

The revolution itself was born in the room of the Caucus Club, amidst clouds of smoke and deep potations of egg-flip. Wilkes and Liberty had their counterpart on the other side of the Atlantic. Plenty of active spirits were ready for political havoc.

The few (says Adams) who have real honour, temperance, and understanding, who are desirous of getting their bread and paying their debts by their own industry, apply their attention to their own business and leave the affairs of towns and provinces to others. But a young fellow who happens to be by nature indolent and perhaps profligate begins by laying schemes by himself or his friends to live and get money without labour or care.

Such patriots are not easily appeased. Undoubtedly in intelligence as well as in integrity, industry and thrift, the New Englander was a picked Anglo-Saxon, and the elect of destiny for the foundation of republican institutions; but, we repeat, he was not good-tempered or placable, nor was it easy to maintain with him political relations in their own nature equivocal and thorny.

Samuel Adams was a typical New Englander in everything but industry and thrift. He had failed in regular callings and had defaulted, though only through incompetence, as a public taxgatherer before he found his element in politics, and became the contriver and leader of a revolution. No doubt is left in our mind after reading the candid narrative of his biographer that he meant mischief from the beginning. Throughout he did all that was in his power to prevent reconciliation and to bring about revolution and civil war. His aspirations may have been grand, his aim may have been beneficent, he may deserve on these accounts the political canonisation which he has received, but his determination to produce a rupture is the acquittal, so far as he is concerned, of the English ministers. No government can satisfy a man who is bent on its overthrow. As a plotter he was very active, bold, persevering, and adroit, nor does his desire of political change appear to have been mingled with any lower motive. The facts, so far as we can see, warrant no higher praise, and we are not disposed to pervert the truth of history for the purpose of placing a crown on the head of any man who, in whatever circumstances, when a peaceful redress of grievances is open to him, prefers revolution and civil war. The professions of attachment to the mother-country which continued to issue from Samuel Adams's lips and pen when he had certainly made up his mind to prevent a reconciliation require, as his biographer allows, some casuistry for their justification.

It is wonderful (says Mr. Hosmer) if the Puritan conscience did not now and then feel a twinge when Adams, at the very time when he had devoted himself body and soul to breaking the link that bound America to England, was coining for this or that body phrases full of reverence for the King and rejecting the thought of independence.