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THE REVOLT

OF THE

British American Colonies,

1764-84.

CHAPTER III.

While those measures were in progress, on the 10th July Mr. Grenville and his adherents were dismissed from office and the *Whig* party under the Marquis of Rockingham attained power; from the active part taken by those people when in opposition to the passage of the Stamp Act, it was expected by the Colonists that immediate measures would be taken to have it repealed, but with an indecision highly reprehensible no attempt was made to do so, and as a consequence violent riots broke out in Boston and other towns.

In the former town the fury of the populace was directed against the Chief Justice of the Province, the Stamp distributor, the Comptroller of Customs, and the Registrar of the Admiralty Court. Owing to information conveyed to them by friends they were fortunate enough to be able to save their persons from insult, but their houses were pillaged, their furniture burned or destroyed and the records of Admiralty Court committed to the flames.

The Legislative Council were assembled by the Governor, but they showed no inclination to assist in suppressing the riots, and the militia refused to obey his orders, and the mob held sway in Boston abetted by its merchants and leading men, indeed it is scarcely to be doubted that this was a regularly organised effort for the purpose of destroying the Admiralty Records, thereby preventing the prosecution of suits against the smugglers. The vigilance of the Coast Guard Service had paralysed the trade of Boston and made resistance to the law a common duty of all classes.

In support of the fact that the restrictions placed on commerce by the Navigation Laws and the recent Revenue Regulations were the direct agents in bringing about this revolt, the speech of the Hon Lorenzo Sabine, of Boston, at the *Detroit Commercial Convention*

in July 1865, is decisive:—"I do not honor the name of Cromwell, for he was neither a wise statesman nor a respectable merchant, else he would not have signed the so-called celebrated—but to me infamous—"Act of Navigation." * * * "And yet in politics, as I have read history and consulted State papers, the Act of Navigation contained not only the germ but was the direct occasion of the American Revolution."

That the views expressed of the complicity of the principal leaders in the Colonies with those disgraceful riots which preceded actual rebellion is well founded, a further extract from the same speech will shew:—"While our fathers were British subjects they were smugglers from one end of the thirteen Colonies to the other, emphatically smugglers, and of necessity. The three pence the pound on tea is well enough for the *fustian* of an oration on the Fourth of July, but to the close student of history it was precisely and unconditionally a question between the British Government and Colonial smugglers; the contraband trade was not confined to tea, but extended to rum, wine, sugar and nearly every product of foreign countries. I repeat distinctly and without qualifications that merchants anterior to 1776 were smugglers; just one quarter part of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, were bred to commerce or to the command of vessels, and were concerned in the illicit trade of the time. *John Hancock was the Prince of contraband traders, and with John Adams as his counsel, was on trial before the Admiralty Court in Boston at the exact hour of the shedding of blood at Lexington to answer for half a million of dollars penalties alleged to have been incurred as a smuggler.*" It is not difficult to arrive at a conclusion respecting the Boston riots and their motives.

On the arrival of the Stamp forms in the months of September and October the Governors of the different Colonies charged themselves with their care, none of the officers commissioned to distribute them being willing to hold so dangerous an appointment—in some cases the papers were seized and destroyed by the populace.

In the month of October deputies from

nine out of thirteen Colonies met at New York to hold a General Congress; the four Colonies not represented in this Congress were—New Hampshire, Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia. The first session of this Congress was held on the 7th October, and on the 19th they agreed to thirteen resolutions to the following effect:—

"That the inhabitants of the Colonies owed the same allegiance to the King as the people of Great Britain, and all due subordination to Parliament.

"That they are entitled to the same rights and immunities as the people of Great Britain.

"That no taxes can be imposed on a free people but by their own consent or that of their Representatives.

"That the inhabitants are not and cannot be represented in the House of Commons of Great Britain.

"That the only representatives of the Colonies are those chosen by themselves, and that no taxes have been or can be imposed upon them but by those representatives.

"That all supplies to the Crown are free gifts from the people and that therefore it is unwarrantable in the Parliament of Great Britain to grant the property of the inhabitants of those Colonies.

"That trial by Jury is the right of every British subject.

"That the Stamp Act by imposing taxes and extending the jurisdiction of the Courts of Admiralty beyond their ancient limits has a tendency to subvert the rights and liberties of the Colonists.

"That the duties imposed by the late acts of Parliament are grievous and the payment of them impracticable.

"That by the British manufactures which they purchased they contribute to the supplies granted to the Crown.

"That the restrictions on trade imposed by late acts of Parliament will render them unable to purchase British manufactures.

"That the increase and prosperity of the Colonies depends on the free enjoyment of their rights and liberties.

"And lastly, that they have the right to petition the King or either House of Parliament."