and did so.

How Boston became the battle-ground

In New York and Charleston, also, the consignees threw up their commissions. In Boston, a similar demand was made, but the consignees doggedly refused to resign; and thus the eyes of the whole country were directed toward Boston as the battlefield on which the great issue was to be tried.



LORD NORTH POURING TEA DOWN COLUMBIA'S THROAT

During the month of November many town meetings were held in Faneuil Hall. On the 17th, authentic intelligence was brought that the tea-ships would soon arrive. The next day, a committee, headed by Samuel Adams, waited upon the consignees, and again asked them to resign. Upon their refusal, the town meeting instantly dissolved itself, without a word of comment or debate; and at this ominous silence the consignees and the governor were filled with a vague sense of alarm, as if some storm were brewing whereof none could foresee the results.

The five towns ask advice

All felt that the decision now rested with the committees of correspondence. Four days afterward, the committees of Cambridge, Brookline, Roxbury, and Dorchester met the Boston committee at Faneuil Hall, and it was unanimously resolved that on no account should the tea be landed. The five towns also sent a letter to all the other towns in the colony, saying, "Brethren, we are reduced to this dilemma: either to sit down quiet under this and every other burden that our enemies shall see fit to lay upon us, or to rise up and resist this and every plan laid for our destruction, as becomes wise freemen. In this extremity we earnestly request your advice." There was nothing weak or doubtful in the response. From Petersham and Lenox perched on their lofty hilltops, from the valleys of the Connecticut and the Merrimack, from Chatham on the bleak peninsula of Cape Cod, there came but one message, – to give up life and all that makes life dear, rather than submit like slaves to this great wrong. Similar words of encouragement came from other colonies. In Philadelphia, at

the news of the bold stand Massachusetts was about to take, the church-bells were rung, and there was general rejoicing about the streets. A letter from the men of Philadelphia to the men of Boston said, "Our only fear is lest you may shrink. May God give you virtue enough to save the liberties of your country."

On Sunday, the 28th, the Dartmouth, first of the tea-ships, arrived in the harbour. The urgency of the business in hand overcame the sabbatarian scruples of the people.

Arrival of the tea; meeting at the Old South

The committee of correspondence met at once, and obtained from Francis Rotch, the owner of the vessel, a promise that the ship should not be entered before Tuesday. Samuel Adams then invited the committees of the five towns, to which Charlestown was now added, to hold a mass-meeting the next morning at Faneuil Hall. More than five thousand people assembled, but as the Cradle of Liberty could not hold so many, the meeting was adjourned to the Old South Meeting-House. It was voted, without a single dissenting voice, that the tea should be sent back to England in the ship which had brought it. Rotch was forbidden to enter the ship at the Custom House, and Captain Hall, the ship's master, was notified that "it was at his peril if he suffered any of the tea brought by him to be landed." A night-watch of twenty-five citizens was set to guard the vessel, and so the meeting adjourned till next day, when it was understood that the consignees would be ready to make some proposals in the matter. Next day, the message was brought from the consignees that it was out of their power to send back the tea; but if it should be landed, they declared themselves willing to store it, and not expose any of it for sale until word could be had from England. Before action could be taken upon this message, the sheriff of Suffolk county entered the church and read a proclamation from the governor, warning the people to disperse and "surcease all further unlawful proceedings at their utmost peril." A storm of hisses was the only reply, and the business of the meeting went on. The proposal of the consignees was rejected, and Rotch and Hall, being present, were made to promise that the tea should go back to England in the Dartmouth, without being landed or paying duty. Resolutions were then passed, forbidding all owners or masters of ships to bring any tea from Great Britain to any part of Massachusetts, so long as the act imposing a duty on it remained unrepealed. Whoever should disregard this injunction would be treated as an enemy to his country, his ships would be prevented from landing – by force, if necessary – and his tea would be sent back to the place whence it came. It was further voted that the citizens of Boston and the other towns here assembled would see that these resolutions were carried into effect, "at the risk of their lives and property." Notice of these resolutions was sent to the owners of the other ships, now daily expected. And, to crown all, a committee, of which Adams was chairman, was appointed to send a printed copy of these proceedings to New York and Philadelphia, to every seaport in Massachusetts, and to the British government.

Two or three days after this meeting, the other two ships arrived, and, under orders from the committee of correspondence, were anchored by the side of the Dartmouth, at Griffin's Wharf, near the foot of Pearl Street.

The tea-ships placed under guard

A military watch was kept at the wharf day and night, sentinels were placed in the church belfries, chosen post-riders, with horses saddled and bridled, were ready to alarm the neighbouring towns, beacon-fires were piled all ready for lighting upon every hilltop, and any attempt to land the tea forcibly would have been the signal for an instant uprising throughout at least four counties. Now, in accordance with the laws providing for the entry and clearance of shipping at custom houses, it was necessary that every ship should land its cargo within twenty days from its arrival. In case this

was not done, the revenue officers were authorized to seize the ship and land its cargo themselves. In the case of the Dartmouth, the captain had promised to take her back to England without unloading; but still, before she could legally start, she must obtain a clearance from the collector of customs, or, in default of this, a pass from the governor. At sunrise of Friday, the 17th of December, the twenty days would have expired.



THE OLD SOUTH MEETING-HOUSE

On Saturday, the 11th, Rotch was summoned before the committee of correspondence, and Samuel Adams asked him why he had not kept his promise, and started his ship off for England. He sought to excuse himself on the ground that he had not the power to do so, whereupon he was told that he must apply to the collector for a clearance. Hearing of these things, the governor gave strict orders at the Castle to fire upon any vessel trying to get out to sea without a proper permit; and two ships from Montagu's fleet, which had been laid up for the winter, were stationed at the entrance of the harbour, to make sure against the Dartmouth's going out. Tuesday came, and Rotch, having done nothing, was summoned before the town meeting, and peremptorily ordered to apply for a clearance. Samuel Adams and nine other gentlemen accompanied him to the Custom House to witness the proceedings, but the collector refused to give an answer until the next day. The meeting then adjourned till Thursday, the last of the twenty days. On Wednesday morning, Rotch was again escorted to the Custom House, and the collector refused to give a clearance unless the tea should first be landed.

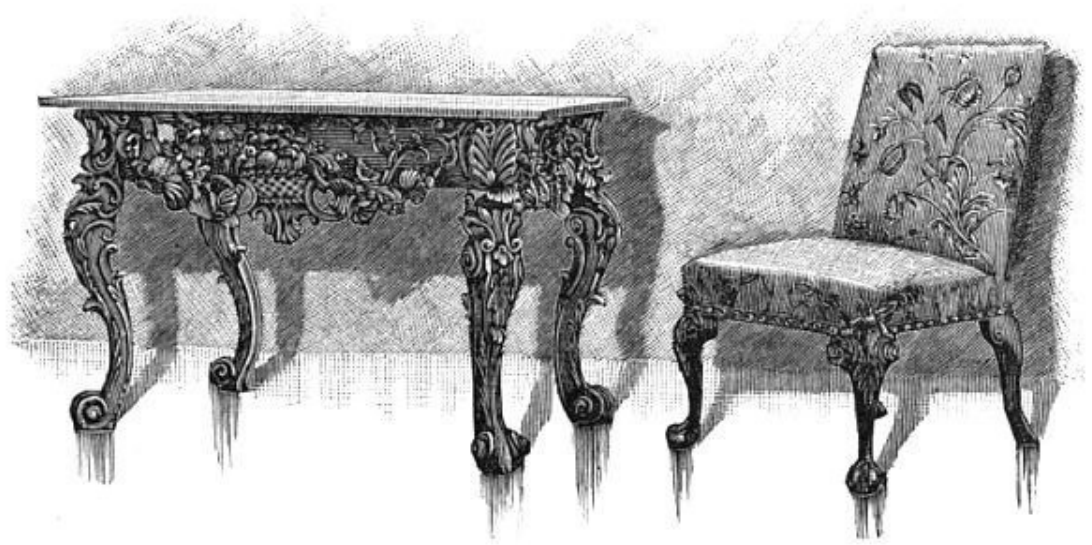


TABLE AND CHAIR FROM GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON'S HOUSE AT MILTON

Town meeting at the Old South

On the morning of Thursday, December 16th, the assembly which was gathered in the Old South Meeting-House, and in the streets about it, numbered more than seven thousand people. It was to be one of the most momentous days in the history of the world. The clearance having been refused, nothing now remained but to order Rotch to request a pass for his ship from the governor. But the wary Hutchinson, well knowing what was about to be required of him, had gone out to his country house at Milton, so as to foil the proceedings by his absence. But the meeting was not to be so trifled with. Rotch was enjoined, on his peril, to repair to the governor at Milton, and ask for his pass; and while he was gone, the meeting considered what was to be done in case of a refusal. Without a pass it would be impossible for the ship to clear the harbour under the guns of the Castle; and by sunrise, next morning, the revenue officers would be empowered to seize the ship, and save by a violent assault upon them it would be impossible to prevent the landing of the tea. "Who knows," said John Rowe, "how tea will mingle with salt water?" And great applause followed the suggestion. Yet the plan which was to serve as a last resort had unquestionably been adopted in secret committee

long before this. It appears to have been worked out in detail in a little back room at the office of the "Boston Gazette," and there is no doubt that Samuel Adams, with some others of the popular leaders, had a share in devising it. But among the thousands present at the town meeting, it is probable that very few knew just what it was designed to do. At five in the afternoon, it was unanimously voted that, come what would, the tea should not be landed. It had now grown dark, and the church was dimly lighted with candles. Determined not to act until the last legal method of relief should have been tried and found wanting, the great assembly was still waiting quietly in and about the church when, an hour after nightfall, Rotch returned from Milton with the governor's refusal. Then, amid profound stillness, Samuel Adams arose and said, quietly but distinctly, "This meeting can do nothing more to save the country." It was the declaration of war; the law had shown itself unequal to the occasion, and nothing now remained but a direct appeal to force.

The tea thrown into the harbour

Scarcely had the watchword left his mouth when a war-whoop answered from outside the door, and fifty men in the guise of Mohawk Indians passed quickly by the entrance, and hastened to Griffin's Wharf. Before the nine o'clock bell rang, the three hundred and forty-two chests of tea laden upon the three ships had been cut open, and their contents emptied into the sea. Not a person was harmed; no other property was injured; and the vast crowd, looking upon the scene from the wharf in the clear frosty moonlight, was so still that the click of the hatchets could be distinctly heard. Next morning, the salted tea, as driven by wind and wave, lay in long rows on Dorchester beach, while Paul Revere, booted and spurred, was riding post-haste to Philadelphia, with the glorious news that Boston had at last thrown down the gauntlet for the king of England to pick up.



John Adams

This heroic action of Boston was greeted with public rejoicing throughout all the thirteen colonies, and the other principal seaports were not slow to follow the example. A ship laden with two hundred and fifty-seven chests of tea had arrived at Charleston on the 2d of December; but the consignees had resigned, and after twenty days the ship's cargo was seized and landed; and so, as there was no one to receive it, or pay the duty, it was thrown into a damp cellar, where it spoiled. In Philadelphia, on the 25th, a ship arrived with tea; but a meeting of five thousand men forced the consignees to resign, and the captain straightway set sail for England, the ship having been stopped before it had come within the jurisdiction of the custom house.

Grandeur of the Boston Tea Party

In Massachusetts, the exultation knew no bounds. "This," said John Adams, "is the most magnificent movement of all. There is a dignity, a majesty, a sublimity, in this last effort of the patriots that I greatly admire." Indeed, often as it has been cited and described, the Boston Tea Party was an event so great that even American historians have generally failed to do it justice. This supreme assertion by a New England town meeting of the most fundamental principle of political freedom has been curiously misunderstood by British writers, of whatever party. The most recent Tory historian,

Mr. Lecky,² speaks of “the Tea-riot at Boston,” and characterizes it as an “outrage.” The most recent Liberal historian, Mr. Green, alludes to it as “a trivial riot.” Such expressions betray most profound misapprehension alike of the significance of this noble scene and of the political conditions in which it originated. There is no difficulty in defining a riot. The pages of history teem with accounts of popular tumults, wherein passion breaks loose and wreaks its fell purpose, unguided and unrestrained by reason. No definition could be further from describing the colossal event which occurred in Boston on the 16th of December, 1773. Here passion was guided and curbed by sound reason at every step, down to the last moment, in the dim candle-light of the old church, when the noble Puritan statesman quietly told his hearers that the moment for using force had at last, and through no fault of theirs, arrived. They had reached a point where the written law had failed them; and in their effort to defend the eternal principles of natural justice, they were now most reluctantly compelled to fall back upon the paramount law of self-preservation. It was the one supreme moment in a controversy supremely important to mankind, and in which the common-sense of the world has since acknowledged that they were wholly in the right. It was the one moment of all that troubled time in which no compromise was possible. “Had the tea been landed,” says the contemporary historian, William Gordon, “the union of the colonies in opposing the ministerial scheme would have been dissolved; and it would have been extremely difficult ever after to have restored it.” In view of the stupendous issues at stake, the patience of the men of Boston was far more remarkable than their boldness. For the quiet sublimity of reasonable but dauntless moral purpose, the heroic annals of Greece and Rome can show us no greater scene than that which the Old South Meeting-House witnessed on the day when the tea was destroyed.



² In his account of the American Revolution, Mr. Lecky inclines to the Tory side, but he is eminently fair and candid.

How Parliament received the news

When the news of this affair reached England, it was quite naturally pronounced by Lord North a fitting culmination to years of riot and lawlessness. This, said Lord George Germain, is what comes of their wretched old town meetings. The Americans have really no government. These “are the proceedings of a tumultuous and riotous rabble, who ought, if they had the least prudence, to follow their mercantile employments, and not trouble themselves with politics and government, which they do not understand. Some gentlemen say, ‘Oh, don’t break their charter; don’t take away rights granted them by the predecessors of the Crown.’ Whoever wishes to preserve such charters, I wish him no worse than to govern such subjects.” “These remarks,” said Lord North, “are worthy of a great mind.” “If we take a determined stand now,” said Lord Mansfield, “Boston will submit, and all will end in victory without carnage.” “The town of Boston,” said Mr. Venn, “ought to be knocked about their ears and destroyed. You will never meet with proper obedience to the laws of this country until you have destroyed that nest of locusts.” General Gage, who had just come home on a visit, assured the king that the other colonies might speak fair words to Massachusetts, but would do nothing to help her; and he offered with four regiments to make a speedy end of the whole matter. “They will be lions,” said Gage, “while we are lambs; but if we take the resolute part, they will prove very meek, I promise you.” It was in this spirit and under the influence of these ideas that the ministry took up the business of dealing with the refractory colony of Massachusetts. Lord North proposed a series of five measures, which from the king’s point of view would serve, not only to heal the wounded pride of Great Britain, but also to prevent any more riotous outbreaks among this lawless American people. Just at this moment, the opposition ventured upon a bold stroke. Fox said truly that no plan for pacifying the colonies would be worth a rush unless the unconditional repeal of the Tea Act should form part of it. A bill for the repealing of the Tea Act was brought in by Fuller, and a lively debate ensued, in the course of which Edmund Burke made one of the weightiest speeches ever heard in the House of Commons; setting forth in all the wealth of his knowledge the extreme danger of the course upon which the ministry had entered, and showing how little good fruit was to be expected from a coercive policy, even if successful. Burke was ably supported by Fox, Conway, Barré, Savile, Dowdeswell, Pownall, and Dunning. But the current had set too strongly against conciliation. Lord North sounded the keynote of the whole British policy when he said, “To repeal the tea-duty would stamp us with timidity.” Come what might, it would never do for the Americans to get it into their heads that the government was not all-powerful. They must be humbled first, that they might be reasoned with afterwards. The tea-duty, accordingly, was not repealed, but Lord North’s five acts for the better regulation of American affairs were all passed by Parliament.

The Boston Port Bill

By the first act, known as the Boston Port Bill, no ships were to be allowed to enter or clear the port of Boston until the rebellious town should have indemnified the East India Company for the loss of its tea, and should otherwise have made it appear to the king that it would hereafter show a spirit of submission. Marblehead was made a port of entry instead of Boston, and Salem was made the seat of government.



VIRTUAL REPRESENTATION. 1775.

The king's friends were fond of asserting that the Americans were "virtually represented" in Parliament, through their British friends in that body. On the back of the copy of this broadside, "Virtual Representation," in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society, is the following explanation, in the handwriting of the time: —

"A full explanation of the within print. — No. 1 intends the K – g of G. B., to whom the House of Commons (4) gives the Americans' money for the use of that very H. of C., and which he is endeavouring to take away with the power of cannon. No. 2, by a Frenchman signifies the tyranny that is intended for America. No. 3, the figure of a Roman Catholic priest with his crucifix and gibbet, assisting George in enforcing his tyrannical system of civil and religious government. Nos. 5 and 6 are honest American yeomen, who oppose an oaken staff to G – 's cannon, and determine they will not be robbed. No. 7 is poor Britannia blindfolded, falling into the bottomless pit which her infamous rulers have prepared for the Americans. Nos. 8, 9 represent Boston in flames and Quebec triumphant, to show the probable consequence of submission to the present wicked ministerial system, that popery and tyranny will triumph over true religion, virtue, and liberty."

