

ledge, now proceeded to instruct their General-in-Chief in the arts of war, what to do and how to do it. They also sent on ahead of him an open letter as a kind of handsome testimonial or letter of introduction to men of leading in New England. Little notice was taken of the General himself, whose long face and stern demeanour probably repelled cordial demonstrations; but of Charles Lee, whose recent exploits near Charleston, coupled with manners appropriate to a conquering paladin, the people could not see enough. It was at two o'clock in the afternoon of the 2nd of July that Washington reached Cambridge, and that old manse where he was to lodge for nine months, until Howe, by quitting Boston, released the Americans from their blockade of the town.

July 2,
1775.

That afternoon, according to the tradition which, inscribed at the foot of the tree known as the Washington Elm, informs the wayfarer of that stirring incident, the General-in-Chief of the Continental army drew his sword, and took command of the assembled forces. Possibly on no soldier was ever imposed a task more beset with difficulties than that of General Washington. To shape into a fighting instrument the incongruous materials gathered around Boston as a besieging force, appeared not merely a Herculean but an impossible achievement. First of all came the Massachusetts men, and the farmers from the Hampshire Grants, particularised always as a singularly fierce and self-willed class of settler, who, in common with all the New England militia, declined to enrol themselves for a moment beyond the next ensuing Christmas Day. Then reckoning was to be taken of the grey-beards and the children, who flocked into Cambridge to offer their services. Stories are told how twenty-four grandsires from Waterbury and Waltham, places now so justly famous for the manufacture of watches, rode into camp armed with blunderbusses and firelocks, or even snaphances of ancient pattern. The total of years represented by this cohort was computed as approach-