

MARTHA J. LAMB



HISTORY OF
THE CITY OF
NEW YORK

VOLUME 2

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CHAPTER I. 1775. THE THRESHOLD OF THE REVOLUTION.

AS we enter upon a conflict which wrought one of the greatest triumphs in history, — the founding of a powerful nation, — it is interesting to trace the various currents of human thought in regions widely remote from each other which stamped their influence upon coming events. "We have noted the high sense of political justice which prevailed in New York, and the intelligence and energy with which her citizens in every decade asserted hereditary rights. A certain vital force, gathered unconsciously through the sharp discussion of knotty questions and the resolute sitting in judgment upon the edicts of the royal government, with roots far in the past, and a long genealogy, needed only signal occasion to ignite and become purely Roman and regal. But, with all her ceaseless internal agitations, New York was scarcely more divided in opinion than England herself. And nearly in the same ratio with New York, whose extensive frontier was at the mercy of innumerable tribes of war-loving Indians, loyal to the crown, the higher intelligence of Great Britain was appalled at the prospect of an armed struggle.

In the House of Lords one peer pronounced the military coercion of America impracticable. Another recommended the cutting of the colonies adrift, "to perish in anarchy and repentance." Many ridiculed the idea of open rebellion in America. "How can a people without arms, ammunition, money, or navy, dare to brave the foremost among the great powers of the earth?" they asked. Camden exclaimed, "Were I an American, I would resist to the last drop of my blood." Sandwich, then at the head of the Admiralty,

answered with clever witticisms concerning American cowardice, causing uproarious laughter. " I tell you," he said, "that Americans are neither disciplined nor capable of discipline." George III., to all suggestions, scornfully replied, " Blows must decide whether the Colonists are to be subject to this country or to be independent."

The new Parliament spent the entire month of December in profitless discussions. Just before its adjournment for the holidays, the proceedings of the first Continental Congress reached England. The petition to the king was dignified in tone and forcible in expression; even the crowned head was filled with surprise! The Colonies asked only security in their ancient condition! The appeal was simply for justice. For equal rights with British subjects who dwelt upon home soil. One passage, as an illustration: —

" You have been told that we are impatient of government and desirous of independency. These are calumnies. Permit us to be as free as yourselves, and we shall ever esteem a union with you to be our greatest glory and our greatest happiness. But if you are determined that your ministers shall wantonly sport with the rights of mankind; if neither the voice of justice, the dictates of law, the principles of the Constitution, or the suggestions of humanity, can restrain your hands from shedding human blood in such an impious cause, we must then tell you that we will never submit to any ministry or nation in the world."

George III. read, and shrugged his shoulders. He did not lose sight of the fact that he had on his side the block and the gallows. He had never loved the Colonies. He had no sympathy with the lofty spirit which inspired such significant language. He could not or would not see that the suspension of trade was the most disinterested expression of a deep sense of wrong. British commerce would be distressed to a certain degree, but England could seek other markets; while the American merchant sacrificed nearly his whole business. Neither did the blind king reflect upon the weak condition of his own war department. British

industry at that epoch rendered every able-bodied man of value; hence enlistments in the army were rare. Rank was bestowed by favor, or sold for money. Boys at school not infrequently held commissions. The corrupt system prevailed to such an extent that, scarcely a general officer of the day had gained a great name.

Barrington, the military secretary, knowing all this, remonstrated warmly against war. "The contest will cost more than we can gain by success; we have not military strength enough to levy taxes on America," he said. With masterly eloquence, he advised that the troops be at once removed from Boston. A conference was finally arranged between Lord Howe and Franklin, the agent of the Colonies, to learn the best terms of reconciliation with America. Franklin, true to his principles and faithful to Congress, declared, as the only basis of possible harmony, that certain specified obnoxious acts be repealed, and Boston freed from her ignominy. Lord Howe repeated his words to Dartmouth and North, who agreed in the opinion that neither the king nor Parliament would concede so much.

At the opening of Parliament after the holidays the aged Chatham rose, and moved to address the king for "immediate orders to remove the forces from the town of Boston." He was keenly alive to the imminence of the crisis, and his argument teemed with sound logic. He said: —

"My Lords, the means of enforcing thralldom are as weak in practice as they are unjust in principle. General Gage and the troops under his command are penned up, pining in inglorious inactivity. You may call them an army of safety and of guard, but they are in truth an army of impotence; and to make the folly equal to the disgrace, they are an army of irritation. But this tameness, however contemptible, cannot be censured; for the first drop of blood, shed in civil and unnatural war, will make a wound that years, perhaps ages, may not heal. Their force would be most disproportionately exerted against a brave,