The Regulating Act

By the second act, known as the Regulating Act, the charter of Massachusetts was annulled without preliminary notice, and her free government was destroyed. Under the charter, the members of the council for each year were chosen in a convention consisting of the council of the preceding year and the assembly. Each councillor held office for a year, and was paid out of an appropriation made by the assembly. Now, hereafter, the members of the council were to be appointed by the governor on a royal writ of *mandamus*, their salaries were to be paid by the Crown, and they could be removed from office at the king's pleasure. The governor was empowered to appoint all judges and officers of

courts, and all such officers were to be paid by the king and to hold office during his pleasure. The governor and his dependent council could appoint sheriffs and remove them without assigning any reason, and these dependent sheriffs were to have the sole right of returning juries. But, worse than all, the town-meeting system of local self-government was ruthlessly swept away. Town meetings could indeed be held twice a year for the election of town officers, but no other business could be transacted in them. The effect of all these changes would, of course, be to concentrate all power in the hands of the governor, leaving no check whatever upon his arbitrary will. It would, in short, transform the commonwealth of Massachusetts into an absolute despotism, such as no Englishman had ever lived under in any age. And this tremendous act was to go into operation on the first day of the following June.

By the third act – a pet measure of George III., to which Lord North assented with great reluctance – it was provided that if any magistrate, soldier, or revenue officer in Massachusetts should be indicted for murder, he should be tried, not in Massachusetts, but in Great Britain.

The shooting of citizens

This measure – though doubtless unintentionally – served to encourage the soldiery in shooting down peaceful citizens, and it led by a natural sequence to the bloodshed on Lexington green. It was defended on the ground that in case of any chance affray between soldiers and citizens, it would not be possible for the soldiers to obtain a fair trial in Massachusetts. Less than four years had elapsed since Preston's men had been so readily acquitted of murder after the shooting in King Street, but such facts were of no avail now. The momentous bill passed in the House of Commons by a vote of more than four to one, in spite of Colonel Barré's ominous warnings.

By the fourth act all legal obstacles to the quartering of troops in Boston or any other town in Massachusetts were swept away.

The Quebec Act

By the fifth act, known as the Quebec Act, the free exercise of the Catholic religion was sanctioned throughout Canada, – a very judicious measure of religious toleration, which concerned the other colonies but little, however it might in some cases offend their prejudices. But this act went on to extend the boundaries of Canada southward to the Ohio river, in defiance of the territorial claims of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and Virginia. This extensive region, the part of North America which was next to be colonized by men of English race, was to be governed by a viceroy, with despotic powers; and such people as should come to live there were to have neither popular meetings, nor *habeas corpus*, nor freedom of the press. "This," said Lord Thurlow, "is the only sort of constitution fit for a colony," – and all the American colonies, he significantly added, had better be reduced to this condition as soon as possible.

Gage sent to Boston

When all these acts had been passed, in April, 1774, General Gage was commissioned to supersede Hutchinson temporarily as governor of Massachusetts, and was sent over with as little delay as possible, together with the four regiments which were to scare the people into submission. On the first day of June, he was to close the port of Boston and begin starving the town into good behaviour; he was to arrest the leading patriots and send them to England for trial; and he was expressly authorized to use his own discretion as to allowing the soldiers to fire upon the people.

All these measures for enslaving peaceful and law-abiding Englishmen the king of England now contemplated, as he himself declared, “with supreme satisfaction.”

In recounting such measures as these, the historian is tempted to pause for a moment, and ask whether it could really have been an *English* government that planned and decreed such things. From the autocratic mouth of an Artaxerxes or an Abderrahman one would naturally expect such edicts to issue. From the misguided cabinets of Spain and France, in evil times, measures in spirit like these had been known to proceed. But our dear mother-country had for ages stood before the world as the staunch defender of personal liberty and of local self-government; and through the mighty strength which this spirit of freedom, and nothing else, had given her, she had won the high privilege of spreading her noble and beneficent political ideas over the best part of the habitable globe. Yet in the five acts of this political tragedy of 1774 we find England arrayed in hostility to every principle of public justice which Englishmen had from time immemorial held sacred. Upon the great continent which she had so lately won from the French champions of despotism, we see her vainly seeking to establish a tyrannical *régime* no better than that which but yesterday it had been her glory to overthrow. Such was the strange, the humiliating, the self-contradictory attitude into which England had at length been brought by the selfish Tory policy of George III.!

But this policy was no less futile than it was unworthy of the noble, freedom-loving English people. For after that fated 1st of June, the sovereign authority of Great Britain, whether exerted through king or through Parliament, was never more to be recognized by the men of Massachusetts.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS



The unfortunate measures of April, 1774, were not carried through Parliament without earnest opposition. Lord Rockingham and his friends entered a protest on the journal of the House of Lords, on the grounds that the people of Massachusetts had not been heard in their own defence, and that the lives and liberties of the citizens were put absolutely into the hands of the governor and council, who were thus invested with greater powers than it had ever been thought wise to entrust to the king and his privy council in Great Britain. They concluded, therefore, that the acts were unconstitutional. The Duke of Richmond could not restrain his burning indignation. "I wish," said he in the House of Lords, – "I wish from the bottom of my heart that the Americans may resist, and get the better of the forces sent against them." But that the Americans really would resist, very few people in England believed. The conduct of the ministry was based throughout upon the absurd idea that the Americans could be frightened into submission.

Belief that the Americans would not fight

General Gage, as we have seen, thought that four regiments would be enough to settle the whole business. Lord Sandwich said that the Americans were a set of undisciplined cowards, who would take to their heels at the first sound of a cannon. Even Hutchinson, who went over to England about this time, and who ought to have known of what stuff the men of Massachusetts were made, assured

the king that they could hardly be expected to resist a regular army. Such blunders, however, need not surprise us when we recollect how, just before the war of secession, the people of the southern and of the northern states made similar mistakes with regard to each other. In 1860, it was commonly said by Southern people that Northern people would submit to anything rather than fight; and in support of this opinion, it was sometimes asked, "If the Northern people are not arrant cowards, why do they never have duels?" On the other hand, it was commonly said at the North that the Southern people, however bravely they might bluster, would never enter upon a war of secession, because it was really much more for their interest to remain in the Federal Union than to secede from it, – an argument which lost sight of one of the commonest facts in human life, that under the influence of strong passion men are unable to take just views of what concerns their own interests. Such examples show how hard it often is for one group of men to understand another group, even when they are all of the same blood and speech, and think alike about most matters that do not touch the particular subject in dispute. Nothing could have been surer, either in 1860, or in 1774, than that the one party to the quarrel was as bold and brave as the other.



FOX AND BURKE DENOUNCING LORD NORTH
(A contemporary caricature)

Belief that Massachusetts would not be supported by the other colonies

Another fatal error under which the ministry laboured was the belief that Massachusetts would not be supported by the other colonies. Their mistake was not unlike that which ruined the plans of Napoleon III., when he declared war upon Prussia in 1870. There was no denying the fact of strong jealousies among the American colonies in 1774, as there was no denying the fact of strong jealousies between the northern and southern German states in 1870. But the circumstances under

which Napoleon III. made war on Prussia happened to be such as to enlist all the German states in the common cause with her. And so it was with the war of George III. against Massachusetts. As soon as the charter of that colony was annulled, all the other colonies felt that their liberties were in jeopardy; and thence, as Fox truly said, “all were taught to consider the town of Boston as suffering in the common cause.”

News of the Port Bill

News of the Boston Port Bill was received in America on the 10th of May. On the 12th the committees of several Massachusetts towns held a convention at Faneuil Hall, and adopted a circular letter, prepared by Samuel Adams, to be sent to all the other colonies, asking for their sympathy and coöperation. The response was prompt and emphatic. In the course of the summer, conventions were held in nearly all the colonies, declaring that Boston should be regarded as “suffering in the common cause.” The obnoxious acts of Parliament were printed on paper with deep black borders, and in some towns were publicly burned by the common hangman. Drove of cattle and flocks of sheep, cartloads of wheat and maize, kitchen vegetables and fruit, barrels of sugar, quintals of dried fish, provisions of every sort, were sent overland as free gifts to the people of the devoted city, even the distant rice-swamps of South Carolina contributing their share. The over-cautious Franklin had written from London, suggesting that perhaps it might be best, after all, for Massachusetts to indemnify the East India Company; but Gadsden, with a sounder sense of the political position, sent word, “Don’t pay for an ounce of the damned tea.” Throughout the greater part of the country the 1st of June was kept as a day of fasting and prayer; bells were muffled and tolled in the principal churches; ships in the harbours put their flags at half-mast. Marblehead, which was appointed to supersede Boston as port of entry, immediately invited the merchants of Boston to use its wharfs and warehouses free of charge in shipping and unshipping their goods. A policy of absolute non-importation was advocated by many of the colonies, though Pennsylvania, under the influence of Dickinson, still vainly cherishing hopes of reconciliation, hung back, and advised that the tea should be paid for. As usual, the warmest sympathy with New England came from Virginia. “If need be,” said Washington, “I will raise one thousand men, subsist them at my own expense, and march myself at their head for the relief of Boston.”

To insure concerted action on the part of the whole country, something more was required than these general expressions and acts of sympathy. The proposal for a Continental Congress came first from the Sons of Liberty in New York; it was immediately taken up by the members of the Virginia House of Burgesses, sitting in convention at the Raleigh tavern, after the governor had dissolved them as a legislature; and Massachusetts was invited to appoint the time and place for the meeting of the Congress. On the 7th of June the Massachusetts assembly was convened at Salem by General Gage, in conformity with the provisions of the Port Bill.

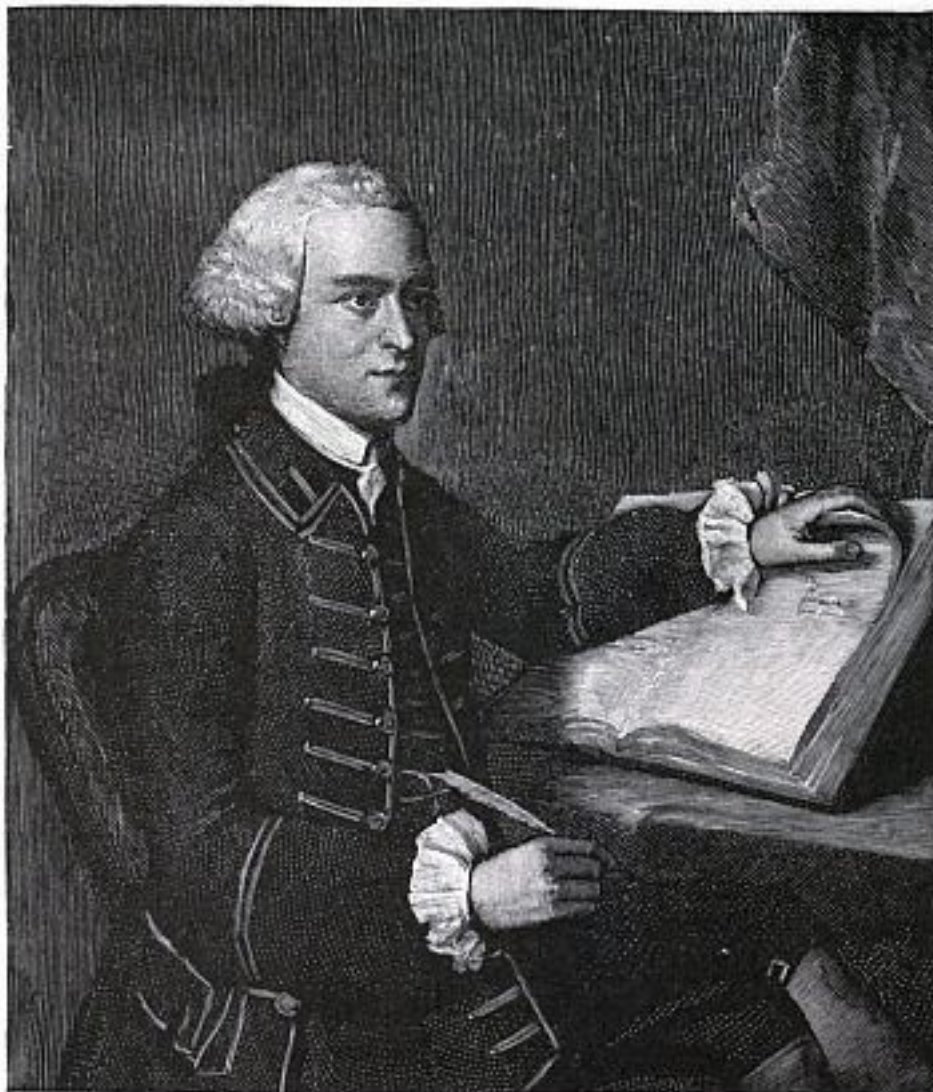
Samuel Adams at Salem

Samuel Adams always preferred to use the ordinary means of transacting public business so long as they were of avail, and he naturally wished to have the act appointing a Continental Congress passed by the assembly. But this was not easy to bring about, for upon the first hint that any such business was to come up the governor would be sure to dissolve the assembly. In such case it would be necessary for the committees of correspondence throughout Massachusetts to hold a convention for the purpose of appointing the time and place for the Congress and of electing delegates to attend it. But Adams preferred to have these matters decided in regular legislative session, and he carried his point. Having talked privately with several of the members, at last on the 17th of June – a day which a twelvemonth hence was to become so famous – the favourable moment came. Having had the door locked, he introduced his resolves, appointing five delegates to confer with duly appointed delegates

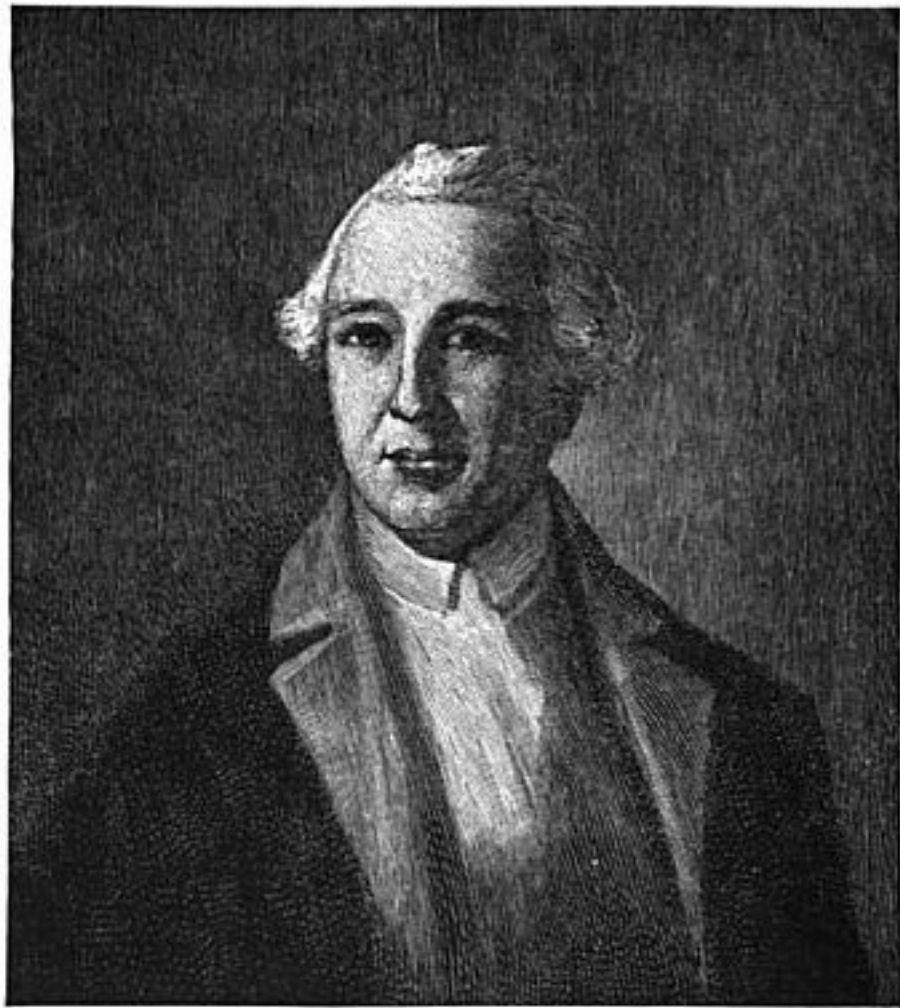
from the other colonies, in a Continental Congress at Philadelphia on the 1st of September next. Some of the members, astonished and frightened, sought to pass out; and as the doorkeeper seemed uneasy at assuming so much responsibility, Samuel Adams relieved him of it by taking the key from the door and putting it into his own pocket, whereupon the business of the assembly went on. Soon one of the Tory members pretended to be very sick, and being allowed to go out, made all haste to Governor Gage, who instantly drew up his writ dissolving the assembly, and sent his secretary with it. When the secretary got there, he found the door locked, and as nobody would let him in or pay any attention to him, he was obliged to content himself with reading the writ, in a loud voice, to the crowd which had assembled on the stairs. The assembly meanwhile passed the resolves by 117 to 12, elected Samuel and John Adams, Thomas Cushing, and Robert Treat Paine as delegates, assessed the towns in the commonwealth for the necessary expenses, passed measures for the relief of Boston, and adjourned *sine die*. All the other colonies except Georgia, in the course of the summer, accepted the invitation, and chose delegates, either through their assemblies or through special conventions. Georgia sent no delegates, but promised to adopt any course of action that should be determined upon.

