

Internal Revenue of the Provinces, which should be alone applied to their own social wants, an interference with the rights of the Provincial Assemblies of the most unwarrantable kind was attempted, and that *constitutional resistance was lawful and expedient and would have been effective.*

The lower House of Assembly of Massachusetts being to a great degree composed of men either individually largely engaged in the smuggling trade or connected with those who were so, and having suffered from the very injudicious enforcement of the Revenue laws, by a resolution in the Fall of 1764 declared that their rights as men guaranteed their freedom from the authority of the British Parliament; and they complained that the "late extension of the powers of the Admiralty Courts" virtually abolished trial by jury.

In consequence of the whole population of this Colony being engaged in the smuggling trade a conviction was impossible, the Courts of Admiralty were intimidated and the operation of the law impeded; to meet this the regulations of the past year provided that a vessel seized in one place might be sent to another for adjudication, but this was only enforcing the general powers of the Admiralty which they had exercised from their first institution, and it was not by any means a new or exceptionable feature in the Act of Parliament, because similar clauses had been inserted in Acts as far back as 7 and 8 Wm. 3, chap. 32.

In the Southern or Middle Colonies the Act regulating the currency gave occasion for complaint, their specie and circulating medium being derived from the Spanish trade in exchange for agricultural produce; this trade being now annihilated by the Revenue Laws occasioned great suffering and exasperation in all the Colonies, especially as the proposed taxes were to be paid in specie which it was thought would drain the Colonies entirely of that necessary medium of trade and send it all to England. Taken together these common grounds of complaint brought the Colonies into accord, diversity of interests and pursuits having hitherto kept them apart, and this union was encouraged as their fears intensified by the conduct of the opposition headed by the elder Pitt in the British House of Commons.

George the Third, an upright honest man of narrow understanding, influenced by his mother, entertaining high notions of his prerogatives and determined to govern as well as reign, had organised such an effective party in the British House of Commons as enabled him to sway that body as he liked. Many reasons conspired to place this power in his hands, he tenaciously withheld honors and rewards from every one who opposed his measures, while he showered both with a liberal hand on those who supported them. Constituted as the British House of Commons then was no difficulty need be encountered in securing a majority, and as the King him-

self was popular he had the people on his side; no minister could hold office under him but one who would carry all his measures, and as a consequence the exclusion of the opposition from office and its emoluments were certain; this latter circumstance added virulence to the attacks made on the ministerialists, and the leaders of the opposition did not scruple to brand ministers with a design to subvert the liberties of the people, hence when the difficulties of the American Colonies arose they were eagerly laid hold on by the opposition, the malcontents encouraged to resistance by the assertions that their liberty was at stake, and it was not till this conduct had evoked the rebellion that the leaders became aware of the mischief their demagogical efforts had inflicted on the Empire.

During the whole of the miserable contest those worthless intriguers devoted their energies to embarrass the ministry of the day, and when they succeeded to office that they proved far more incapable of allaying the evil than those whose blunders first excited the opposition; to the Whig party in particular this issue is to be ascribed, and it was owing to their selfish violence that the flames of rebellion was kindled in the Colonies, and the British Empire bereft of its fairest possessions. History furnishes no more pitiable spectacle than that afforded by the last appearance of the first Earl of Chatham in the House of Lords, and the contrast between his repentance and the political sins committed by Pitt, is a picture humiliating in the extreme. As a violent party leader he cast suspicion on the acts of his Sovereign and imperilled the existence of his native land, as a statesman passing out of the world he saw and repented of the mischief but was not allowed time to propose a remedy. Coming from such a source, endowed by a man deservedly popular in the Colonies, the leading men eagerly adopted all his ideas and were constantly on the watch for manifestations of those arbitrary acts which he taught them to believe was the settled policy of the British Court. Without any means of analysing the truth or falsehood of those assertions the American Colonists eagerly fell in with those ideas which were in accord with their own feelings and promised a chance of redress from what were real grievances of which the true solution was an enlightened commercial policy, and this was foreign to the genius of the age.

The British Colonies in America were not organised in such a manner as to add strength or dignity to the Empire, a set of isolated communities without even a common currency, governed by men with little authority and less brains to exercise it, no wonder need be experienced at the rapidity with which revolutionary ideas spread through them. When the first unconstitutional steps were taken and open resistance to the law attempted; there was no central authority of sufficient power to put it down by force, and

the Executive weakness being ascertained in obedience to well known laws governing such cases, it was treated with contempt.

On the 29th January, 1765, the British Minister moved *fifty-five resolutions* for imposing *stamp duties* on certain papers and documents used in the Colonies, and shortly afterwards introduced a bill founded thereon which was carried through both Houses and received the Royal assent on the 22nd March. This Act so productive of momentous consequences was to take effect in the Colonies on the 1st November following, and as it had received considerable opposition in its passage through the House of Commons, the Colonial malcontents were not without hopes that a spirited resistance on their parts might distress if not overturn the Administration and eventually produce its repeal.

It was with no small feelings of surprise that the first legislative opposition it should receive in the Colonies would come from the hitherto loyal Colony of Virginia, the causes of this have been hinted at, but in addition there was the currency difficulty, the loss of demand for agricultural produce, and the feeling of exasperation produced by the application of an impracticable act of Parliament. Because it is evident that as none of the ordinary transactions between man and man were legal except the provisions of the Stamp Act was complied with—in a Colony with out a circulating medium where most of the usual transactions were carried on by barter—great difficulty must have existed in complying with the Statute which supposed gold and silver to be sufficiently plentiful for ordinary circulation, which was not the case.

In the House of Assembly the Stamp Act gave rise to a most violent debate, in which the celebrated Patrick Henry is reported to have said—"Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles the First an Oliver Cromwell, and George the Third"—here the speaker was interrupted by loud cries of "Treason," and the Speaker rose declaring he would quit the chair unless he was supported by the House in restraining such intemperate speeches.—As soon as order was restored Mr. Henry said—"may profit by their example, and if that is treason I beg leave to apologise to the House."

The four following resolutions were agreed to and entered on the Journals of the House on the 29th of May:—"The first, declared that their ancestors brought with them from England and transmitted to their posterity all the rights, privileges and immunities enjoyed by British subjects." "The second, that these were confirmed and declared by two Royal Charters granted by King James the First." "The third, that they have ever since enjoyed the right of being governed by their own Assembly in the articles of taxes and internal police, which right has not been forfeited or yielded up but has been recognised by the King and people of Great Britain." And the fourth, "That the General Assembly of Virginia, with His Majesty or his