generous, and united people, with arms in their hands, and courage in their hearts, — three millions of people, the genuine descendants of a valiant and pious ancestry, driven to those deserts by the narrow maxims of a superstitious tyranny. And is the spirit of persecution never to be appeased? Are the brave sons of these brave forefathers to inherit their sufferings as they have inherited their virtues! Are they to sustain the infliction of the most oppressive and unexampled severity? They have been condemned unheard. The indiscriminate hand of vengeance has lumped together innocent and guilty; with all the formalities of hostility, has blocked up the town of Boston, and reduced to beggary and famine thirty thousand inhabitants. This resistance to your arbitrary system of taxation might have been foreseen from the very nature of things and from mankind; above all, from the Whiggish spirit flourishing in that country. The spirit which now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolence, and ship-money in England; the same which, by the Bill of Rights, vindicated the English Constitution; the same which established the essential maxim of your liberties, that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent For myself, I must avow, that in all my reading, — and I have read Thucydides and have, studied and admired the master-states of the world, — for solidity of reason, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion under a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress at Philadelphia. The histories of Greece and Rome give us nothing equal to it, and all attempts to impose servitude upon such a mighty continental nation must be in vain."

Many of the English statesmen besides Chatham believed that every motive of justice and policy, of dignity and prudence, urged the removal of the troops from Boston; that haughty England would be forced ultimately to retract. The illustrious nobleman's words made a profound impression upon the crowd of Americans who were

listening with breathless attention, particularly when he added: —

" If the ministers persevere in thus misadvising and misleading the king, I will not say that the king is betrayed, but I will pronounce that the kingdom is undone; I will not say, that they can alienate the affections of his subjects from his crown, but I will affirm that, the American jewel out of it, they will make the crown not worth his wearing."

Suffolk replied with angry vehemence, boasting that he was one of the first to advise coercive measures, and that the government was resolved to bring the Americans to obedience. Shelburne signified his approval of the sentiments of Chatham " because of their wisdom, justice, and propriety." Camden exclaimed: —

" This I will say, not only as a statesman, politician, and philosopher, but as a common lawyer: My Lords, you have no right to tax America; the natural rights of man and the immutable laws of nature are all with that people. Kings, lords, and commons are fine sounding names; but kings, lords, and commons may become tyrants as well as others; it is as lawful to resist the tyranny of many as of one."

Lord Gower, with a torrent of sneers, declared himself in favor of enforcing every measure. Rochford and others followed, each attacking Chatham with biting sarcasm, and reproaching him with "seeking to spread the fire of sedition." But the greatest statesman of the realm closed the debate, as he had opened it, by insisting on the right of Americans to hold themselves exempt from taxation save by their own consent. His reasoning, the essence of the true spirit of English opinion, availed nothing. His motion was lost by a vote of sixty-eight against eighteen. And the king was well pleased.

Attention was at once turned towards severing the chain of union in the Colonies which Chatham had proclaimed as "solid, permanent, and effectual." The ministry fixed their eyes upon New York, which was the central point, geographically, commercially, and financially. New York

won over to a separate negotiation, and the backbone of the "rebellion" was broken. Every device was resorted to, and every exertion made to accomplish the desired result. Very little doubt of ultimate success existed in the minds of the king and his influential courtiers. New York had acquired individual strength and stood out alone, a distinct character, as it were, among the colonies. Having no charter, and being the seal of a royal government which dispensed commissions, offices, and immense' grants of land, New York was alive for them with signs of promise. A corrupt influence had grown out of contracts for the army; the New York Assembly had been continued from session to session by the king's prerogative for a series of years; New York City was the seat of a chartered college which taught that Christians should be subject to the higher powers, and of the Church of England, whose ministers were strictly loyal; and over and above all, the shadow of a great terror might be tinned to account, for the widely scattered and defenseless population of the province shuddered at the possibility of the countless savages being let loose from the north in case of war. It would seem as if New York would accept the olive-branch, and welcome almost any plan of accommodation.

The recent death of Sir William Johnson (July 11, 1774) had created fresh apprehensions in regard to the movements of the Indians. On the very day of his death a congress of six hundred braves were assembled at his baronial hall, and he had spoken two hours with the fire and vivacity of an Iroquois orator, endeavoring to persuade the great sachems of the Six Nations from participating in the bloody war which was then raging fiercely along the savage borders of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, a war which involved their own blood — for Logan was a Mingo chief — and which was marked by atrocities so awful that history recoils from their recital. Sir William was succeeded in his title and estates by his son Sir John Johnson, then thirty-two years of age, who, in 1773, had married Mary,

daughter of Hon. John Watts of New York City; but the control of Indian affairs fell into the hands of Colonel Guy Johnson, who was less powerful as well as less popular than his father, and whose efficiency in managing the uneasy savages remained to be proven.

This succession of butcheries which crimsoned the Alleghany and Monongahela Rivers, was virtually brought to an end through the action of the old Seneca warriors in preventing their bloodthirsty young men from rushing to the assistance of the defeated tribes in that extensive wild; but these same suspicious and treacherous beings were now sniffing the rumors of possible civil war among their white brethren, and any prophecy concerning their probable conduct in such an event was idle in the extreme.