Massachusetts nullifies the Regulating Act

Before the time appointed for the Congress, Massachusetts had set the Regulating Act at defiance. On the 16th of August, when the court assembled at Great Barrington, a vast multitude of farmers surrounded the court house and forbade the judges to transact any business. Two or three of the councillors newly appointed on the king's writ of *mandamus* yielded in advance to public opinion, and refused to take their places. Those who accepted were forced to resign. At Worcester 2,000 men assembled on the common, and compelled Timothy Paine to make his resignation in writing. The councillor appointed from Bridgewater was a deacon; when he read the psalm the congregation refused to sing. In Plymouth one of the most honoured citizens, George Watson, accepted a place on the council; as he took his seat in church on the following Sunday, the people got up and began to walk out of the house. Overcome with shame, for a moment his venerable gray head sank upon the pew before him; then he rose up and vowed that he would resign. In Boston the justices and barristers took their accustomed places in the court house, but no one could be found to serve as juror in a court that was illegally constituted. Gage issued a proclamation warning all persons against attending town meeting, but no one heeded him, and town meetings were more fully attended than ever. He threatened to send an armed force against Worcester, but the people there replied that he would do so at his peril, and forthwith began to collect powder and ball. At Salem the people walked to the town house under the governor's nose and in the very presence of a line of soldiers. On the 1st of September a party of soldiers seized two hundred kegs of powder at Charlestown and two field-pieces at Cambridge, and carried them to Castle William. As the news spread about the country, rumour added that the troops had fired upon the people, and within forty-eight hours at least 20,000 men were marching on Boston; but they turned back to their homes on receiving word from the Boston committee that their aid was not yet needed.



John Hancock



Jos Warren

John Hancock and Joseph Warren

During these stirring events, in the absence of Samuel Adams, who had gone to attend the Congress at Philadelphia, the most active part in the direction of affairs at Boston was taken by Dr. Joseph Warren. This gentleman – one of a family which has produced three very eminent physicians – was graduated at Harvard College in 1759. He had early attracted the attention of Samuel Adams, had come to be one of his dearest friends, and had been concerned with him in nearly all of his public acts of the past seven years. He was a man of knightly bravery and courtesy, and his energy and fertility of mind were equalled only by his rare sweetness and modesty. With Adams and Hancock, he made up the great Massachusetts triumvirate of Revolutionary leaders. The accession of Hancock to the Revolutionary cause at an early period had been of great help, by reason of his wealth and social influence. Hancock was graduated at Harvard College in 1754. He was a gentleman of refinement and grace, but neither for grasp of intelligence nor for strength of character can he be compared with

Adams or with Warren. His chief weakness was personal vanity, but he was generous and loyal, and under the influence of the iron-willed Adams was capable of good things. Upon Warren, more than any one else, however, Adams relied as a lieutenant, who, under any circumstances whatever, would be sure to prove equal to the occasion.



SUFFOLK RESOLVES HOUSE AT MILTON

B O S T O N, September, 27. 1774-

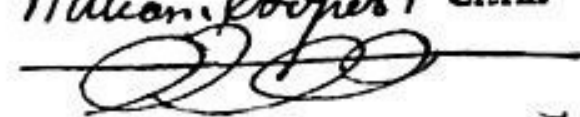
GENTLEMEN,

THE committees of correspondence of this and several of the neighbouring towns, having taken into consideration the vast importance of withholding from the troops now here, labour, straw, timber, flitwork, boards, and in short every article excepting provisions necessary for their subsistence; and being under a necessity from their conduct of considering them as real enemies, we are fully satisfied that it is our bounden duty to withhold from them every thing but what meer humanity requires; and therefore we must beg your close and serious attention to the inclosed resolves which were passed unanimously; and as unanimity in all our measures in this day of severe trial, is of the utmost consequence, we do earnestly recommend your co-operation in this measure, as conducive to the good of the whole.

We are,

Your Friends and Fellow Countrymen,

Signed by Order of the joint Committee,

William Cooper Clerk.


NOTICE OF THE COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE

[See Transcription](#)

The Suffolk County Resolves, Sept. 6, 1774

On the 5th of September Gage began fortifying Boston Neck, so as to close the only approach to the city by land. Next day the county assize was to be held at Worcester; but 5,000 armed men, drawn up in regular military array, lined each side of the main street, and the unconstitutionally appointed judges were forbidden to take their seats. On the same day a convention of the towns of Suffolk county was held at Milton, and a series of resolutions, drawn up by Dr. Warren, were adopted unanimously. The resolutions declared that a king who violates the chartered rights of his people forfeits their allegiance; they declared the Regulating Act null and void and ordered all the officers appointed under it to resign their offices at once; they directed the collectors of taxes to refuse to pay over money to Gage's treasurer; they advised the towns to choose their own militia officers; and they threatened the governor that, should he venture to arrest any one for political reasons, they would retaliate by seizing upon the Crown officers as hostages. A copy of these resolutions, which virtually placed Massachusetts in an attitude of rebellion, was forwarded to the Continental Congress, which enthusiastically indorsed them, and pledged the faith of all the other colonies that they would aid

Massachusetts in case armed resistance should become inevitable, while at the same time they urged that a policy of moderation should be preserved, and that Great Britain should be left to fire the first shot.

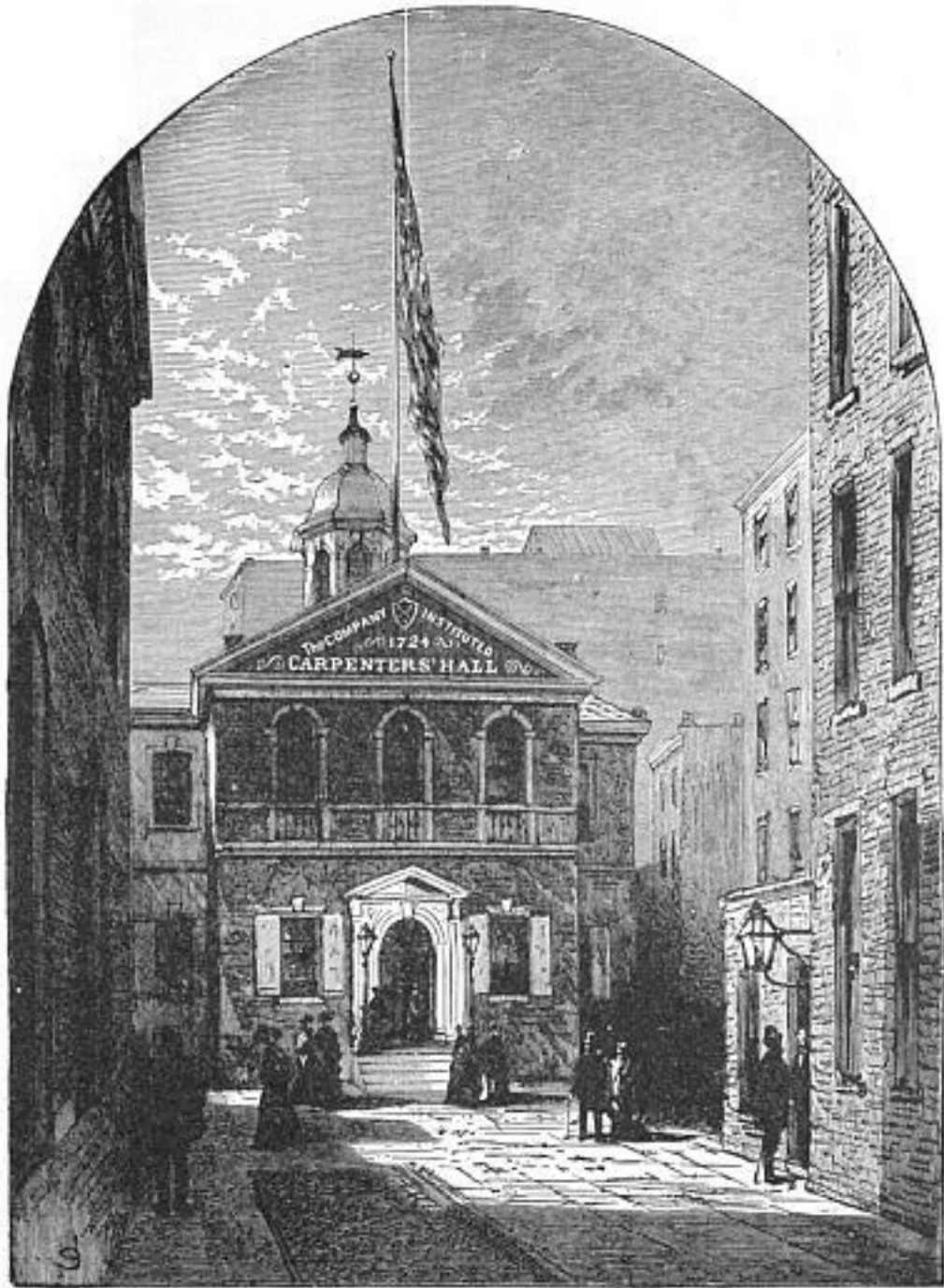
On receiving these instructions from the Congress, the people of Massachusetts at once proceeded to organize a provisional government in accordance with the spirit of the Suffolk resolves. Gage had issued a writ convening the assembly at Salem for the 1st of October, but before the day arrived he changed his mind, and prorogued it. In disregard of this order, however, the representatives met at Salem a week later, organized themselves into a provincial congress, with John Hancock for president, and adjourned to Concord.

Provincial Congress in Massachusetts

On the 27th they chose a committee of safety, with Warren for chairman, and charged it with the duty of collecting military stores. In December this Congress dissolved itself, but a new one assembled at Cambridge on the 1st of February, and proceeded to organize the militia and appoint general officers. A special portion of the militia, known as “minute men,” were set apart, under orders to be ready to assemble at a moment’s warning; and the committee of safety were directed to call out this guard as soon as Gage should venture to enforce the Regulating Act. Under these instructions every village green in Massachusetts at once became the scene of active drill. Nor was it a population unused to arms that thus began to marshal itself into companies and regiments. During the French war one fifth of all the able-bodied men of Massachusetts had been in the field, and in 1757 the proportion had risen to one third. There were plenty of men who had learned how to stand under fire, and officers who had held command on hard-fought fields; and all were practised marksmen. It is quite incorrect to suppose that the men who first repulsed the British regulars in 1775 were a band of farmers, utterly unused to fighting. Their little army was indeed a militia, but it was made up of warlike material.



Peyton Randolph



CARPENTERS' HALL, PHILADELPHIA

Meeting of the Continental Congress, Sept. 5, 1774

While these preparations were going on in Massachusetts, the Continental Congress had assembled at the Hall of the Company of Carpenters, in Philadelphia, on the 5th of September. Peyton Randolph, of Virginia, was chosen president; and the Adamses, the Livingstons, the Rutledges, Dickinson, Chase, Pendleton, Lee, Henry, and Washington took part in the debates. One of their first acts was to dispatch Paul Revere to Boston with their formal approval of the action of the Suffolk Convention. After four weeks of deliberation they agreed upon a declaration of rights, claiming for the American people "a free and exclusive power of legislation in their provincial legislatures, where

their rights of legislation could alone be preserved in all cases of taxation and internal polity." This paper also specified the rights of which they would not suffer themselves to be deprived, and called for the repeal of eleven acts of Parliament by which these rights had been infringed. Besides this, they formed an association for insuring commercial non-intercourse with Great Britain, and charged the committees of correspondence with the duty of inspecting the entries at all custom houses. Addresses were also prepared, to be sent to the king, to the people of Great Britain, and to the inhabitants of British America. The 10th of May was appointed for a second Congress, in which the Canadian colonies and the Floridas were invited to join; and on the 26th of October the Congress dissolved itself.



L. Howe

William Howe

The ability of the papers prepared by the first Continental Congress has long been fully admitted in England as well as in America. Chatham declared them unsurpassed by any state papers ever composed in any age or country. But the king's manipulation of rotten boroughs in the election of November, 1774, was only too successful, and the new Parliament was not in the mood for listening to reason. Chatham, Shelburne, and Camden urged in vain that the vindictive measures of the last April should be repealed and the troops withdrawn from Boston. On the 1st of February, Chatham introduced a bill which, could it have passed, would no doubt have averted war, even at the eleventh hour.

Debates in Parliament

Besides repealing its vindictive measures, Parliament was to renounce forever the right of taxing the colonies, while retaining the right of regulating the commerce of the whole empire; and the Americans were to defray the expenses of their own governments by taxes voted in their colonial assemblies. A few weeks later, in the House of Commons, Burke argued that the abstract right of Parliament to tax the colonies was not worth contending for, and he urged that on large grounds of expediency it should be abandoned, and that the vindictive acts should be repealed. But both Houses, by large majorities, refused to adopt any measures of conciliation, and in a solemn joint address to the king declared themselves ready to support him to the end in the policy upon which he had entered. Massachusetts was declared to be in a state of rebellion, and acts were passed closing all the ports of New England, and prohibiting its fishermen from access to the Newfoundland fisheries. At the same time it was voted to increase the army at Boston to 10,000 men, and to supersede Gage, who had in all these months accomplished so little with his four regiments. As people in England had utterly failed to comprehend the magnitude of the task assigned to Gage, it was not strange that they should seek to account for his inaction by doubting his zeal and ability. No less a person than David Hume saw fit to speak of him as a "lukewarm coward." William Howe, member of Parliament for the liberal constituency of Nottingham, was chosen to supersede him. In his speeches as candidate for election only four months ago, Howe had declared himself opposed to the king's policy, had asserted that no army that England could raise would be able to subdue the Americans, and, in reply to a question, had promised that if offered a command in America he would refuse it. When he now consented to take Gage's place as commander-in-chief, the people of Nottingham scolded him roundly for breaking his word.

It would be unfair, however, to charge Howe with conscious breach of faith in this matter. His appointment was itself a curious symptom of the element of vacillation that was apparent in the whole conduct of the ministry, even when its attitude professed to be most obstinate and determined. With all his obstinacy the king did not really wish for war, – much less did Lord North; and the reason for Howe's appointment was simply that he was a brother to the Lord Howe who had fallen at Ticonderoga, and whose memory was idolized by the men of New England. Lord North announced that, in dealing with his misguided American brethren, his policy would be always to send the olive branch in company with the sword; and no doubt Howe really felt that, by accepting a command offered in such a spirit, he might more efficiently serve the interests of humanity and justice than by leaving it open for some one of cruel and despotic temper, whose zeal might outrun even the wishes of the obdurate king.

Richard, Lord Howe

At the same time, his brother Richard, Lord Howe, a seaman of great ability, was appointed admiral of the fleet for America, and was expressly entrusted with the power of offering terms to the colonies. Sir Henry Clinton and John Burgoyne, both of them in sympathy with the king's policy, were appointed to accompany Howe as lieutenant-generals.



A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely reading "R. Howe". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the engraving.

The conduct of the ministry, during this most critical and trying time, showed great uneasiness. When leave was asked for Franklin to present the case for the Continental Congress, and to defend it before the House of Commons, it was refused. Yet all through the winter the ministry were continually appealing to Franklin, unofficially and in private, in order to find out how the Americans might be

appeased without making any such concessions as would hurt the pride of that Tory party which was now misgoverning England. Lord Howe was the most conspicuous agent in these fruitless negotiations. How to conciliate the Americans without giving up a single one of the false positions which the king had taken was the problem, and no wonder that Franklin soon perceived it to be insolvable, and made up his mind to go home.

Franklin returns to America

He had now stayed in England for several years, as agent for Pennsylvania and for Massachusetts. He had shown himself a consummate diplomatist, of that rare school which deceives by telling unwelcome truths, and he had some unpleasant encounters with the king and the king's friends. Now in March, 1775, seeing clearly that he could be of no further use in averting an armed struggle, he returned to America. Franklin's return was not, in form, like that customary withdrawal of an ambassador which heralds and proclaims a state of war. But practically it was the snapping of the last diplomatic link between the colonies and the mother-country.

Still the ministry, with all its uneasiness, did not believe that war was close at hand. It was thought that the middle colonies, and especially New York, might be persuaded to support the government, and that New England, thus isolated, would not venture upon armed resistance to the overwhelming power of Great Britain. The hope was not wholly unreasonable; for the great middle colonies, though conspicuous for material prosperity, were somewhat lacking in force of political ideas. In New York and Pennsylvania the non-English population was relatively far more considerable than in Virginia or the New England colonies. A considerable proportion of the population had come from the continent of Europe, and the principles of constitutional government were not so thoroughly inwrought into the innermost minds and hearts of the people, the pulse of liberty did not beat so quickly here, as in the purely English commonwealths of Virginia and Massachusetts.

