

to succour their brethren before they were undeceived. These manœuvres were doubtless the efforts of those leaders of the ultra republican faction which had always existed in Massachusetts and were peculiar to the religious belief of the people and their social organization, and they were intended to try how far the mob would support their measures, but matters not being yet ripe for open hostilities; in order to quiet the disturbances for the present it was decided to appoint a meeting of delegates from all the towns in the county of Suffolk, of which Boston is the capital, to advise on such a plan of conduct as would best subserve the interests of the people. This meeting was accordingly held on 9th September, and the resolutions were of such a character as to render it no longer a matter of doubt to what lengths the rebels were prepared to go. They refused all submission to Parliament and engaged to indemnify such as should be prosecuted for disobedience to the acts thereof. They accused those who accepted seats in the new Council of violating the duty due their country and threatened them with being treated as public enemies unless they resigned their appointments. They exhorted the people to perfect themselves in the use of arms, and for that purpose to assemble once a week. They warned them to be on their guard as attempts would be made to seize on some of them who deserved well of their country, and if this was effected they were to retaliate by seizing on every British officer they could find. They recommended the receivers of the public revenue to keep it in their own hands until the Constitution of the Province was restored or until it should be otherwise disposed of by a Provincial Convention. They presented a remonstrance to the Governor complaining of the fortification of Boston Neck, the seizure of the magazines, and concluded by stating that they had no inclination to commence hostilities against His Majesty's troops, yet they are determined never to submit to the late Acts of Parliament.

Nothing but the indolent supineness of Gage and his want of energy or decision prevented his seizing those gentry and their abettors in the midst of their treason.

Throughout the summer preparations had been made throughout all the Colonies, Georgia excepted, for holding a Congress at Philadelphia. How this Assembly was permitted to be organized by the British Administration is one of those perplexing problems with which the student of history has to deal, the motive being incomprehensible and the results most disastrous. It is evident that too little importance was attached altogether to this illegal assemblage. The very mode in which the delegates were chosen was sufficient to mark the character of the Assembly. In those Colonies where the Assemblies met delegates to the Congress were appointed, a proceeding entirely outside their constitutional privileges, and therefore illegal. In other Colonies the peo-

ple elected representatives as if it had been for an Assembly, and those representatives elected the delegates—the whole proceedings being illegal. The instructions to the delegates were of course as varied as the temper and conditions of the people represented; but they all agreed on one point, that of condemning the Boston Port Bill and the other Acts relating to Massachusetts and denying the right of the British Parliament to tax them, but the most important of all was the instructions to agree to whatever measures should meet with the concurrence of a majority of the Congress.

The first session of this self-constituted body was held in Philadelphia on the 5th of September, 1774, and consisted of fifty-one delegates representing twelve Colonies on the shores of the Atlantic, from New Hampshire to South Carolina inclusive; the greatest number for one Colony being seven and the smallest two delegates. It was agreed that each Colony should have only one vote whatever was the number of its delegates. This representative, or assumed to be representative, Assembly of a few people sat with locked doors. No one was permitted to be present at their deliberations and all their proceedings, except what they chose to make public, were kept profoundly secret. Assembled in the cause of freedom their first act was to observe a form only practised in the most despotic Governments, and at this distance of time it is not possible to unlock the secrets of their plotting from its prison house, but it argued badly from the outset to find that their proceedings could not be entrusted to the public gaze.

Seven papers were published as the records of their labours, said by their admirers in Great Britain to be masterly compositions well adapted to the purposes intended and able state papers, but in reality a series of special pleadings which any clever lawyer (and there were many such amongst the delegates) could compose. They were—A Declaration on the state of affairs in Massachusetts—A letter to General Gage—A Declaration of Rights and Grievances accompanied with an Association—A Petition to the King—An Address to the People of Great Britain—Another to the Inhabitants of the Colonies—and a third to the Inhabitants of Canada. As those resolutions tended to approve of all the acts of rebellion perpetrated since 1768 the loyalists and some of the more moderate of what was called the patriotic party were greatly chagrined and disappointed, it was hoped the Congress would have endeavored to affect a compromise, but the tactics of the Republicans were successful and the Southern delegates were dazzled at the ambitious prospects opened before them by the crafty New England leaders allowed the opportunity to pass from their hands for ever of healing the divisions between the Colonies and the Mother Country.

A recapitulation of the contents of those resolutions would be useless as they con-

tained the standard complaints so often enumerated, the lofty resolves so frequently reiterated and the whining cant of loyalty which deceived no one.

The address to the people of Canada was the cleverest and most rascally of the productions of that remarkable Assembly; its intention was to render that colony dissatisfied and to induce them to join the confederacy, and this at a time when one of the charges against Great Britain was the restoration to those very people of the ancient laws by the Quebec Act. Happily the people of Canada were not to be caught with the chaff of blandishments by people who had manifested their enmity to themselves and institutions, and when their hour of trial came they showed of what stuff they were made and dealt with Yankee rebels in the same order with which they served those gentry as colonial militia in the war of 1754-64.

After a sitting of fifty-two days this self-constituted body dissolved on the 26th of October, leaving as its only published proceedings those already detailed, but when the delegates reached their respective Provinces the results of their unpublished deliberations were apparent in the stern note of preparation for the coming conflict, and the implicit obedience paid to the decrees of Congress. Meantime the Massachusetts rebels were doing their utmost towards straitening Gage's quarters at Boston, burning the straw and sinking the boats loaded with brick for the use of the troops, but that stolid commander, unwilling to strike the first blow, sat at ease within his lines while his opponents were busily engaged in rooting out the last vestige of British power from the Province by compelling the commissioners of customs and all their officers to fly to Boston for protection; in fact since August British jurisdiction was conferred to that peninsula alone.

As the Legislative Council had virtually dissolved itself by the resignation of the majority of its members, General Gage thought fit by proclamation to countermand the writs issued for election to the Assembly in October, but in opposition the leading demagogues declared the proclamation illegal and that the elections should be made in pursuance of the writs. The representative thus illegally chosen assembled at Salem on the fifth of October, and after waiting a day for the Governor who did not appear, they veiled themselves into a Provincial Congress and chose Mr. J. Hancock for the president, the seizure of whose sloop in 1768 for smuggling was the beginning of the disturbances which had now culminated in rebellion.

This illegal and self-constituted body advanced to Concord, a town about twenty miles from Boston, and at once proceeded to remonstrate with the Governor on the subject of the fortifications on Boston Neck, and on the alarm occasioned in the Province by the military forces collecting at Boston