Dartmouth quickly ordered the governors of the colonies " to use their utmost endeavors " to prevent the appointment of delegates to the contemplated Congress. Tryon was in England, and the aged Lieutenant-Governor Colden at the head of affairs in New York during his absence. Golden had never swerved for an instant from his allegiance to the crown; he esteemed it a religious duty to obey the instructions of his superiors to the letter. In reply to Dartmouth's communication he wrote, under date of January 4, 1775: —

" Enthusiasm is ever contagious; and when propagated by every artifice becomes almost irresistible. The Assembly of this Province, as I formerly informed your Lordship, are to meet next Tuesday. If I find that there will not be a Majority for prudent measures, I shall incline to prorogue them for a short time, that the Plan of the New Parliament may be known here before the Assembly do anything."

This legislative body was slow in coming together. It was the 26th of January before twenty-one out of thirty members were in their seats. Abraham Ten Broeck immediately moved to take into consideration the acts of the Congress held at Philadelphia in the preceding autumn. He was ably seconded by George Clinton (afterwards

governor of the State of New York), by the brave Philip Schuyler, by Simon Boerum, who had represented King's County since 1761, by the afterwards famous Colonel Woodhull, by Philip Livingston, and, indeed, by nearly all the members who were of Dutch descent A most intensely exciting debate ensued. The motion, however, was rejected by a vote of eleven against ten.

The news reaching England, George III. and his ministers became infatuated with their courting scheme. Henceforth no pains must be spared. The game must be well played. Not a trick lost. New York must be secured. Favors and indulgences to the loyal. Praise accorded the good disposition towards reconciliation as shown by the vote of the Assembly. "Ah," said Gamier to Rochford, "that one vote was worth a million sterling." But his tone changed when he was in company with Vergennes, and he explained how that one "insignificant" vote was not worth the counting by the Ministry, for New York was sure to act with the rest of the continent, — she only differed in the modes.

Governor Tryon was ordered to return to New York without delay, and empowered to give "every reasonable satisfaction to England's faithful subjects in New York." Diplomats were to convey promises to the landed gentry; the chronic disputes in the land department, and boundary difficulties, were to be settled in favor of New York; the claims of New York speculators to Vermont territory, under which populous villages had grown up, were to be supported against the New Hampshire grants; in short, all claims or pretensions were to be honored where the petitioners would pledge themselves not to obstruct the importation or exportation of goods to and from Great Britain. New York was to be excepted from the restraints imposed on the trade and fisheries of the other colonies.

There were hot debates in the New York Assembly, particularly when the question was argued whether delegates should be appointed to the second Congress. It was claimed that the proceedings of the first Congress

were violent and treasonable, and, instead of healing the unnatural breach with the mother country, had the effect to widen it immeasurably; that "to repeat the experiment in the present emergency was to be guilty of open treason in the broad light of day." Against a very determined minority the House refused to appoint delegates.

This action was extensively quoted by the hopeful on the other side of the water; and it subjected New York to all manner of unmerited aspersions from the neighboring colonies. But its weight was of little account in the general balance of sentiment. Never was a pivot of the policy of ministers more grievously misunderstood than New York. Never was the character of a community more blunderingly misinterpreted. The foundation of the structure was moderation, inflexibility, and an inherited predilection for republicanism. An ancestry of which New York was proud had proven to the world that a small people under great discouragements could found a republic. The results of the daring and heroism which distinguished the long period of the contest between Holland and Spain were fresh in the public mind; and men reminded each other in their daily walks and conversation how Great Britain herself owed the renovation of her own political system in 1689 to Holland. The New Yorkers who were actually in sympathy with the British system of ministerial oppression were much fewer than has been generally supposed; and they were found chiefly on the surface. The landed aristocracy were divided; they naturally dreaded the confiscation of their vast estates. But we shall see presently that it was no insignificant proportion of them who nobly risked their wide possessions, whether inherited or accumulated, in the cause of liberty. The mechanics of the city were almost to a man enthusiasts for resistance. They were excitable and headstrong; and men of means and broader intelligence feared that through the very fact that this class had nothing personally to lose, and little care for or conception of

possible future events, irreparable mischief might be wrought through their rash perversity.

Notwithstanding the conservative element, and the generally established belief to the contrary, in no American colony was English dominion less welcome than in New York. The reader will observe that with all the corrupting influences which the ingenuity of a corrupt Ministry could devise bearing down upon her, without any legally constituted body as a rallying point, with perils menacing her on every side, and in defiance