The middle colonies

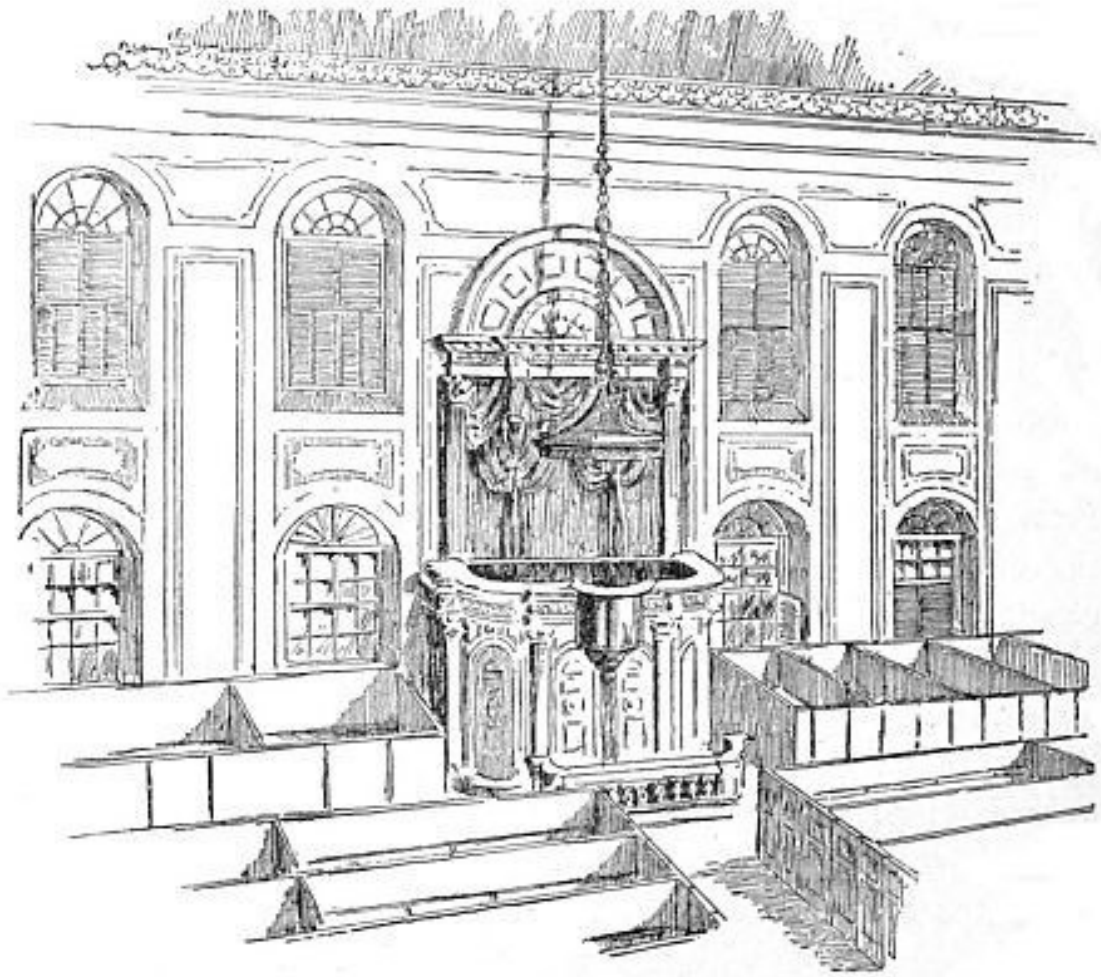
In Pennsylvania and New Jersey the Quakers were naturally opposed to a course of action that must end in war; and such very honourable motives certainly contributed to weaken the resistance of these colonies to the measures of the government. In New York there were further special reasons for the existence of a strong loyalist feeling. The city of New York had for many years been the headquarters of the army and the seat of the principal royal government in America. It was not a town, like Boston, governing itself in town meeting, but its municipal affairs were administered by a mayor, appointed by the king. Unlike Boston and Philadelphia, the interests of the city of New York were almost purely commercial, and there was nothing to prevent the little court circle there from giving the tone to public opinion. The Episcopal Church, too, was in the ascendant, and there was a not unreasonable prejudice against the Puritans of New England for their grim intolerance of Episcopalians and their alleged antipathy to Dutchmen. The province of New York, moreover, had a standing dispute with its eastern neighbours over the ownership of the Green Mountain region. This beautiful country had been settled by New England men, under grants from the royal governors of New Hampshire; but it was claimed by the people of New York, and the controversy sometimes waxed hot and gave rise to very hard feelings.

Lord North's mistaken hopes of securing New York

Under these circumstances, the labours of the ministry to secure this central colony seemed at times likely to be crowned with success. The assembly of New York refused to adopt the non-

importation policy enjoined by the Continental Congress, and it refused to choose delegates to the second Congress which was to be held in May. The ministry, in return, sought to corrupt New York by exempting it from the commercial restrictions placed upon the neighbouring colonies, and by promising to confirm its alleged title to the territory of Vermont. All these hopes proved fallacious, however. In spite of appearances, the majority of the people of New York were opposed to the king's measures, and needed only an opportunity for organization. In April, under the powerful leadership of Philip Schuyler and the Livingstons, a convention was held, delegates were chosen to attend the Congress, and New York fell into line with the other colonies. As for Pennsylvania, in spite of its peaceful and moderate temper, it had never shown any signs of willingness to detach itself from the nascent union.

News travelled with slow pace in those days, and as late as the middle of May, Lord North, confident of the success of his schemes in New York, and unable to believe that the yeomanry of Massachusetts would fight against regular troops, declared cheerfully that this American business was not so alarming as it seemed, and everything would no doubt be speedily settled without bloodshed!



INTERIOR OF OLD SOUTH MEETING-HOUSE

Affairs in Massachusetts

Great events had meanwhile happened in Massachusetts. All through the winter the resistance to General Gage had been passive, for the lesson had been thoroughly impressed upon the mind of

every man, woman, and child in the province that, in order to make sure of the entire sympathy of the other colonies, Great Britain must be allowed to fire the first shot. The Regulating Act had none the less been silently defied, and neither councillors nor judges, neither sheriffs nor jurymen, could be found to serve under the royal commission. It is striking proof of the high state of civilization attained by this commonwealth, that although for nine months the ordinary functions of government had been suspended, yet the affairs of every-day life had gone on without friction or disturbance. Not a drop of blood had been shed, nor had any one's property been injured. The companies of yeomen meeting at eventide to drill on the village green, and now and then the cart laden with powder and ball that dragged slowly over the steep roads on its way to Concord, were the only outward signs of an unwonted state of things. Not so, however, in Boston. There the blockade of the harbour had wrought great hardship for the poorer people. Business was seriously interfered with, many persons were thrown out of employment, and in spite of the generous promptness with which provisions had been poured in from all parts of the country, there was great suffering through scarcity of fuel and food. Still there was but little complaint and no disorder. The leaders were as resolute as ever, and the people were as resolute as their leaders. As the 5th of March drew near, several British officers were heard to declare that any one who should dare to address the people in the Old South Church on this occasion would surely lose his life.

Warren's oration at the Old South

As soon as he heard of these threats, Joseph Warren solicited for himself the dangerous honour, and at the usual hour delivered a stirring oration upon "the baleful influence of standing armies in time of peace." The concourse in the church was so great that when the orator arrived every approach to the pulpit was blocked up; and rather than elbow his way through the crowd, which might lead to some disturbance, he procured a ladder, and climbed in through a large window at the back of the pulpit. About forty British officers were present, some of whom sat on the pulpit steps, and sought to annoy the speaker with groans and hisses, but everything passed off quietly.

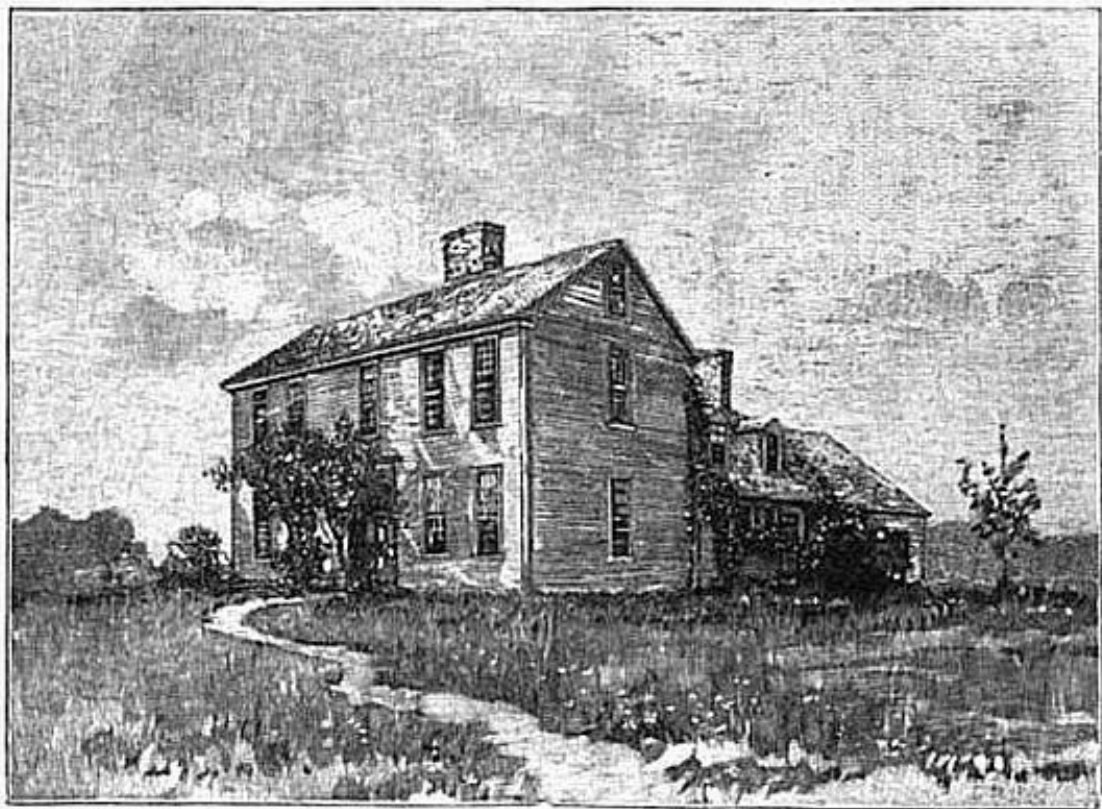


OLD NORTH CHURCH, IN WHICH SIGNAL WAS HUNG

Attempt to corrupt Samuel Adams

The boldness of Adams and Hancock in attending this meeting was hardly less admirable than that of Warren in delivering the address. It was no secret that Gage had been instructed to watch his opportunity to arrest Samuel Adams and “his willing and ready tool,” that “terrible desperado,” John Hancock, and send them over to England to be tried for treason. Here was an excellent opportunity for seizing all the patriot leaders at once; and the meeting itself, moreover, was a town meeting, such as Gage had come to Boston expressly to put down. Nothing more calmly defiant can be imagined than the conduct of people and leaders under these circumstances. But Gage had long since learned the temper of the people so well that he was afraid to proceed too violently. At first he had tried to

corrupt Samuel Adams with offers of place or pelf; but he found, as Hutchinson had already declared, that such was “the obstinate and inflexible disposition of this man that he never would be conciliated by any office or gift whatsoever.” The dissolution of the assembly, of which Adams was clerk, had put a stop to his salary, and he had so little property laid by as hardly to be able to buy bread for his family. Under these circumstances, it occurred to Gage that perhaps a judicious mixture of threat with persuasion might prove effectual. So he sent Colonel Fenton with a confidential message to Adams. The officer, with great politeness, began by saying that “an adjustment of the existing disputes was very desirable; that he was authorized by Governor Gage to assure him that he had been empowered to confer upon him such benefits as would be satisfactory, upon the condition that he would engage to cease in his opposition to the measures of government, and that it was the advice of Governor Gage to him not to incur the further displeasure of his Majesty; that his conduct had been such as made him liable to the penalties of an act of Henry VIII., by which persons could be sent to England for trial, and, by changing his course, he would not only receive great personal advantages, but would thereby make his peace with the king.” Adams listened with apparent interest to this recital until the messenger had concluded. Then rising, he replied, glowing with indignation: “Sir, I trust I have long since made my peace with the King of kings. No personal consideration shall induce me to abandon the righteous cause of my country. Tell Governor Gage it is the advice of Samuel Adams to him no longer to insult the feelings of an exasperated people.”



REV. JONAS CLARK'S HOUSE

Orders to arrest Adams and Hancock

Toward the end of the winter Gage received peremptory orders to arrest Adams and Hancock, and send them to England for trial. One of the London papers gayly observed that in all probability

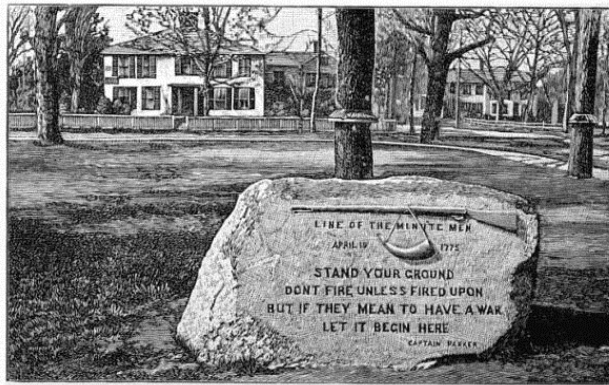
Temple Bar “will soon be decorated with some of the patriotic noddles of the Boston saints.” The provincial congress met at Concord on the 22d of March, and after its adjournment, on the 15th of April, Adams and Hancock stayed a few days at Lexington, at the house of their friend, the Rev. Jonas Clark.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "F. Smith Lt Col". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

It would doubtless be easier to seize them there than in Boston, and, accordingly, on the night of the 18th Gage dispatched a force of 800 troops, under Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Smith, to march to Lexington, and, after seizing the patriot leaders, to proceed to Concord, and capture or destroy the military stores which had for some time been collecting there. At ten in the evening the troops were rowed across Charles river, and proceeded by a difficult and unfrequented route through the marshes of East Cambridge, until, after four miles, they struck into the highroad for Lexington. The greatest possible secrecy was observed, and stringent orders were given that no one should be allowed to leave Boston that night.

Paul Revere's ride

But Warren divined the purpose of the movement, and sent out Paul Revere by way of Charlestown, and William Dawes by way of Roxbury, to give the alarm. At that time there was no bridge across Charles river lower than the one which now connects Cambridge with Allston. Crossing the broad river in a little boat, under the very guns of the Somerset man-of-war, and waiting on the farther bank until he learned, from a lantern suspended in the belfry of the North Church, which way the troops had gone, Revere took horse and galloped over the Medford road to Lexington, shouting the news at the door of every house that he passed. Reaching Mr. Clark's a little after midnight, he found the house guarded by eight minute-men, and the sergeant warned him not to make a noise and disturb the inmates. "Noise!" cried Revere. "You'll soon have noise enough; the regulars are coming!" Hancock, recognizing the voice, threw up the window, and ordered the guard to let him in. On learning the news, Hancock's first impulse was to stay and take command of the militia; but it was presently agreed that there was no good reason for his doing so, and shortly before daybreak, in company with Adams, he left the village.



JONATHAN HARRINGTON'S HOUSE

Meanwhile, the troops were marching along the main road; but swift and silent as was their advance, frequent alarm-bells and signal-guns, and lights twinkling on distant hilltops, showed but too plainly that the secret was out. Colonel Smith then sent Major Pitcairn forward with six companies of light infantry to make all possible haste in securing the bridges over Concord river, while at the same time he prudently sent back to Boston for reinforcements.

John Parker

When Pitcairn reached Lexington, just as the rising sun was casting long shadows across the village green, he found himself confronted by some fifty minute-men under command of Captain John Parker, – grandfather of Theodore Parker, – a hardy veteran, who, fifteen years before, had climbed the heights of Abraham by the side of Wolfe.

Pitcairn fires upon the yeomanry, April 19, 1775

“Stand your ground,” said Parker. “Don’t fire unless fired upon; but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here.” “Disperse, ye villains!” shouted Pitcairn. “Damn you, why don’t you disperse?” And as they stood motionless he gave the order to fire.



