

would not submit without a struggle, and always had a standard grievance ready to justify their most illegal acts.

Their present Governor was no exception to the general rule; his activity and zeal in supporting constitutional rules and maintaining the authority of the Mother Country as far as lay in his power, was enough to render him unpopular. He had penetrated the character and designs of the leading men of which the British administration was duly advised, as well as of the tendencies of these designs and the animadversions contained in the despatches which it was necessary to lay before the Assembly discovered to those astute plotters the nature of his communications. The construction of the charter of the Colony permitted the members of the Lower House to elect the Council, and in 1776 the prerogative of the Crown was expressed by putting a negative on the election on some of the most violent of the opposition, making those men his enemies of course and complicating matters to a very considerable extent, thus clearly demonstrating the evils of the want of a responsible ministry.

In October 1767 at a town meeting in Boston, associations were entered into for the purpose of discontinuing importations from Great Britain, but the Act which established the Board of Customs in America gave them most uneasiness, as it imposed restrictions on trade which could not be evaded, nor could the Act itself be assailed by any objections prejudicing the right acquired when the centre of administration was in England.

Therefore, when the Assembly of the Province met in January, 1768, they entered upon a general consideration of grievances, sending in a petition to the King complaining not only of the acts of the last session of Parliament but of every other act which had been passed for imposing duties in the Colonies since 1763. Every colony maintained in Great Britain a political resident or agent, whose business it was to communicate with the Secretary of State or the Administrator on matters connected with the opinions of the various Legislative Assemblies, thus showing on what a very absurd basis the charter of those Colonies had been founded, the Governor not being the recognized channel for the transaction of its political business.

To the agent for Massachusetts the Assembly wrote a long letter instructing him how to controvert upon pleas of *National rights, general principles of equity, policy and commerce*, the acts of the British Parliament, while letters were also addressed to the members of the British administration intrusting their influence for the same object. Not content with these efforts, the Assembly resorted to others reprehensible in the highest degree, they addressed circular letters to the Assemblies of the other Colonies, detailing what had been done and expressing a hope that they would adopt a similar course of action.

This circumstance exemplifies the old ob-

servation that an action may be just and proper in itself but the manner of its performance be attended with serious evils and highly objectionable, and in this light it was viewed by the British administration. The Assembly of Massachusetts had acted irregularly in addressing their petition, through their agent and not through His Majesty's representative, their Governor, and they had added to this the attempt to induce the other Assemblies to follow their lead in regular organized opposition to the authority of the Mother country.

At the commencement of this year a Secretary of State for the Colonies had been added to the departments of the British Executive, and a circular letter was addressed to the Governors of the different Provinces condemning the course pursued by the Assembly of Massachusetts, and warning the other Legislative bodies against the course that Assembly had followed.

But the spirit of discontent could not be so easily allayed, the evil example of Vaccillation encouraged resistance, and the leading men in the Colonies having discovered their strength to be in a close union amongst themselves, made common cause with the people of Massachusetts and felt insulted by the circular letter of the Secretary of the Colonies, stigmatizing it as an unwarrantable and unjustifiable attempt to interfere with the right of British subjects to prefer their united supplication to the Throne whenever they thought proper, overlooking the fact that what was proper in individuals was an act of grievous treason in Legislative Assemblies.

The action of the Assembly of Massachusetts was approved and petitions founded on the circular issued by that Assembly were transmitted to England from all the Colonies, and the Act of last session of Parliament which seemed to have been framed for the purpose of coinciding with the political creed of Virginia was now as much condemned by the Assembly of that and other Southern Colonies as by Massachusetts; the Legislature of Virginia getting rid of the distinction formerly raised by asserting that the duties payable by the Act although on importations were as much internal as those of the Stamp Act, because they were imposed not for the purpose of regulating trade but of raising a revenue.

The Governor of the Province of Massachusetts had been intrusted by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to require the House of Assembly to rescind the resolutions of the preceding session, which had produced the circular letter as it appeared to have passed in their House at the close of the session, and if they should refuse he was instructed to dissolve them. This message was delivered to the Assembly in June, and compliance being refused by a majority of 92 against 17 the House was dissolved by the Governor accordingly.

In Boston the ill humour, discontent, chagrin and vexation of the people was ag-

gravated by some new regulations introduced by the commissioners to check clandestine trade, and was manifested in such acts of violence as threatened to involve the whole Province in rebellion.

A circumstance occurred at this time which forcibly illustrates the turbulence of the people; the length to which the Assembly was prepared to go and the extreme weakness of the Executive. On the 9th of June the sloop Liberty, belonging to John Hancock, one of the principal merchants of Boston, arrived in the harbour laden with wines, and a tide-waiter had been put on board to prevent the cargo from being landed until the usual entry was made at the custom house and a permit to unlade received. The master of the vessel, during the night of her arrival, after a vain attempt to corrupt the custom house officer, at last forcibly locked him up in the cabin and discharged his cargo of wines, taking oil from on shore to replace it. Information of this proceeding having been given at the custom house the collector, on 10th June, seized the sloop and put her under the protection of the Romney, man-of-war, for safety. This was no sooner done than a mob assembled, who beat and abused the collector and controller of customs, the commissioners were threatened, their houses attacked and their selves obliged to take refuge on board the Romney, and the collector's boat was carried in triumph and burned before Mr. Hancock's door.

On the following day the commissioners applied to the Governor for protection. This application was laid before the Council and Assembly, but no action was taken thereon, and the commissioners were obliged to retire for safety to Castle William, a fortress situated on an island at the mouth of the harbour.

On the 14th June a town meeting was held and a remonstrance presented by the inhabitants to the Governor on the seizure of the sloop, and a modest request made that he would order His Majesty's ship Romney out of the harbor.

A tumult and insurrection of this description could not be passed over by the British administration, who ordered troops to be sent to Boston to aid the civil power, a measure which should have been attended to three years before. Intelligence of this movement having reached Boston, filled the inhabitants with alarm, and that focus of sedition a town meeting being called on the 12th September, a petition was got up to the Governor entreating him to convene the Assembly, to this an answer was returned that it was not in his power, as the last Assembly had been dissolved for contumacy, and His Majesty's instructions were necessary to call another. This answer did not satisfy the leaders of the mob, who now conceived the idea of assembling a convention of the people. For this purpose the town meeting was adjourned to the following day, when they voted and resolved that they were under no obligation of submitting to laws to which