of the logic which had been a part of every man's education — that an established government must lie sustained — we find New York proceeding exclusively by the methods of revolution, and under circumstances of difficulty which had no parallel in any of the other Colonies. At the critical moment when the king was most obstinately and serenely confident in regard to the future conduct of New York, the Committee of Sixty were laughing at the vote of the Assembly, which by a majority of four refused to forbid importations, and in the very face of this counter-legislative action strictly enforced the non-importation agreement of the condemned Congress. While the smiling monarch was lavishing flattery upon his "well-disposed subjects in New York " and issuing orders that they should be "gratified in every reasonable request," the self-directing Committee of Sixty, wishing to test the real mind of New York concerning the Assembly's refusal to appoint delegates to another Congress, caused a poll to be taken throughout the city, and against one hundred and sixty-three, eight hundred and twenty-five declared in favor of representation. A convention was unhesitatingly summoned to elect the delegates, in which the counties co-operated with the city. On the 20th of April, under the direct gaze of the "supreme legislative government of New York," forty-five undaunted electors chose from among their ranks fourteen delegates for the second Continental Congress. Colden wrote despairingly to Dartmouth: "It is not in the

power of government to prevent such measures; they are supported by individuals in their private characters, and do not come within the energy of the laws."

Several of these newly elected delegates will be recognized as members of the Assembly. Philip Livingston, the great merchant — president of the convention — was the first choice; John Alsop, with immense mercantile interests at stake; Francis Lewis, also a merchant, a man of liberal education and extensive foreign travel; James Duane, a lawyer of large practice and universally conceded abilities; John Jay, already in the front rank among lawyers, scholars, and political economists, despite his brief twenty-nine years; Philip Schuyler, the valiant champion of popular rights in the Assembly; Robert E. Livingston, versatile, brilliant, and influential; George Clinton, as wise in council as he was afterwards gallant in warfare; Henry Wisner, from Orange County, the chief manufacturer of powder for the American army at a later date; Simon Boerum, the assemblyman from King's County during fourteen consecutive years; William Floyd, intelligent, active, and discreet; and Lewis Morris, the worthy scion of a powerful family whose influence for more than a century had been arrayed against the arbitrary encroachments of the crown. Thus were the varied interests of New York represented in this important movement towards independence. Men of high moral dignity, of sound discretion, of wealth and position, of active business habits, and cultivated intelligence, men well known and in whom the community trusted, and who were in no humor to shirk responsibility or hasten war, were to take their seats in the second Continental Congress which England had tried in vain to suppress. Their real as well as professed object was to "concert measures for the preservation of American rights, and for the restoration of harmony between Great Britain and the Colonies."

New York had as much more at stake than either New England or Virginia, as she was better prepared through

generations of schooling in the methods of government to cope with the adversaries of liberty. For upwards of three fourths of a century New York had been steadily advancing upon arbitrary power, while the neighboring colonies were comparatively at rest under well-defined chartered rights. The question whether English or French civilization should control in the development of the American continent had been chiefly determined by New York; and the principles which underlie our republican institutions had first found expression in New York. In short, the tree of freedom had been planted in the Empire State long before the little plantation of a Dutch mercantile company had come under kingly rule; it had taken firm root; it had grown rank despite the frosts of severe displeasure, sometimes shooting forth its branches in one direction and sometimes in another, putting out a leaf here and a leaf there, and finally budding and blooming under the stray sunbeams of a living affection for liberty even while constantly assailed by storms of foreign wrath; and now its ripening fruit is falling — into its neighbors' fields, indeed, who, with their baskets ready, hasten to gather it in.

The New York Convention adjourned on Saturday. The quiet of the next morning (Sunday) was broken by the startling news of the battle of Lexington. As the people were assembling for morning service in the various churches of the metropolis, a horseman, riding furiously down the Bowery road into Broadway, reined in his steed here and there to recite the events of Wednesday, the 19th of April, to little groups of Sunday worshipers on the street. Written documents, authenticated by the chief men of all the prominent towns he had passed through from Boston to New York, confirmed his every statement. Amazement, alarm, and indignation took possession of the public mind. The British army had attempted to seize and destroy the military supplies at Concord; an ill-advised and inglorious expedition had resulted in a chapter of horrors with which the world is familiar, and in the ignominious flight of well-

trained troops before an outraged people! The king's army at this moment were closely beleaguered in Boston with no mode of exit except by the sea!

New York was aflame with excitement. The news traveled with the speed of a whirlwind, and the whole city before noon seemed to have risen in resentment. Men hurried to and fro, women were met weeping on the sidewalks, the churches were deserted in the great feverish impulse to learn the miserable truth, and the dinner-hour was forgotten. Although it was the Sabbath, men in a body took possession of the City Hall, and armed themselves with the munitions it contained. Two vessels laden with flour and supplies for the British troops at Boston, just upon the eve of sailing, were at once boarded by an impromptu force, headed by Isaac Sears and John Lamb, and the cargoes, to the value of eighty thousand pounds, swiftly unloaded. All vessels about to sail for any of the British possessions were detained. The royal government was powerless in New York; the people ruled the hour. The keys of the custom-house were demanded and the officers dismissed.

On Monday, while volunteer companies paraded Broadway in defiance of the administration, the Committee of Sixty met in earnest consultation; being invested with no special power except in regard to the non-importation agreement, a new committee with wider authority seemed indispensable. Hence the following call was issued: —

NEW-YORK, COMMITTEE-CHAMBER,

WEDNESDAY, 26th April, 1775.