THE MINUTE-MAN³

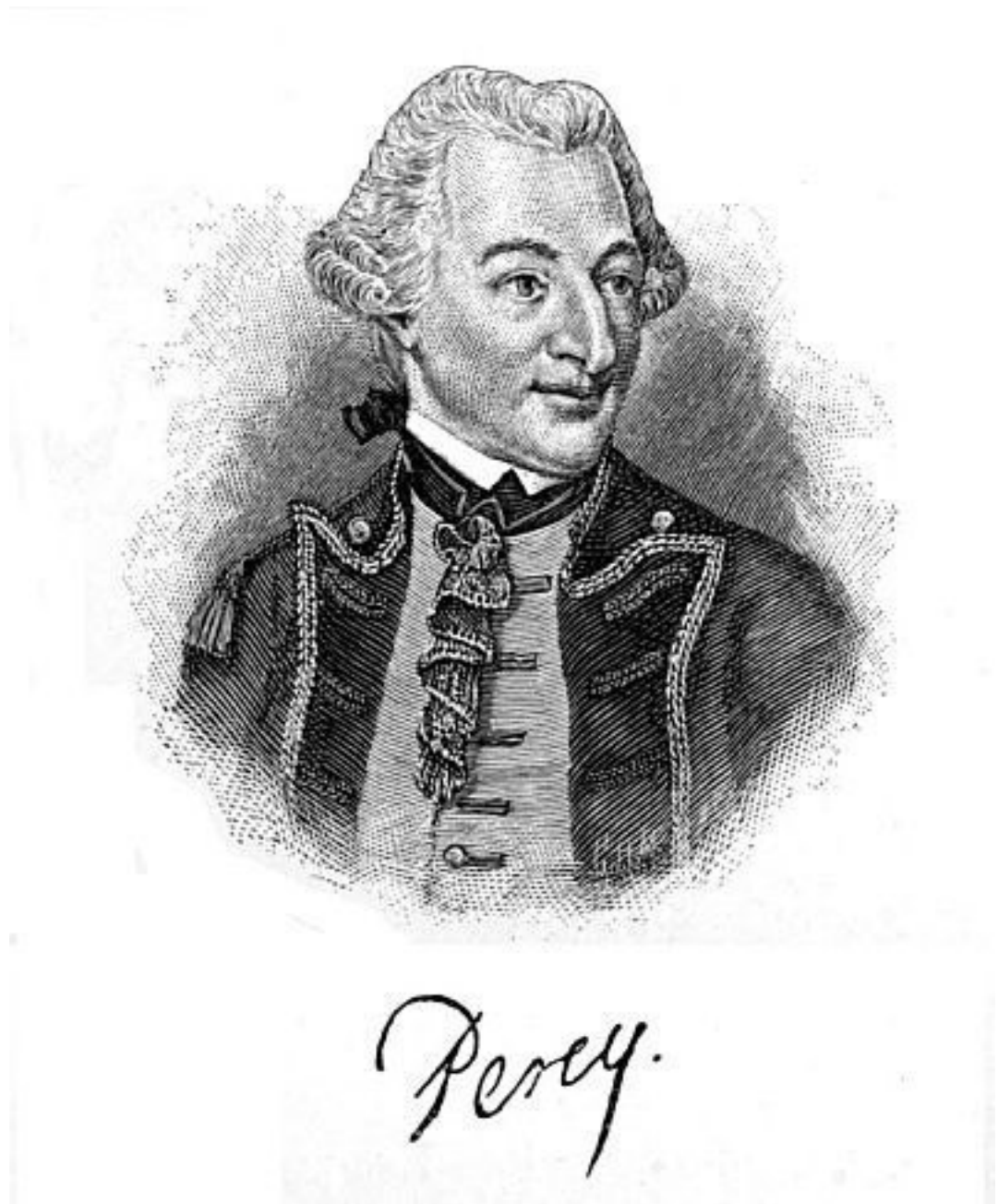
As the soldiers hesitated to obey, he discharged his own pistol and repeated the order, whereupon a deadly volley slew eight of the minute-men and wounded ten. One of the victims, Jonathan Harrington, was just able to stagger across the green to his own house (which is still there), and to die in the arms of his wife, who was standing at the door. At this moment the head of Smith’s own column seems to have come into sight, far down the road. The minute-men had begun to return the fire, when Parker, seeing the folly of resistance, ordered them to retire. While this was going on, Adams and Hancock were walking across the fields toward Woburn; and as the crackle of distant musketry reached their ears, the eager Adams – his soul aglow with the prophecy of the coming deliverance of his country – exclaimed, “Oh, what a glorious morning is this!” From Woburn the

³ On the pedestal of this statue, which stands in front of the North Bridge at Concord, is engraved the following quotation from Emerson’s “Concord Hymn: ” —By the rude bridge that arched the flood, Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled, Here once the embattled farmers stood, And fired the shot heard round the world. The poet’s grandfather, Rev. William Emerson, watched the fight from a window of the Old Manse.

two friends went on their way to Philadelphia, where the second Continental Congress was about to assemble.



THE OLD MANSE AT CONCORD



Some precious minutes had been lost by the British at Lexington, and it soon became clear that the day was to be one in which minutes could ill be spared. By the time they reached Concord, about seven o'clock, the greater part of the stores had been effectually hidden, and minute-men were rapidly gathering from all quarters. After posting small forces to guard the bridges, the troops set fire to the court-house, cut down the liberty-pole, disabled a few cannon, staved in a few barrels of flour, and hunted unsuccessfully for arms and ammunition, until an unexpected incident put a stop to their proceedings.

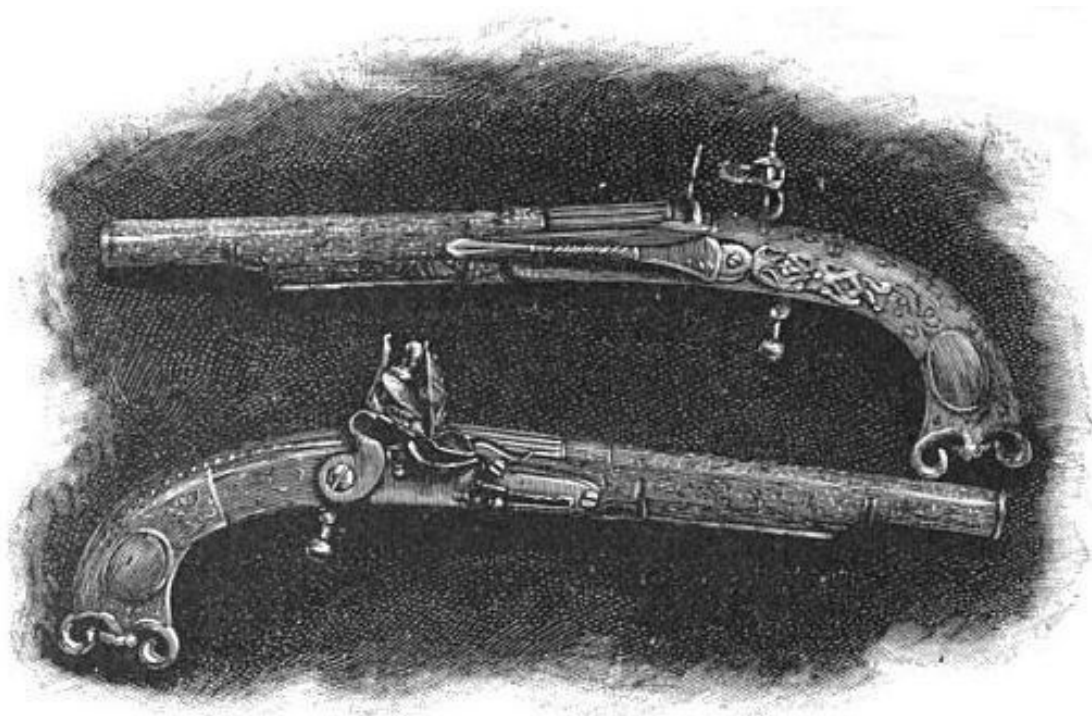
The troops repulsed at Concord

When the force of minute-men, watching events from the hill beyond the river, had become increased to more than 400, they suddenly advanced upon the North Bridge, which was held by 200 regulars. After receiving and returning the British fire, the militia, led by Major Buttrick, charged

across the narrow bridge, overcame the regulars by dint of weight and numbers, and drove them back past the Old Manse into the village. They did not follow up the attack, but rested on their arms, wondering, perhaps, at what they had already accomplished, while their numbers were from moment to moment increased by the minute-men from neighbouring villages. A little before noon, though none of the objects of the expedition had been accomplished, Colonel Smith began to realize the danger of his position, and started on his retreat to Boston. His men were in no mood for fight. They had marched eighteen miles, and had eaten little or nothing for fourteen hours. But now, while companies of militia hovered upon both their flanks, every clump of trees and every bit of rising ground by the roadside gave shelter to hostile yeomen, whose aim was true and deadly. Straggling combats ensued from time to time, and the retreating British left nothing undone which brave men could do; but the incessant, galling fire at length threw them into hopeless confusion.

Retreating troops rescued by Lord Percy

Leaving their wounded scattered along the road, they had already passed by the village green of Lexington in disorderly flight, when they were saved by Lord Percy, who had marched out over Boston Neck and through Cambridge to their assistance, with 1,200 men and two field-pieces. Forming his men in a hollow square, Percy inclosed the fugitives, who, in dire exhaustion, threw themselves upon the ground, – "their tongues hanging out of their mouths," says Colonel Stedman, "like those of dogs after a chase." Many had thrown away their muskets, and Pitcairn had lost his horse, with the elegant pistols which fired the first shots of the War of Independence, and which may be seen to-day, along with other trophies, in the town library of Lexington.



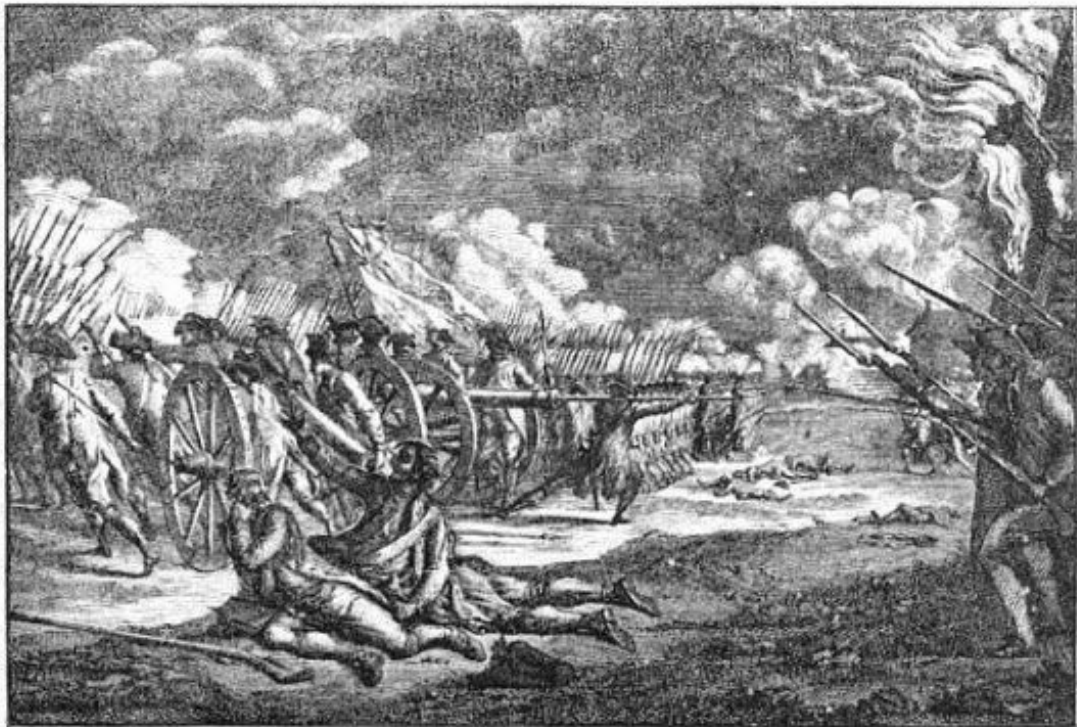
PITCAIRN'S PISTOLS

Percy's timely arrival checked the pursuit for an hour, and gave the starved and weary men a chance for food and rest. A few houses were pillaged and set on fire, but at three o'clock General Heath and Dr. Warren arrived on the scene and took command of the militia, and the irregular fight was renewed. When Percy reached Menotomy (now Arlington), seven miles from Boston, his passage

was disputed by a fresh force of militia, while pursuers pressed hard on his rear, and it was only after an obstinate fight that he succeeded in forcing his way.

Retreat continued from Lexington to Charlestown

The roadside now fairly swarmed with marksmen, insomuch that, as one of the British officers observed, “they seemed to have dropped from the clouds.” It became impossible to keep order or to carry away the wounded; and when, at sunset, the troops entered Charlestown, under the welcome shelter of the fleet, it was upon the full run. They were not a moment too soon, for Colonel Timothy Pickering, with 700 Essex militia, on the way to intercept them, had already reached Winter Hill; and had their road been blocked by this fresh force they must in all probability have surrendered.



FANCIFUL PICTURE OF THE CONCORD-LEXINGTON FIGHT
(From a contemporary French print)

On this eventful day the British lost 273 of their number, while the Americans lost 93. The expedition had been a failure, the whole British force had barely escaped capture, and it had been shown that the people could not be frightened into submission. It had been shown, too, how efficient the town system of organized militia might prove on a sudden emergency.

Rising of the country; the British besieged in Boston

The most interesting feature of the day is the rapidity and skill with which the different bodies of minute-men, marching from long distances, were massed at those points on the road where they might most effectually harass or impede the British retreat. The Danvers company marched sixteen miles in four hours to strike Lord Percy at Menotomy. The list of killed and wounded shows that contingents from at least twenty-three towns had joined in the fight before sundown. But though the pursuit was then ended, these men did not return to their homes, but hour by hour their numbers

increased. At noon of that day the alarm had reached Worcester. Early next morning, Israel Putnam was ploughing a field at Pomfret, in Connecticut, when the news arrived. Leaving orders for the militia companies to follow, he jumped on his horse, and riding a hundred miles in eighteen hours, arrived in Cambridge on the morning of the 21st, just in time to meet John Stark with the first company from New Hampshire. At midday of the 20th the college green at New Haven swarmed with eager students and citizens, and Captain Benedict Arnold, gathering sixty volunteers from among them, placed himself at their head and marched for Cambridge, picking up recruits and allies at all the villages on the way. And thus, from every hill and valley in New England, on they came, till, by Saturday night, Gage found himself besieged in Boston by a rustic army of 16,000 men.



Israel Putnam



ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, RICHMOND⁴

Effects of the news

When the news of this affair reached England, five weeks later, it was received at first with incredulity, then with astonishment and regret. Slight as the contest had been, it remained undeniable that British troops had been defeated by what in England was regarded as a crowd of “peasants;” and it was felt besides that the chances for conciliation had now been seriously diminished. Burke said that now that the Americans had once gone so far as this, they could hardly help going farther; and in spite of the condemnation that had been lavished upon Gage for his inactivity, many people were now inclined to find fault with him for having precipitated a conflict just at the time when it was hoped that, with the aid of the New York loyalists, some sort of accommodation might be effected. There is no doubt that the news from Lexington thoroughly disconcerted the loyalists of New York for the moment, and greatly strengthened the popular party there. In a manifesto addressed to the city of London, the New York committee of correspondence deplored the conduct of Gage as rash and violent, and declared that all the horrors of civil war would never bring the Americans to submit to the unjust acts of Parliament. When Hancock and Adams arrived, on their way to the Congress, they were escorted through the city with triumphal honours. In Pennsylvania steps were immediately taken for the enlistment and training of a colonial militia, and every colony to the south of it followed the example.

⁴ It was in this church on March 23, 1775, that Patrick Henry made the famous speech in which he said, “It is too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery. The war is inevitable, and let it come! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death.”

Mecklenburg County Resolves, May 31, 1775

The Scotch-Irish patriots of Mecklenburg county, in North Carolina, ventured upon a measure more decided than any that had yet been taken in any part of the country. On May 31st, the county committee of Mecklenburg affirmed that the joint address of the two Houses of Parliament to the king, in February, had virtually “annulled and vacated all civil and military commissions granted by the Crown, and suspended the constitutions of the colonies;” and that consequently “the provincial congress of each province, under the direction of the great Continental Congress, is invested with all the legislative and executive powers within their respective provinces, and that no other legislative or executive power does or can exist at this time in any of these colonies.” In accordance with this state of things, rules were adopted “for the choice of county officers, to exercise authority by virtue of this choice and independently of the British Crown, until Parliament should resign its arbitrary pretensions.” These bold resolves were entrusted to the North Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress, but were not formally brought before that body, as the delegates thought it best to wait for a while longer the course of events.

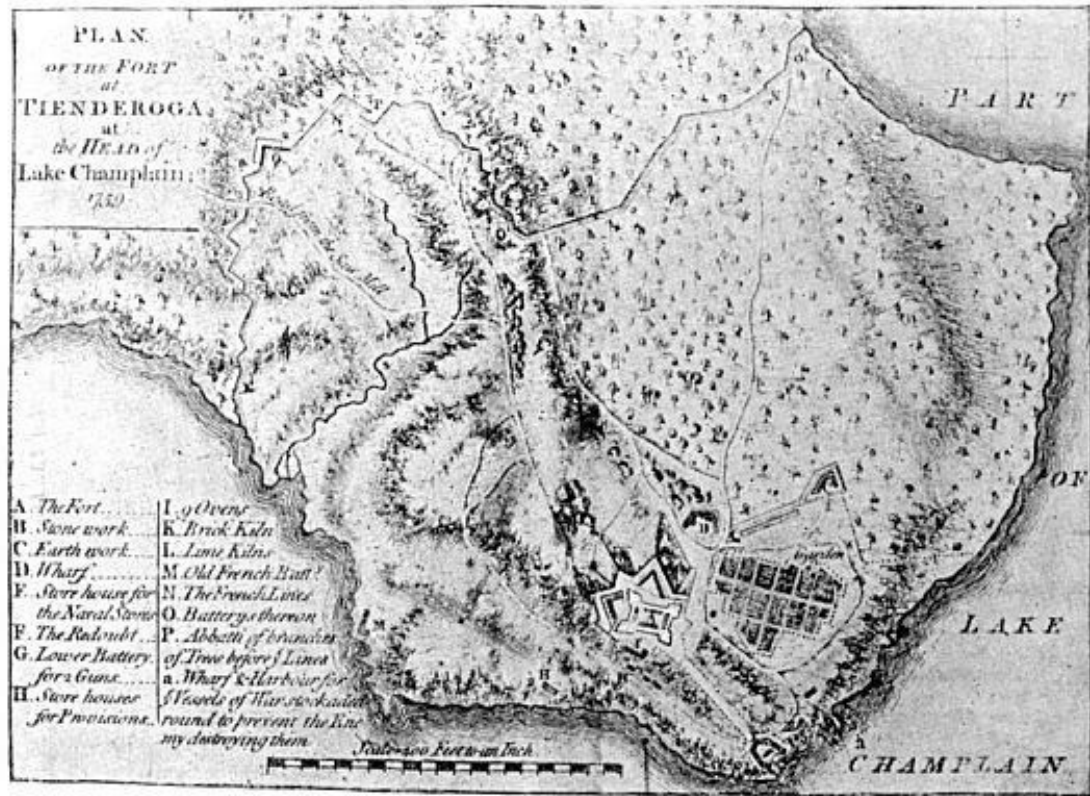
*Alex^r Alexander - Eph^r Brum
 Tho^s Polk Adam Alexander
 David Rees J^r H^e Alexander
 H^e Alexander John Pifer
 Rob^t Jones
 W^m Kenner Rich^d Berry
 Benjamin Patton John Board
 John Davidson William Graham
 John Lemmon Waughtstill Avery
 Charles Alexander
 Henry Dorris - Rob^t Harris
 Ezra Alexander Neill Morrison
 James Harris*

SIGNATURES OF MECKLENBURG COMMITTEE

Legend of the Mecklenburg "Declaration of Independence"

Some twenty years later they gave rise to the legend of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. The early writers of United States history passed over the proceedings of May 31st in silence, and presently the North Carolina patriots tried to supply an account of them from memory. Their traditional account was not published until 1819, when it was found to contain a spurious document, giving the substance of some of the foregoing resolves, decorated with phrases borrowed from the Declaration of Independence. This document purported to have been drawn up and signed at a county meeting on the 20th of May. A fierce controversy sprang up over the genuineness of the document, which was promptly called in question. For a long time many people believed in it,

and were inclined to charge Jefferson with having plagiarized from it in writing the Declaration of Independence. But a minute investigation of all the newspapers of May, 1775, throughout the thirteen colonies, has revealed no trace of any such meeting on the 20th, and it is clear that no such document was made public. The story of the Mecklenburg Declaration is simply a legend based upon the distorted recollection of the real proceedings of May 31st.