THE Committee having taken into Consideration the Commotions occasioned by the sanguinary Measures pursued by the British Ministry, and that the Powers with which this Committee is invested, respect only the Association, are unanimously of Opinion, That a new Committee be elected by the Freeholders and Freemen of this City and County, for the present unhappy Exigency of Affairs, as well as to observe the Conduct of all Persons touching the Association; That the said Committee consist of 100 Persons; that 33 be a Quorum, and that they dissolve within a Fortnight next after the End of the next Sessions of the Continental Congress. And that the Sense of the Freeholders and Freemen of this City and County, upon this Subject, may be better procured and ascertained, the Committee are further unanimously of Opinion, That the Polls be taken on Friday Morning next, at 9 o'Clock, at the usual Places of Election in each Ward, under the Inspection of the two Vestrymen of each Ward, and two of this Committee, or any two of the four; and that at the said Elections the Votes of the Freemen and Freeholders, be taken on the following Questions, viz. Whether such New Committee shall be constituted; and if *Yes*, of whom it shall consist. And this Committee is further unanimously of Opinion, That at the present alarming Juncture, it is highly advisable that a Provincial Congress be immediately summoned; and that it be recommended to the Freeholders and Freemen of this City and County, to choose at the same Time that they vote for the New Committee aforesaid, Twenty Deputies to represent them at the said Congress. And that a Letter be forthwith prepared and dispatched to all the Counties, requesting them to unite with us in forming a Provincial Congress, and to appoint their Deputies without Delay, to meet at New-York, on Monday the 22d of May next.

By Order of the Committee,

ISAAC LOW, *Chairman.*

The counties of New York had many of them prior to this call assured the public through the press of their willingness to stand or fall with American liberty. Hitherto there had been no occasion for the appointment of a Provincial Congress in New York. It was supposed that such a movement would obstruct all business, prevent the collection of debts, destroy the liberty of the press, and involve the country in distress. But with the shifting scenes minor considerations were overlooked, and one grand impulse seemed to inspire action. While the war-message was speeding from village to village through New England, and the population responding in a manner which has found no parallel in history, New York unhesitatingly took another firm, unfaltering step in the direction of Independence.

Through the length and breadth of New England no time was consumed in asking if resistance were practicable; no delay for the want of a union formed or leaders proclaimed. Men hurried from the fields, the work-shops, and the barns,

and ministers came from their studies, every one with a gun, and a bit of lunch in his hat or pocket; possibly a few necessaries packed in a pillow-case by wife or daughter. In some towns, companies were organized after a fashion on the village green. For the most part the enlistments were on the prime condition of individual convenience or pleasure. Thus the volunteer was as free to go away as to rush into the fray. There were no uniforms, and no equipments. On the soldiers' rapid march to the seat of the disturbance the inhabitants along the route gladly spread their tables, and all things were in common. The British officers were confounded when they saw the besiegers perched in Cambridge as a central camp, with wide-spread wings stretching from Chelsea on the left, almost round to Dorchester on the right, covering about three quarters of a circle of headlands, slopes, peninsulas, and eminences, themselves thus hemmed in by an unorganized, fluctuating mass of humanity filled with the spirit and intent of a military host. The bitter mortification of the proud and most experienced soldiers of the English realm, freshly laureled in recent wars, was only equaled by the sufferings which came with their confinement, since their magazines were unfilled, and supplies of every description were cut off, rendering their diet unwholesome and meager. They were rich in every form of water-craft, ships of war, gun-boats, transports, floats, and barges; but even with these they could not venture near the shore of main or island. The tide-soaked marshes between the two combating forces then doubled the present width of the rivers; and there were no bridges in the region, save on the side of Cambridge towards Brighton. The salt flats had no causeways over them, and the only route between any two places was by a long detour. The chief roads and all the high points were cautiously guarded. Hence the humiliated generals of England's monarch saw no way out of their disgraceful dilemma, until reinforcements should reach them from the other side of the Atlantic. General Gage, at

the solicitation of some of the leading citizens of Boston assembled in Faneuil Hall, agreed to allow such of the people as desired, to remove from the city, if they would leave their arms behind them and covenant to abstain altogether from hostilities. Many of the suffering and frightened families, whose means of procuring food were made precarious by the siege, availed themselves of the permission. But their effects were subjected to a rigid examination; and presently the devoted loyalists, of whom there were not a few, objected to the liberty afforded their neighbors of removal, under whatever circumstances, as it would furnish the provincials more excuse for violence should they attack the city. There were timid neutrals, and there were spies, who remained quietly in Boston. These latter watched all movements and communicated with their friends outside. The population of Boston, independent of the military, was then about eighteen thousand. The town of Charlestown, which lay under the British guns, contained some two or three thousand souls. The interruption of employment brought poverty, and the people fled from Charlestown in every direction, until there were less than two hundred remaining.

The colonial forces were loosely officered, and under no national authority whatsoever. No war had been declared, and there was no nation to declare war. The Continental Congress had not as yet decided upon the need of an army. They had no munitions of war nor the means with which to procure them. A self-constituted Provincial Congress discharged legislative functions in Massachusetts, and a Committee of Safety directed in military affairs. A Council of War was also instituted, with an undefined range as to advice and authority, sometimes mischievously interfering with or confusing the arrangements and measures of the Committee of Safety. The field officers held place and rank according to the inclination and partialities of the privates, and were liable to be superseded or disobeyed at any moment. Indeed, the fighting elements, drawn together by

the excitement of the hour, were subject to discord and disintegration, and could act in concert only by yielding themselves to the influence of the spirit which had wrenched them from their various occupations at the busiest season of the year. They did not feel their lack of discipline nor realize its probable consequences. They were restless under restraint, and eager for action. In the Committee of Safety and in the Council of War there were directing minds, and a wide difference of opinion, as to the safe and expedient course to be pursued. Daring enterprises were discussed, but little could be attempted while there was hardly powder enough in the camp for a successful target expedition.

In accordance with the call, New York city and county elected, on May 1, a new Committee of One Hundred to control in all general affairs and as the powers of the Convention (so recently in session) had expired with the choice of delegates to the Continental Congress, all parts of the colony of New York had been summoned, and at the same time (May 1) elected delegates to represent them in a Provincial Congress.

Eighty-three members of the new Committee of One Hundred met as soon as chosen; and on the motion of John Morin Scott, seconded by Alexander MacDougall, an association was projected, engaging under all the ties of religion, honor, and love of country, to submit to committees and to Congress, to withhold supplies from British troops, and at the risk of lives and fortunes to repel every attempt at enforcing taxation by Parliament. Colden described in a letter to Dartmouth, under date of May 3, how the people of New York had "entirely prostrated the powers of Government, and produced an association by which this Province has solemnly united with the others in resisting the Acts of Parliament."

On the 5th of May a packet sailed for England. Among the passengers were two agents sent by the counselors of the disabled government of New York, to represent to the

Ministry how severely the rash conduct of the army at Boston had injured the cause of the king. The Committee of One Hundred addressed by the same vessel the mayor and corporation of London, and through them the capital of the British Empire and people of Great Britain, saying: —

" This country will not be deceived by measures conciliatory in appearance. America is grown so irritable by oppression, that the least shock, in any part, is, by the most powerful sympathetic affection, instantaneously felt through the whole continent. The city (of New York) are as one man in the cause of liberty; our inhabitants are resolutely bent on supporting their committee, and the intended Provincial and Continental Congresses; there is not the least doubt of the efficacy of their example in the other counties. In short, while the whole continent ardently wishes for peace upon such terms as can be acceded to by Englishmen, they are indefatigable in preparing for the last appeal.

" We speak the real sentiments of the confederated colonies, from Nova Scotia to Georgia, when we declare that all the horrors of civil war will never compel America to submit to taxation by authority of Parliament."

These brave words were written in the full light of the knowledge that there were not five hundred pounds of powder in the length and breadth of the metropolis, that British troops were already ordered to New York, that it was commanded by Brooklyn Heights, and that the deep water of its harbor exposed it on both sides to ships of war. The letter was signed by eighty-nine of the One Hundred, of whom the first was John Jay.

The following day the delegates from Massachusetts and Connecticut to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia drew near; they were met on Murray Hill, three miles from the city, by a company of grenadiers, and a regiment of the city militia under arms, and by carriages and a cavalcade, and many thousands of persons on foot; and along roads which were crowded as if the whole city had turned out to

do them honor, and amid shouts and huzzas, the ringing of bells and every demonstration of joy, they made their entry into New York, where they spent the Sabbath.

On Monday, two days later, they were joined by several of the New York delegates, and with great ceremony escorted by several hundred of the militia under arms, and by a much larger number of patriotic citizens, across the water on their way to Philadelphia, pausing in Newark and Elizabethtown, where triumphal honors awaited them.

Events followed each other with the swiftness of the whirlwind. Rev. Myles Cooper, the second President of King's College, who had been elected to that honorable position in 1763, while only twenty-eight years of age, had been writing for the press with great force and elegance of diction, on the subject of colonial relation to England. A tract had recently appeared from his pen entitled "A Friendly Address to all Reasonable Americans on the Subject of our Political Confusions." His habits and opinions had been fashioned from the old Oxford pattern, and the popular party were not in any humor to tolerate his scholarly arguments against opposing the king's troops. On the night of the 10th of May a mob forcibly entered his lodging in the college with murder intent. A student warning him in time, he escaped, half-dressed, by jumping over the college fence, and found shelter in the house of one of the Stuyvesants until he could reach a vessel bound for England.