PLAN of the FORT at TICONDEROGA at the HEAD of Lake Champlain; 1759



218 100

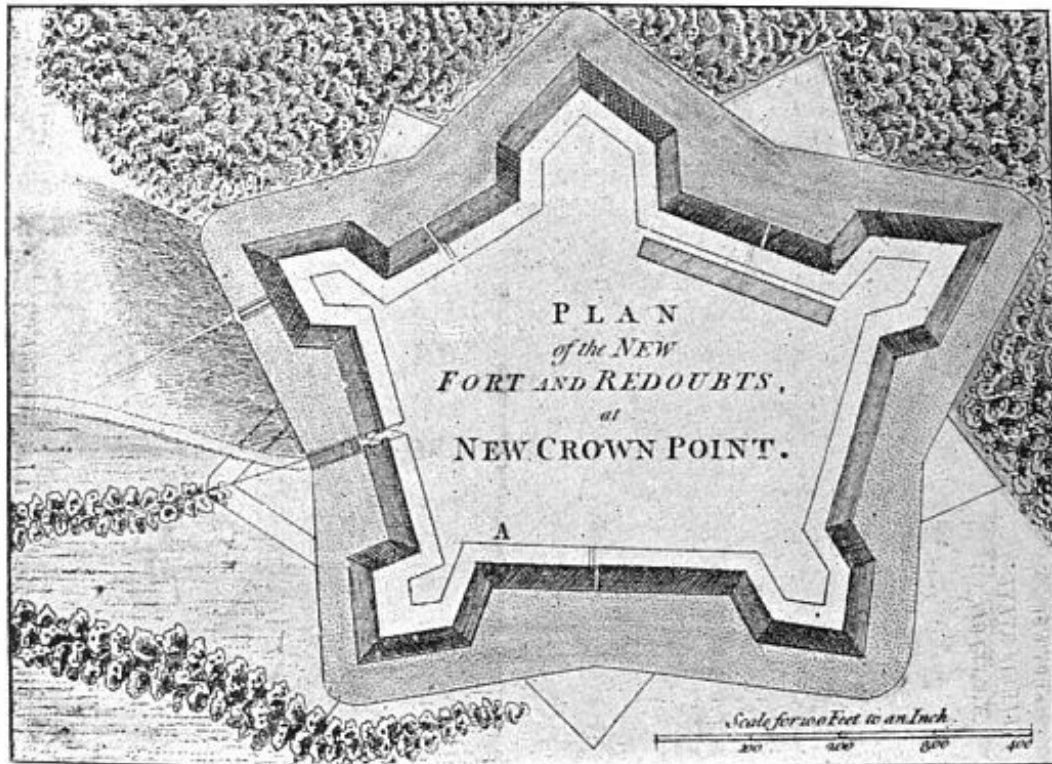
Meanwhile, in New England, the warlike feeling had become too strong to be contented merely with defensive measures. No sooner had Benedict Arnold reached Cambridge than he suggested to Dr. Warren that an expedition ought to be sent without delay to capture Ticonderoga and Crown Point. These fortresses commanded the northern approaches to the Hudson river, the strategic centre of the whole country, and would be of supreme importance either in preparing an invasion of Canada or in warding off an invasion of New York.

Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen

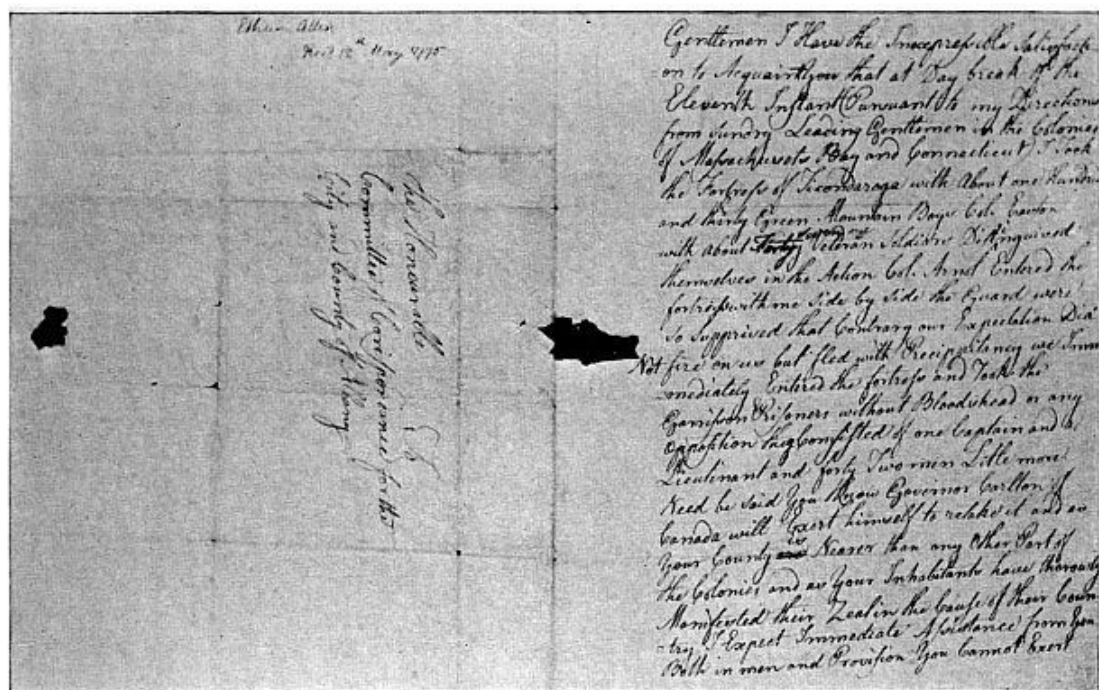
Besides this, they contained a vast quantity of military stores, of which the newly gathered army stood in sore need. The idea found favour at once. Arnold received a colonel's commission from the Massachusetts Congress, and was instructed to raise 400 men among the Berkshire Hills, capture the fortresses, and superintend the transfer of part of their armament to Cambridge. When Arnold reached the wild hillsides of the Hoosac range, he found that he had a rival in the enterprise. The capture of Ticonderoga had also been secretly planned in Connecticut, and was entrusted to Ethan Allen, the eccentric but sagacious author of that now-forgotten deistical book, "The Oracles of Reason." Allen was a leading spirit among the "Green Mountain Boys," an association of Vermont settlers formed for the purpose of resisting the jurisdiction of New York, and his personal popularity was great. On the 9th of May Arnold overtook Allen and his men on their march toward Lake Champlain, and claimed the command of the expedition on the strength of his commission from Massachusetts; but the Green Mountain Boys were acting partly on their own account, partly under the direction of Connecticut. They cared nothing for the authority of Massachusetts, and knew nothing of Arnold; they had come out to fight under their own trusted leader. But few of Arnold's own men had as yet assembled, and his commission could not give him command of Vermonters, so he joined the expedition as a volunteer. On reaching the lake that night, they found there were not nearly enough row-boats to convey the men across. But delay was not to be thought of. The garrison must not be put on its guard. Accordingly, with only eighty-three men, Allen and Arnold crossed the lake at daybreak of the 10th, and entered Ticonderoga side by side.

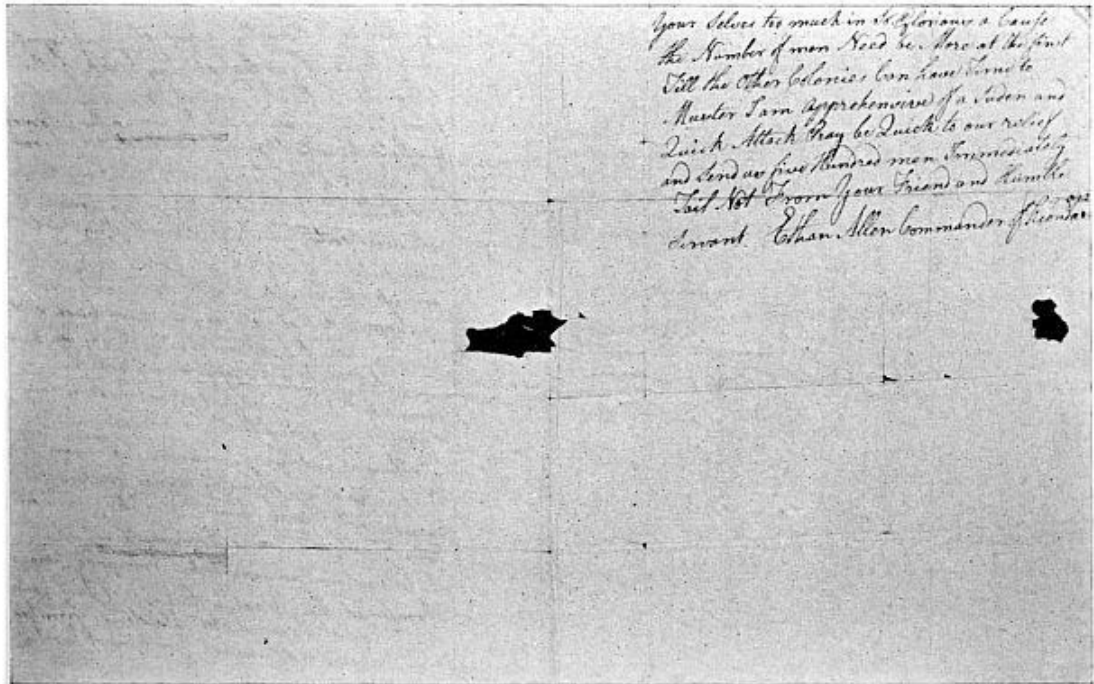
Capture of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, May 10, 1775

The little garrison, less than half as many in number, as it turned out, was completely surprised, and the stronghold was taken without a blow. As the commandant jumped out of bed, half awake, he confusedly inquired of Allen by whose authority he was acting. "In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!" roared the bellicose philosopher, and the commandant, seeing the fort already taken, was fain to acquiesce. At the same time Crown Point surrendered to another famous Green Mountain Boy, Seth Warner, and thus more than two hundred cannon, with a large supply of powder and ball, were obtained for the New England army. A few days later, as some of Arnold's own men arrived from Berkshire, he sailed down Lake Champlain, and captured St. John's with its garrison; but the British recovered it in the course of the summer, and planted such a force there that in the next autumn we shall see it able to sustain a siege of fifty days.



PLAN of the New FORT AND REDOUBTS at NEW CROWNE POINT





FACSIMILE OF ETHAN ALLEN'S LETTER ANNOUNCING THE CAPTURE OF TICONDEROGA

Neither Connecticut nor Massachusetts had any authority over these posts save through right of conquest. As it was Connecticut that had set Allen's expedition on foot, Massachusetts yielded the point as to the disposal of the fortresses and their garrisons. Dr. Warren urged the Connecticut government to appoint Arnold to the command, so that his commission might be held of both colonies; but Connecticut preferred to retain Allen, and in July Arnold returned to Cambridge to mature his remarkable plan for invading Canada through the trackless wilderness of Maine. His slight disagreement with Allen bore evil fruit. As is often the case in such affairs, the men were more zealous than their commanders; there were those who denounced Arnold as an interloper, and he was destined to hear from them again and again.



WASHINGTON AT THE AGE OF FORTY

Second meeting of the Continental Congress, May 10, 1775

On the same day⁵ on which Ticonderoga surrendered, the Continental Congress met at Philadelphia. The Adamses and the Livingstons, Jay, Henry, Washington, and Lee were there, as also Franklin, just back from his long service in England. Of all the number, John Adams and Franklin had now, probably, come to agree with Samuel Adams that a political separation from Great Britain was inevitable; but all were fully agreed that any consideration of such a question was at present premature and uncalled for. The Congress was a body which wielded no technical legal authority; it was but a group of committees, assembled for the purpose of advising with each other regarding the

⁵ In the letter, of which a facsimile is here given, Allen gives the date of the capture of Ticonderoga as the 11th, but a minute survey of the contemporary newspaper and other sources of information makes it clear that this must be a slip of the pen. In his personal "Narrative," Allen gives the date correctly as the 10th.

public weal. Yet something very like a state of war existed in a part of the country, under conditions which intimately concerned the whole, and in the absence of any formally constituted government something must be done to provide for such a crisis. The spirit of the assembly was well shown in its choice of a president. Peyton Randolph being called back to Virginia to preside over the colonial assembly, Thomas Jefferson was sent to the Congress in his stead; and it also became necessary for Congress to choose a president to succeed him. The proscribed John Hancock was at once chosen, and Benjamin Harrison, in conducting him to the chair, said, "We will show Great Britain how much we value her proscriptions." To the garrisoning of Ticonderoga and Crown Point by Connecticut, the Congress consented only after much hesitation, since the capture of these posts had been an act of offensive warfare. But without any serious opposition, in the name of the "United Colonies," the Congress adopted the army of New England men besieging Boston as the "Continental Army," and proceeded to appoint a commander-in-chief to direct its operations. Practically, this was the most important step taken in the whole course of the War of Independence.

Appointment of Washington to command the Continental army

Nothing less than the whole issue of the struggle, for ultimate defeat or for ultimate victory, turned upon the selection to be made at this crisis. For nothing can be clearer than that in any other hands than those of George Washington the military result of the war must have been speedily disastrous to the Americans. In appointing a Virginian to the command of a New England army, the Congress showed rare wisdom. It would well have accorded with local prejudices had a New England general been appointed. John Hancock greatly desired the appointment, and seems to have been chagrined at not receiving it. But it was wisely decided that the common interest of all Americans could in no way be more thoroughly engaged in the war than by putting the New England army in charge of a general who represented in his own person the greatest of the Southern colonies. Washington was now commander of the militia of Virginia, and sat in Congress in his colonel's uniform. His services in saving the remnant of Braddock's ill-fated army, and afterwards in the capture of Fort Duquesne, had won for him a military reputation greater than that of any other American. Besides this, there was that which, from his early youth, had made it seem right to entrust him with commissions of extraordinary importance. Nothing in Washington's whole career is more remarkable than the fact that when a mere boy of twenty-one he should have been selected by the governor of Virginia to take charge of that most delicate and dangerous diplomatic mission to the Indian chiefs and the French commander at Venango. Consummate knowledge of human nature as well as of wood-craft, a courage that no threats could daunt and a clear intelligence that no treachery could hoodwink, were the qualities absolutely demanded by such an undertaking; yet the young man acquitted himself of his perilous task not merely with credit, but with splendour. As regards booklore, his education had been but meagre, yet he possessed in the very highest degree the rare faculty of always discerning the essential facts in every case, and interpreting them correctly. In the Continental Congress there sat many who were superior to him in learning and eloquence; but "if," said Patrick Henry, "you speak of solid information and sound judgment, Colonel Washington is unquestionably the greatest man upon that floor." Thus did that wonderful balance of mind – so great that in his whole career it would be hard to point out a single mistake – already impress his ablest contemporaries. Hand in hand with this rare soundness of judgment there went a completeness of moral self-control, which was all the more impressive inasmuch as Washington's was by no means a tame or commonplace nature, such as ordinary power of will would suffice to guide. He was a man of intense and fiery passions. His anger, when once aroused, had in it something so terrible that strong men were cowed by it like frightened children. This prodigious animal nature was habitually curbed by a will of iron, and held in the service of a sweet and tender soul, into which no mean or unworthy thought had ever entered. Whole-souled devotion to public duty, an incorruptible integrity which no appeal to ambition

or vanity could for a moment solicit, – these were attributes of Washington, as well marked as his clearness of mind and his strength of purpose. And it was in no unworthy temple that Nature had enshrined this great spirit. His lofty stature (exceeding six feet), his grave and handsome face, his noble bearing and courtly grace of manner, all proclaimed in Washington a king of men.