John Holt, who edited the New York Journal, was one of the most fearless of printers; having in 1774 discarded the arms of the king as an ornamental heading for his paper, and substituted the device of a snake cut into parts, with "Unite or die" for a motto, he about this time issued the snake joined and coiled, with the tail in its mouth, forming a double ring; within the coil was a pillar standing on Magna Holt's snake Device. Carta, surmounted with the cap of Liberty. As the delegates of New England and New York were traveling through New Jersey and bearing with

them to their goal the sense of the population as well as the declaration of the New Jersey Assembly " to abide by the united voice of the Continental Congress," a scheme, discussed in private by Adams and Hancock with the governor and council of Connecticut while in Hartford a few days before, was taking effect in a master stroke of military policy. A party of volunteers under the command of Ethan Allen were on the march towards Ticonderoga. They were chiefly from Salisbury, Berkshire, and Bennington, having been fitted out from the funds in the Connecticut treasury. In the gray of the morning of that eventful 10th of May which inaugurated the opening of the second Continental Congress, the fortress of Ticonderoga, which cost England eight million pounds sterling, a succession of campaigns, and an immense amount of human life, fell into the hands of the Americans after a siege of ten minutes, without the loss of a single man.

Allen's party numbered eighty-three; they broke through the closed gate of the fort, disarmed the guards, raising at the same instant the Indian war-whoop, — such an unnatural yell as had not been heard in all that region since the days of Montcalm, — and formed on the parade in hollow square so as to face each of the barracks. One of the sentries, after receiving a slight wound, cried for quarter, and guided Allen to the apartment of the commanding officer.

" Come forth instantly, or I will sacrifice the whole garrison! " Allen shouted through the door.

Delaplace, the commander, appeared undressed, with his garments in his hand " Deliver to me the fort instantly!" was the salutation with which he was welcomed.

"By what, authority '." he asked in amazement.

"In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!" was the quick response.

Delaplace attempted to speak again, but was peremptorily interrupted by Allen, who nourished a drawn sword over his head. Seeing no alternative, Delaplace

surrendered the garrison, and ordered his men to be paraded without arms.

With the fortress were captured fifty prisoners, more than a hundred pieces of cannon, one thirteen-inch mortar, and a number of swivels, stores and small arms. Crown Point was taken a little later by a detachment under Seth Warner, the garrison of twelve men surrendering upon the first summons. And furthermore, the only British vessel on Lake Champlain yielded to the bravery of Benedict Arnold. Alas! Great Britain was actually at war with herself.

And now all eyes were turned towards the Congress at Philadelphia. A more doubtful body of men was probably never convened since the world was made. They could copy nothing past, be guided by no precedent, proceed not after the manner of great inventors, but depend entirely upon the gradual unfolding of the internal necessity of the community. They had no place of meeting, but were indebted to the courtesy of the carpenters of the Quaker City for the use of the hall wherein they held their sessions; they had no treasury; they had no authority to levy taxes or to borrow money; they had no soldiers enlisted, and not one civil or military officer to carry out their orders; they were not an executive government, they were not even a legislative body; they had no powers save those of counsel. They represented simply the unformed opinions of an unformed people.

The thirteen American provinces were inhabited by men of French, Dutch, Swedish, and German ancestry, as well as English. This new directing intelligence must respect the masses, one fifth of whom had for their mother tongue some other language than the Anglo-Saxon. They must not ignore the Quakers, who considered it wicked to fight; nor yet the Calvinists, whose religious creed encouraged resistance to tyranny. They must remember the freeholders, whose pride in their liberties and confidence in their power to defend the lands which their own hands had subdued rendered them impatient and headstrong; and also the

merchants, whose ships and treasures were afloat, and who dreaded war as the foreshadowing of their own bankruptcy. The immediate declaration of independence was an impossibility. Massachusetts, almost exclusively of British origin, might reach a result with short time for reflection. Congress must take a broader view. Not only the various nationalities, but the religious creeds, numerous as embraced by all Europe, must be molded into something like unity before the American mind could be liberated from allegiance to the past and enlisted in the formation of one great state. A creative impulse waited for the just solution of an intricate problem. Time and circumstances were to foster a sublime sentiment superior to race or language. Meantime it was the sense of oppression rather than exalted love for country which now ruled the multitude. The members of Congress saw with fatal clearness the total want of any preparation for war. The narrow powers with which they were entrusted by their constituents argued forcibly against any change, where change was not demanded by instant necessity. They were divided and undecided. They resisted every forward movement, and made none but by compulsion. And yet it was their glorious office, through the natural succession of inevitable events, to cement a union and constitute a nation.

On the following day the New York Committee of One Hundred addressed lieutenant-governor Colden in a carefully worded and dignified document, setting forth how the city and county, as well as the rest of the Colony of New York, had waited with patience, in vain, for "a redress of the many unconstitutional burdens under which the whole continent had groaned for many years," and that at this most interesting crisis, when their all was at stake, and the sword drawn by the administration against the people of Massachusetts for asserting their invaluable rights, the common inheritance of all Britons, whether in England or America, they had proceeded to associate in the common

cause, and claimed as their birthright a total exemption from all taxes, internal or external, by authority of Parliament. At the same time they were deeply concerned in regard to the mischief and bloodshed which would ensue from the encampment of British troops in the city of New York, and besought Colden to apply to General Gage for orders to prevent the landing of such as were on the sea bound for this port, and daily expected. The final paragraph of the communication was as follows: —

" Give us leave, Sir, to conclude by assuring you, that we are determined to improve that confidence with which the People have honored us, in strengthening the hand of the civil Magistrate in every lawful measure calculated to promote the Peace and just Rule of this metropolis, and consistent with that jealous attention which above all things we are bound to pay to the violated Rights of America."

Golden replied May 13, saying, he could not conceive upon what grounds a suspicion was entertained that the city of New York was in be reduced to the present state of Boston. He denied having had the least intimation that any " regular troops were destined for this province." And he specially exhorted the committee to 'airy into effect their assurances of strengthening the hands of the civil magistral adding: "Let this be done immediately, and with impartial firmness on every occasion; that the houses, persons, and property of your fellow citizens may not be attacked with impunity, and every degree of domestic security and happiness sapped to its foundation."

The Provincial Congress assembled in the city May 23. Colden wrote to Dartmouth shortly afterward: —

"You will not be surprised to hear that congresses and committees are established in this government and acting with all the confidence and authority of a legal government. The Provincial Congress of this province, now setting, consists of upwards of one hundred members. The city committee and subcommittees in the country places are

likewise kept up; that the new plan of government may be complete for the carrying into execution the determination of the Continental and Provincial Congresses."

The names of those who organized themselves into a legislative body at this critical juncture reveal much more of the real republican spirit which pervaded New York, than shining narrations of riotous outbreaks from gifted pens. Many of them are already associated in the reader's mind with the most important events of colonial New York. Others were borne by influential private citizens and wealthy business men, who, although indisposed to hasten acts of violence, coolly imperiled their all by such unusual proceedings. Benjamin Kissam, for instance, was an educated and able lawyer, in whose office John Jay and Lindley Murray had been law-students together. He was a man of sterling qualities, and one who commanded universal respect. His wife was Catharine Rutgers. He and his family were on terms of special social intimacy with William Livingston; and he was one of the famous coterie of lawyers — the "Moot" — which met to discuss legal questions only, of which Livingston was president, and such men as James Duane, Robert R. Livingston, Egbert Benson, Whitehead Hicks, William Wickham, Gouverneur Morris, John Jay, William Smith, Richard Morris, Samuel Jones, Stephen De Lancey, John Morin Scott, and John Watts, Jr., regular attendants. His brother, Daniel Kissam, was also an eminent lawyer and a judge in Queen's County, where he married Mary Betts. The Kissams were of purely English origin, the first of the name having early settled in Flushing, and in the various generations since have perhaps contributed more valuable men to the legal and medical professions than any other of the old New York families.

Jacobus Van Zandt represented an opulent family of as purely Holland origin, the ancestors of whom were men of note on the Continent. Wynant Van Zandt, styled "gentleman" in the records, held important trusts under

Charles I. In 1638 he was commissioned by that monarch as agent for England of the city of Amsterdam, to act in connection with the British minister in regard to certain matters of moment. The first of the name settled in New York about 1682. His son Wynant, educated in Europe, married a Dutch lady; their home in William Street for a decade was one of refinement and luxury, many relics of which in old and elaborately wrought silver, a carved chair of state, etc., are still preserved, as well as the portraits from which the above sketches are copied. They had six sons, of whom Jacobus, the elder, occupied the old homestead in 1775. Fired with the true Dutch spirit in which he had been bred, he was quickly ranked among those who declared for resistance, and was a most useful member of this Congress.

David Clarkson, second son of Hon. David Clarkson, so long active in New York city affairs, was a grandson of the Matthew Clarkson, notable as Secretary of the Province, whose father was an eminent English divine and whose mother was of royal descent. David (2d) was one of the substantial men of the city at this period, — widely known and widely honored, middle aged, rich without pride, and liberal without ostentation. He, like his father before him, had been educated in Europe and seen much of the world. He married, in 1749, Elizabeth French, the sister of Mrs. William Livingston and Ains. David Van Borne. Shortly afterward he built upon the Clarkson property, corner of Whitehall and Pearl streets, an elegant mansion, which was considered at the time an "ornament" to the metropolis, but which was swept away by the great fire of 1776. It was sumptuously furnished, some of the European importations consisting of beautiful curtains, and stuffed sofas and easy-chairs (made in London), "mirrors in carved gold frames," works of art, portraits, ancient relics, line table-service in costly porcelain, cut glass, and silver plate, and a library embracing the popular novels and standard works of the day. The household servants, as in many other of the New