The choice of Washington for commander-in-chief was suggested and strongly urged by John Adams, and when, on the 15th of June, the nomination was formally made by Thomas Johnson of Maryland, it was unanimously confirmed. Then Washington, rising, said with great earnestness: “Since the Congress desire, I will enter upon the momentous duty, and exert every power I possess in their service and for the support of the glorious cause. But I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room that I this day declare, with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honoured with.” He refused to take any pay for his services, but said he would keep an accurate account of his personal expenses, which Congress might reimburse, should it see fit, after the close of the war.

While these things were going on at Philadelphia, the army of New England men about Boston was busily pressing, to the best of its limited ability, the siege of that town.

Siege of Boston

The army extended in a great semicircle of sixteen miles, – averaging about a thousand men to the mile, – all the way from Jamaica Plain to Charlestown Neck.



The headquarters were at Cambridge, where some of the university buildings were used for barracks, and the chief command had been entrusted to General Artemas Ward, under the direction of the committee of safety. Dr. Warren had succeeded Hancock as president of the provincial congress, which was in session at Watertown. The army was excellent in spirit, but poorly equipped and extremely deficient in discipline. Its military object was to compel the British troops to evacuate Boston and take to their ships, for as there was no American fleet, anything like the destruction or capture of the British force was manifestly impossible. The only way in which Boston could be made untenable for the British was by seizing and fortifying some of the neighbouring hills which

commanded the town, of which the most important were those in Charlestown on the north and in Dorchester on the southeast. To secure these hills was indispensable to Gage, if he was to keep his foothold in Boston; and as soon as Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne arrived, on the 25th of May, with reinforcements which raised the British force to 10,000 men, a plan was laid for extending the lines so as to cover both Charlestown and Dorchester.

Gage's proclamation

Feeling now confident of victory, Gage issued a proclamation on June 12th, offering free pardon to all rebels who should lay down their arms and return to their allegiance, saving only those ring leaders, John Hancock and Samuel Adams, whose crimes had been "too flagitious to be condoned." At the same time, all who should be taken in arms were threatened with the gallows. In reply to this manifesto, the committee of safety, having received intelligence of Gage's scheme, ordered out a force of 1,200 men, to forestall the governor, and take possession of Bunker Hill in Charlestown. At sunset of the 16th this brigade was paraded on Cambridge Common, and after prayer had been offered by Dr. Langdon, president of the university, they set out on their enterprise, under command of Colonel Prescott of Pepperell, a veteran of the French war, grandfather of one of the most eminent of American historians. On reaching the grounds, a consultation was held, and it was decided, in accordance with the general purpose, if not in strict conformity to the letter of the order, to push on farther and fortify the eminence known as Breed's Hill, which was connected by a ridge with Bunker Hill, and might be regarded as part of the same locality.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Wm Prescott". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

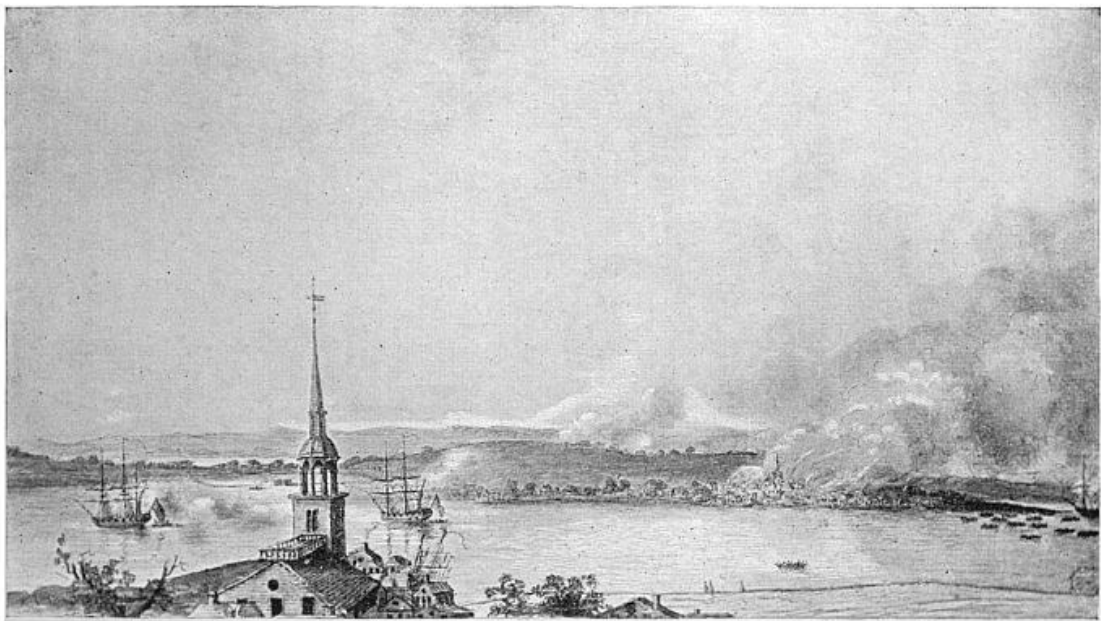
Americans occupy Bunker Hill

The position of Breed's Hill was admirably fitted for annoying the town and the ships in the harbour, and it was believed that, should the Americans succeed in planting batteries there, the British would be obliged to retire from Boston. There can be little doubt, however, that in thus departing from the strict letter of his orders Prescott made a mistake, which might have proved fatal, had not the enemy blundered still more seriously. The advanced position on Breed's Hill was not only exposed to attacks in the rear from an enemy who commanded the water, but the line of retreat was ill secured, and, by seizing upon Charlestown Neck, it would have been easy for the British, with little or no loss, to have compelled Prescott to surrender. From such a disaster the Americans were saved by the stupid contempt which the enemy felt for them.

Reaching Breed's Hill about midnight, Colonel Prescott's men began throwing up intrenchments. At daybreak they were discovered by the sailors in the harbour, and a lively cannonade was kept up through the forenoon by the enemy's ships; but it produced little effect, and the strength of the American works increased visibly hour by hour. It was a beautiful summer day, bathed in brightest sunshine, and through the clear dry air every movement of the spadesmen on the hilltop and the sailors on their decks could be distinctly seen from a great distance.

Arrival of Putnam, Stark, and Warren, June 17, 1775

The roar of the cannon had called out everybody, far and near, to see what was going on, and the windows and housetops in Boston were crowded with anxious spectators. During the night General Putnam had come upon the scene, and turned his attention to fortifying the crest of Bunker Hill, in order to secure the line of retreat across Charlestown Neck. In the course of the forenoon Colonel Stark arrived with reinforcements, which were posted behind the rail fence on the extreme left, to ward off any attempt of the British to turn their flank by a direct attack. At the same time, Dr. Warren, now chief executive officer of Massachusetts, and just appointed major-general, hastened to the battlefield; replying to the prudent and affectionate remonstrance of his friend Elbridge Gerry, “*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*” Arriving at the redoubt, he refused the command expressly tendered him, saying that he should be only too glad to serve as volunteer aid, and learn his first lesson under so well tried a soldier as Prescott. This modest heroism was typical of that memorable day, to the events of which one may well apply the Frenchman’s dictum, “*C’est magnifique, mais ce n’est pas la guerre!*” A glorious day it was in history, but characterized, on both the British and the American sides, by heroism rather than by military skill or prudence.



VIEW OF BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL, FROM BEACON HILL⁶

During the forenoon Gage was earnestly discussing with the three new generals the best means of ousting the Americans from their position on Breed’s Hill. There was one sure and obvious method, – to go around by sea and take possession of Charlestown Neck, thereby cutting off the Americans from the mainland and starving them out. But it was thought that time was too precious to admit of so slow a method. Should the Americans succeed, in the course of the afternoon, in planting

⁶ This sketch was made on the spot for Lord Rawdon, who was then on Gage’s staff. The spire in the foreground is that of the Old West Church, where Jonathan Mayhew preached; it stood on the site since occupied by Dr. Bartol’s church on Cambridge Street, now a branch of the Boston Public Library. Its position in the picture shows that the sketcher stood on Beacon Hill, 138 feet above the water. The first hill to the right of the spire, on the further side of the river, is Bunker Hill, 110 feet high. The summit of Breed’s Hill, 62 feet high, where Prescott’s redoubt stood, is nearly hidden by the flames of burning Charlestown. At a sale of the effects of the Marquis of Hastings, descendant of Lord Rawdon, this sketch was bought by my friend Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet.

a battery of siege guns on Breed's Hill, the British position in Boston would be endangered. A direct assault was preferred, as likely to be more speedily effective.

Gage decides to try an assault

It was unanimously agreed that these "peasants" could not withstand the charge of 3,000 veteran soldiers, and it was gravely doubted if they would stay and fight at all. Gage accordingly watched the proceedings, buoyant with hope. In a few hours the disgrace of Lexington would be wiped out, and this wicked rebellion would be ended. At noonday the troops began crossing the river in boats, and at three o'clock they prepared to storm the intrenchments. They advanced in two parties, General Howe toward the rail-fence, and General Pigot toward the redoubt, and the same fate awaited both. The Americans reserved fire until the enemy had come within fifty yards, when all at once they poured forth such a deadly volley that the whole front rank of the British was mowed as if by the sudden sweep of a scythe.

First assault repulsed

For a few minutes the gallant veterans held their ground and returned the fire; but presently an indescribable shudder ran through the line, and they gave way and retreated down the hillside in disorder, while the Americans raised an exultant shout, and were with difficulty restrained by their officers from leaping over the breastworks and pursuing.

A pause now ensued, during which the village of Charlestown was set on fire by shells from the fleet, and soon its four hundred wooden houses were in a roaring blaze, while charred timbers strewed the lawns and flower-beds, and the sky was blackened with huge clouds of smoke.

Second assault repulsed

If the purpose of this wholesale destruction of property was, as some have thought, to screen the second British advance, the object was not attained, for a light breeze drove the smoke the wrong way. As the bright red coats, such excellent targets for trained marksmen, were seen the second time coming up the slope, the Americans, now cool and confident, withheld their fire until the distance was less than thirty yards. Then, with a quick succession of murderous discharges, such havoc was wrought in the British lines as soon to prove unendurable. After a short but obstinate struggle the lines were broken, and the gallant troops retreated hastily, leaving the hillside covered with their dead and wounded. All this time the Americans, in their sheltered position, had suffered but little.

So long a time now elapsed that many persons began to doubt if the British would renew the assault. Had the organization of the American army been better, such reinforcements of men and ammunition might by this time have arrived from Cambridge that any further attack upon the hill would be sure to prove fruitless. But all was confusion at headquarters. General Ward was ill furnished with staff officers, and wrong information was brought, while orders were misunderstood. And besides, in his ignorance of the extent of Gage's plans,

Prescott's powder gives out

General Ward was nervously afraid of weakening his centre at Cambridge. Three regiments were sent over too late to be of any use, and meanwhile Prescott, to his dismay, found that his stock of powder was nearly exhausted. While he was making ready for a hand-to-hand fight, the British officers were holding a council of war, and many declared that to renew the attack would be

simply useless butchery. On the other hand, General Howe observed, “to be forced to give up Boston would be very disagreeable to us all.” The case was not so desperate as this, for the alternative of an attack upon Charlestown Neck still remained open, and every consideration of sound generalship now prescribed that it should be tried.

Third assault succeeds; the British take the hill

But Howe could not bear to acknowledge the defeat of his attempts to storm, and accordingly, at five o'clock, with genuine British persistency, a third attack was ordered. For a moment the advancing columns were again shaken by the American fire, but the last powder-horns were soon emptied, and by dint of bayonet charges the Americans were slowly driven from their works and forced to retreat over Charlestown Neck, while the whole disputed ground, including the summit of Bunker Hill, passed into the hands of the British.

In this battle, in which not more than one hour was spent in actual fighting, the British loss in killed and wounded was 1,054, or more than one third of the whole force engaged, including an unusually large proportion of officers.

British and American losses

The American loss, mainly incurred at the rail-fence and during the final hand-to-hand struggle at the redoubt, was 449, probably about one fourth of the whole force engaged. On the British side, one company of grenadiers came out of the battle with only five of its number left unhurt. Every officer on General Howe's staff was cut down, and only one survived his wounds. The gallant Pitcairn, who had fired the first shot of the war, fell while entering the redoubt, and a few moments later the Americans met with an irreparable loss in the death of General Warren, who was shot in the forehead as he lingered with rash obstinacy on the scene, loath to join in the inevitable retreat. Another volunteer aid, not less illustrious than Warren, fought on Bunker Hill that day, and came away scatheless. Since the brutal beating which he had received at the coffee-house nearly six years before, the powerful mind of James Otis had suffered well-nigh total wreck. He was living, harmlessly insane, at the house of his sister, Mercy Warren, at Watertown, when he witnessed the excitement and listened to the rumour of battle on the morning of the 17th of June. With touching eagerness to strike a blow for the cause in which he had already suffered so dreadful a martyrdom, Otis stole away from home, borrowed a musket at some roadside farmhouse, and hastened to the battlefield, where he fought manfully, and after all was over made his way home, weary and faint, a little before midnight.



Though small in its dimensions, if compared with great European battles, or with the giant contests of our own civil war, the struggle at Bunker Hill is memorable and instructive, even from a purely military point of view.

Excessive slaughter; significance of the battle

Considering the numbers engaged and the short duration of the fight, the destruction of life was enormous. Of all the hardest-fought fields of modern times, there have been very few indeed

in which the number of killed and wounded has exceeded one fourth of the whole force engaged. In its bloodiness and in the physical conditions of the struggle, the battle of Bunker Hill resembles in miniature the tremendous battles of Fredericksburg and Cold Harbor. To ascend a rising ground and storm well-manned intrenchments has in all ages been a difficult task; at the present day, with the range and precision of our modern weapons, it has come to be almost impossible. It has become a maxim of modern warfare that only the most extraordinary necessity can justify a commander in resorting to so desperate a measure. He must manœuvre against such positions, cut them off by the rear, or deprive them of their value by some flanking march; but he must not, save as a forlorn hope, waste precious human lives in an effort to storm them that is almost sure to prove fruitless. For our means of destroying life have become so powerful and so accurate that, when skilfully wielded from commanding positions, no human gallantry can hope to withstand them. As civilization advances, warfare becomes less and less a question of mere personal bravery, and more and more a question of the application of resistless physical forces at the proper points; that is to say, it becomes more and more a purely scientific problem of dynamics. Now at Bunker Hill though the Americans had not our modern weapons of precision, yet a similar effect was wrought by the remarkable accuracy of their aim, due to the fact that they were all trained marksmen, who waited coolly till they could fire at short range, and then wasted no shots in random firing. Most of the British soldiers who fell in the two disastrous charges of that day were doubtless picked off as partridges are picked off by old sportsmen, and thus is explained the unprecedented slaughter of officers. Probably nothing quite like this had yet been seen in the history of war, though the principle had been similar in those wonderful trials of the long-bow in such mediæval battles as Crécy and Dupplin Moor. Against such odds even British pluck and endurance could not prevail. Had the Americans been properly supplied with powder, Howe could no more have taken Bunker Hill by storm than Burnside could take the heights of Fredericksburg.

Its moral effect

The moral effect of the battle of Bunker Hill, both in America and Europe, was remarkable. It was for the British an important victory, inasmuch as they not only gained the ground for which the battle was fought, but by so doing they succeeded in keeping their hold upon Boston for nine months longer. Nevertheless, the moral advantage was felt to be quite on the side of the Americans. It was they who were elated by the day's work, while it was the British who were dispirited. The belief that Americans could not fight was that day dispelled forever. British officers who remembered Fontenoy and Minden declared that the firing at Bunker Hill was the hottest they had ever known, and, with an exaggeration which was pardonable as a reaction from their former ill-judged contempt, it was asserted that the regulars of France were less formidable foes than the militia of New England. It was keenly felt that if a conquest of a single strategic position had encountered such stubborn resistance, the task of subjugating the United Colonies was likely to prove a hard one. "I wish we could sell them another hill at the same price," said General Greene. Vergennes, the French minister of foreign affairs, exclaimed that with two more such victories England would have no army left in America. Washington said there could now be no doubt that the liberties of the people were secure. While Franklin, taking extreme ground, declared that England had lost her colonies forever.



CHAPTER IV INDEPENDENCE

Washington arrives in Cambridge

On the 2d of July, 1775, after a journey of eleven days, General Washington arrived in Cambridge from Philadelphia, and on the following day, under the shade of the great elm-tree which still stands hard by the Common, he took command of the Continental army, which as yet was composed entirely of New Englanders. Of the 16,000 men engaged in the siege of Boston, Massachusetts furnished 11,500, Connecticut 2,300, New Hampshire 1,200, Rhode Island 1,000. These contingents were arrayed under their local commanders, and under the local flags of their respective commonwealths, though Artemas Ward of Massachusetts had by courtesy exercised the chief command until the arrival of Washington. During the month of July, Congress gave a more continental complexion to the army by sending a reinforcement of 3,000 men from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, including the famous Daniel Morgan, with his sturdy band of sharpshooters each man of whom, it was said, while marching at double-quick, could cleave with his rifle-ball a squirrel at a distance of three hundred yards. The summer of 1775 thus brought together in Cambridge many officers whose names were soon to become household words throughout the length and breadth of the land, and a moment may be fitly spent in introducing them before we proceed with the narrative of events.

Daniel Morgan

Daniel Morgan, who had just arrived from Virginia with his riflemen, was a native of New Jersey, of Welsh descent. Moving to Virginia at an early age, he had won a great reputation for bravery and readiness of resource in the wild campaigns of the Seven Years' War. He was a man of gigantic stature and strength, and incredible powers of endurance. In his youth, it is said, he had received five hundred lashes by order of a tyrannical British officer, and had come away alive and defiant. On another occasion, in a fierce woodland fight with the Indians, in which nearly all his comrades were slain, Morgan was shot through the neck by a musket-ball. Almost fainting from the wound, which he believed to be fatal, Morgan was resolved, nevertheless, not to leave his scalp in the hands of a dirty Indian; and falling forward, with his arms tightly clasped about the neck of his stalwart horse, though mists were gathering before his eyes, he spurred away through the forest paths, until his foremost Indian pursuer, unable to come up with him, hurled his tomahawk after him with a yell of baffled rage, and gave up the chase. With this unconquerable tenacity, Morgan was a man of gentle and unselfish nature; a genuine diamond, though a rough one; uneducated, but clear and strong in intelligence and faithful in every fibre.

Benedict Arnold

At Cambridge began his long comradeship with a very different character, Benedict Arnold, a young man of romantic and generous impulses, and for personal bravery unsurpassed, but vain and self-seeking, and lacking in moral robustness; in some respects a more polished man than Morgan, but of a nature at once coarser and weaker. We shall see these two men associated in some of the most brilliant achievements of the war; and we shall see them persecuted and insulted by political enemies, until the weaker nature sinks and is ruined, while the stronger endures to the end.



NATHANAEL GREENE

Along with Morgan and Arnold there might have been seen on Cambridge Common a man who was destined to play no less conspicuous a part in the great campaign which was to end in the first decisive overthrow of the British. For native shrewdness, rough simplicity, and dauntless courage, John Stark was much like Morgan.



SILHOUETTE OF JOHN STARK

What the one name was in the great woods of the Virginia frontier, that was the other among the rugged hills of northern New England, – a symbol of patriotism and a guarantee of victory. Great as was Stark's personal following in New Hampshire, he had not, however, the chief command of the troops of that colony.

John Sullivan

The commander of the New Hampshire contingent was John Sullivan, a wealthy lawyer of Durham, who had sat in the first Continental Congress. Sullivan was a gentleman of culture and fair ability as a statesman. As a general, he was brave, intelligent, and faithful, but in no wise brilliant.

Nathanael Greene

Closely associated with Sullivan for the next three years we shall find Nathanael Greene, now in command of the Rhode Island contingent. For intellectual calibre all the other officers here mentioned are dwarfed in comparison with Greene, who comes out at the end of the war with a military reputation scarcely, if at all, inferior to that of Washington. Nor was Greene less notable for the sweetness and purity of his character than for the scope of his intelligence.⁷ He had that rare genius which readily assimilates all kinds of knowledge through an inborn correctness of method.

⁷ [Of a family always prominent in Rhode Island, he had early come to be the most admired and respected citizen of the colony. His father, a narrow-minded Quaker, though rich in lands, mills, and iron forges, was adverse to education, and kept his son at work

Henry Knox

Whatever he touched, it was with a master hand, and his weight of sense soon won general recognition. Such a man was not unnaturally an eager book-buyer, and in this way he had some time ago been brought into pleasant relations with the genial and intelligent Henry Knox, who from his bookshop in Boston had come to join the army as a colonel of artillery, and soon became one of Washington's most trusty followers.



Knox

Older officers

Of this group of officers, none have as yet reached very high rank in the Continental army. Sullivan and Greene stand at the end of the list of brigadier-generals; the rest are colonels. The senior major-general, Artemas Ward, and the senior brigadiers, Pomeroy Heath, Thomas, Wooster, and

Spencer, will presently pass into the background, to make way for these younger or more vigorous men.

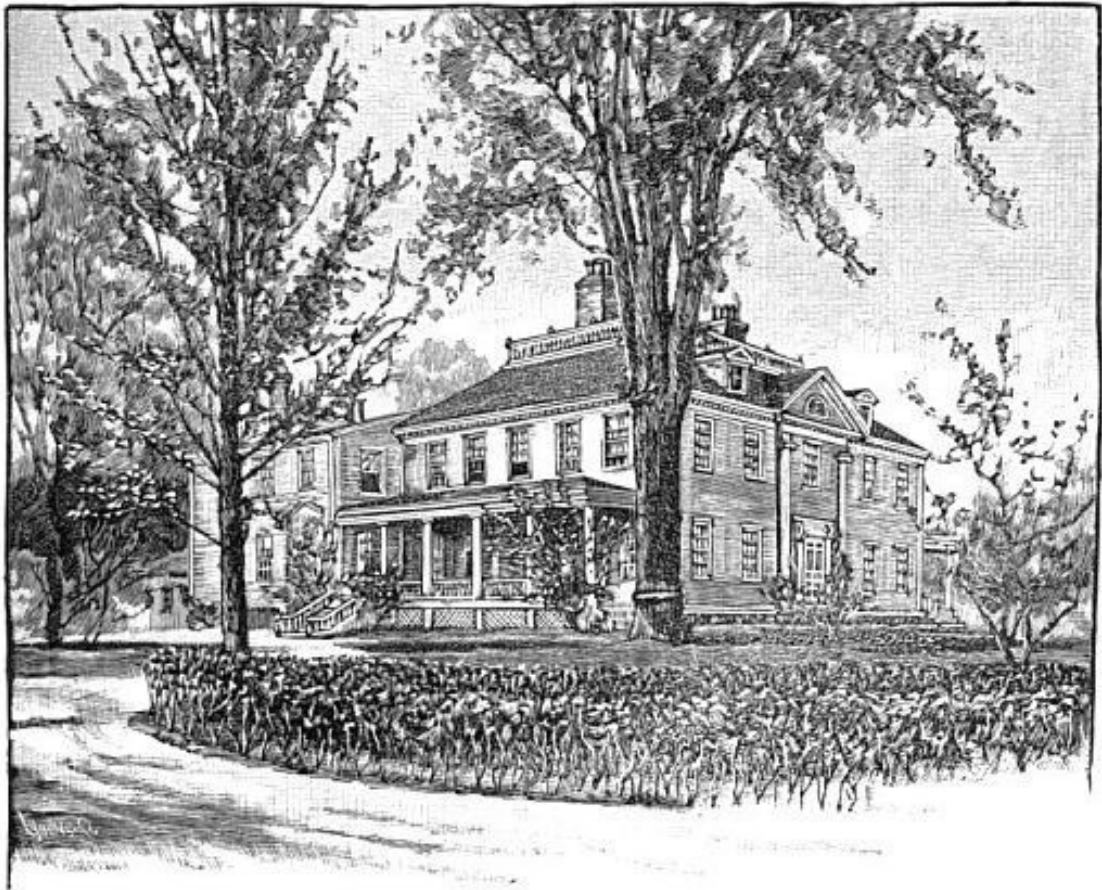
Israel Putnam

Major-General Israel Putnam, the picturesque wolf-slayer, a brave and sterling patriot, but of slender military capacity, will remain in the foreground for another year, and will then become relegated mainly to garrison duty.

With the exception of Morgan, all the officers here noticed are New England men, as is natural, since the seat of war is in Massachusetts, and an army really continental in complexion is still to be formed. The Southern colonies have as yet contributed only Morgan and the commander-in-chief. New York is represented in the Continental army by two of the noblest of American heroes, – Major-General Philip Schuyler and Brigadier-General Richard Montgomery; but these able men are now watching over Ticonderoga and the Indian frontier of New York.

Horatio Gates and Charles Lee

But among the group which in 1775 met for consultation on Cambridge Common, or in the noble Tory mansion now hallowed alike by memories of Washington and of Longfellow, there were yet two other generals, closely associated with each other for a time in ephemeral reputation won by false pretences, and afterwards in lasting ignominy. It is with pleasure that one recalls the fact that these men were not Americans, though both possessed estates in Virginia; it is with regret that one is forced to own them as Englishmen. Of Horatio Gates and his career of imbecility and intrigue, we shall by and by see more than enough. At this time he was present in Cambridge as adjutant-general of the army. But his friend, Charles Lee, was for the moment a far more conspicuous personage; and this eccentric creature, whose career was for a long time one of the difficult problems in American history, needs something more than a passing word of introduction.



WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS



Charles Lee

Although Major-General Charles Lee happened to have acquired an estate in Virginia, he had nothing in common with the illustrious family of Virginian Lees beyond the accidental identity of name. He was born in England, and had risen in the British army to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He had served in America in the Seven Years' War, and afterward, as a soldier of fortune, he had wandered about Europe, obtaining at one time a place on the staff of the king of Poland.

Lee's personal peculiarities

A restless adventurer, he had come over again to America as soon as he saw that a war was brewing here. There is nothing to show that he cared a rush for the Americans, or for the cause in which they were fighting, but he sought the opportunity of making a name for himself. He was received with enthusiasm by the Americans. His loud, pompous manner and enormous self-confidence at first imposed upon everybody. He was tall, lank, and hollow-cheeked, with a discontented expression of face. In dress he was extremely slovenly. He was fond of dogs, and always had three or four at his heels, but toward men and women his demeanour was morose and insulting. He had a sharp, cynical wit, and was always making severe remarks in a harsh, rough voice. But the trustful American imagination endowed this unpleasant person with the qualities of a great soldier. His reputation was part of the unconscious tribute which the provincial mind of our countrymen was long wont to pay to the men and things of Europe; and for some time his worst actions found a lenient interpretation as the mere eccentricities of a wayward genius. He had hoped to be made commander-in-chief of the army, and had already begun to nourish a bitter grudge against Washington, by whom he regarded himself as supplanted. In the following year we shall see him endeavouring to thwart the plans of Washington at the most critical moment of the war, but for the present he showed no signs of insincerity, except perhaps in an undue readiness to parley with the British commanders. As soon as it became clear that a war was beginning, the hope of winning glory by effecting an accommodation with the enemy offered a dangerous temptation to men of weak virtue in eminent positions.

Benjamin Church

In October, 1775, the American camp was thrown into great consternation by the discovery that Dr. Benjamin Church, one of the most conspicuous of the Boston leaders, had engaged in a secret correspondence with the enemy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benja Church Junr." The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

Dr. Church was thrown into jail, but as the evidence of treasonable intent was not absolutely complete, he was set free in the following spring, and allowed to visit the West Indies for his health. The ship in which he sailed was never heard from again. This kind of temptation, to which Church succumbed at the first outbreak of the war, beset Lee with fatal effect after the Declaration of Independence, and wrought the ruin of Arnold after the conclusion of the French alliance.

To such a man as Charles Lee, destitute of faith in the loftier human virtues or in the strength of political ideas, it might easily have seemed that more was to be hoped from negotiation than from an attempt to resist Great Britain with such an army as that of which he now came to command the left wing. It was fortunate that the British generals were ignorant of the real state of things. Among the moral effects of the battle of Bunker Hill there was one which proved for the moment to be of inestimable value. It impressed upon General Howe, who now succeeded to the chief command, the feeling that the Americans were more formidable than had been supposed, and that much care and forethought would be required for a successful attack upon them. In a man of his easy-going

disposition, such a feeling was enough to prevent decisive action. It served to keep the British force idle in Boston for months, and was thus of great service to the American cause. For in spite of the zeal and valour it had shown, this army of New England minute-men was by no means in a fit condition for carrying on such an arduous enterprise as the siege of Boston. When Washington took command of the army on Cambridge Common, he found that the first and most trying task before him was out of this excellent but very raw material to create an army upon which he could depend.

Difficult work for Washington

The battle of Bunker Hill had just been lost, under circumstances which were calculated to cheer the Americans and make them hopeful of the future; but it would not do to risk another battle, with an untrained staff and a scant supply of powder. All the work of organizing an army was still to be done, and the circumstances were not such as to make it an easy work. It was not merely that the men, who were much better trained in the discipline of the town meeting than in that of the camp, needed to be taught the all-important lesson of military subordination: it was at first a serious question how they were to be kept together at all. That the enthusiasm kindled on the day of Lexington should have sufficed to bring together 16,000 men, and to keep them for three months at their posts, was already remarkable; but no army, however patriotic and self-sacrificing, can be supported on enthusiasm alone. The army of which Washington took command was a motley crowd, clad in every variety of rustic attire, armed with trusty muskets and rifles, as their recent exploit had shown, but destitute of almost everything else that belongs to a soldier's outfit. From the Common down to the river, their rude tents were dotted about here and there, some made of sail-cloth stretched over poles, some piled up of stones and turf, some oddly wrought of twisted green boughs; while the more fortunate ones found comparatively luxurious quarters in Massachusetts Hall, or in the little Episcopal church, or in the houses of patriotic citizens. These volunteers had enlisted for various periods, for the most part short, under various contracts with various town or provincial governments. It was not altogether clear how they were going to be paid, nor was it easy to see how they were going to be fed. That this army should have been already subsisted for three months, without any commissariat, was in itself an extraordinary fact. Day by day the heavy carts had rumbled into Cambridge, bringing from the highlands of Berkshire and Worcester, and from the Merrimac and Connecticut valleys, whatever could in any wise be spared of food, or clothing, or medicines, for the patriot army; and the pleasant fields of Cambridge were a busy scene of kindness and sympathy.



A Westerly View of the Colledges in Cambridge New England

Such means as these, however, could not long be efficient. If war was to be successfully conducted, there must be a commissariat, there must be ammunition, and there must be money. And here Washington found himself confronted with the difficulty which never ceased to vex his noble soul and disturb his best laid schemes until the day when he swooped down upon Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Absence of governmental organization

He had to keep making the army, with which he was often expected to fight battles ere it was half made; and in this arduous work he could get but little systematic help from any quarter. At present the difficulty was that there was nowhere any organized government competent to support an army. On Washington's arrival, the force surrounding Boston owed allegiance, as we have seen, to four distinct commonwealths, of which two, indeed, – Connecticut and Rhode Island, – preserving their ancient charters, with governors elected by themselves, were still in their normal condition. In New Hampshire, on the other hand, the royal governor, John Wentworth, whose personal popularity was deservedly great, kept his place until August, while Stark and his men had gone to Cambridge in spite of him. In Massachusetts the revolutionary Provincial Congress still survived, but with uncertain power; even the Continental Congress which adopted the Cambridge army in the name of the United Colonies was simply an advisory body, without the power to raise taxes or to beat up recruits.

New government of Massachusetts, July, 1775

From this administrative chaos, through which all the colonies, save Connecticut and Rhode Island, were forced to pass in these trying times, Massachusetts was the first to emerge, in July, 1775, by reverting to the provisions of its old charter, and forming a government in which the king's authority was virtually disallowed. A representative assembly was chosen by the people in their town meetings, according to time-honoured precedent; and this new legislature itself elected an annual council of twenty-eight members, to sit as an upper house. James Bowdoin, as president of the council, became chief executive officer of the commonwealth, and John Adams was made chief justice. Forty

thousand pounds were raised by a direct tax on polls and on real estate, and bills of credit were issued for 1,000 more. The commonwealth adopted a new seal, and a proclamation, issued somewhat later by Chief Justice Adams, enjoining it upon all people to give loyal obedience to the new government, closed with the significant invocation “God save the people,” instead of the customary “God save the king.”

In taking this decisive step, Massachusetts was simply the first to act upon the general recommendation of the Continental Congress, that the several colonies should forthwith proceed to frame governments for themselves, based upon the suffrages of the people. From such a recommendation as this to a formal declaration of independence, the distance to be traversed was not great. Samuel Adams urged that in declaring the colonies independent Congress would be simply recognizing a fact which in reality already existed, and that by thus looking facts squarely in the face the inevitable war might be conducted with far greater efficiency. But he was earnestly and ably opposed by John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, whose arguments for the present prevailed in the Congress. It was felt that the Congress, as a mere advisory body, had no right to take a step of such supreme importance without first receiving explicit instructions from every one of the colonies. Besides this, the thought of separation was still a painful thought to most of the delegates, and it was deemed well worth while to try the effect of one more candid statement of grievances, to be set forth in a petition to his majesty.

Congress sends a petition to the king

For like reasons, the Congress did not venture to take measures to increase its own authority; and when Franklin, still thinking of union as he had been thinking for more than twenty years, now brought forward a new scheme, somewhat similar to the Articles of Confederation afterwards adopted, it was set aside as premature. The king was known to be fiercely opposed to any dealings with the colonies as a united body, and so considerate of his feelings were these honest and peace-loving delegates that, after much discussion, they signed their carefully worded petition severally, and not jointly. They signed it as individuals speaking for the people of the American colonies, not as members of an organic body representing the American people. To emphasize still further their conciliatory mood, the delivery of the petition was entrusted to Richard Penn, a descendant of the great Quaker and joint-proprietary in the government of Pennsylvania, an excellent man and an ardent loyalist. At the same time that this was done, an issue of paper money was made, to be severally guaranteed by the thirteen colonies, and half a million dollars were sent to Cambridge to be used for the army.

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