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THE REVOLT

OF THE

British American Colonies,

1764-84.

CHAPTER XIV.

While this brisk and eventful campaign was in progress in Canada, Gage remained cooped up within his lines at Boston in happy ignorance of what was conspiring around him, while Washington was allowed sufficient leisure to bring the rabble occupying the rebel positions into something like discipline and increase his warlike stores by the capture of the Royal forts and magazines which Gage's stupidity exposed to plunder.

On the 14th November a newspaper containing the rebel General's order of the day brought the first intelligence to Boston of the successful invasion of Canada.

The blunders of the British Governors and Generals was not confined to the Northern Colonies, but spread southward with such perfect regularity that it assumed the appearance of having been governed by some general law. In fact the universal defection can only be explained on the principle that owing to constitutional omissions there was no sympathy between the popular branches of the Legislature and the Executive, and consequently on every occasion in which the Governor endeavored to enforce respect to the constitutional law of the Empire he stood alone. Not even being able to bring any members of his council into accord on this question or secure their support in upholding the dignity of the Crown.

Many of the rebel leaders in this revolt had no doubt been planning it for years; others were carried away by their enthusiasm. Washington was the only one who had that love of country, which is known as patriotism. With him it amounted to a disease. Everything his countrymen did was right; everyone else wrong, and that feeling was quickened by the fact that he had in vain sought to be "put on the English establishment," in other words, have his services re-

cognized by "rank in the regular army." It was not a generous age; selfishness was the order of the day, and English politicians had quite enough on their hands to provide for their own hungry parasites without thinking of the representative Virginian. Without imputing in the slightest degree unworthy motives to George Washington but the facility with which he, the representative of an old aristocratic and loyal family, espoused the cause of treason and sedition is thus easily accounted for, and it also explains why he was followed by most of his class, many of them the descendant of peers, whose historic fame is emblazoned in history, and more the scions of the first families in England. With such names as leaders the mass of Colonists were easily persuaded at that day of the justice of the cause in which they were required to fight, and as transplantation to the soil of the New World did not alter the Briton's hereditary tendency to pugacity found no difficulty in taking to a position so very natural and congenial.

Under no other aspect can this extraordinary revolt be explained, and simply because the mass of the people were not so cially in as good a position to judge of political acts as their fellow subjects in Great Britain. Many of the Colonial settlers were or had been Irish, Scotch or English redemptors, that is emigrants unable to pay their passage and who sold their services for that purpose for a term of years. The general standard was not above that of the corresponding class at home, and it is absurd to suppose those men were able at that day to be discriminating judges of nice points of constitutional law. There was not much land held in the Southern and Middle Colonies on fee simple tenure, most of it was leased from the large Proprietors, and a tenantry similar to that of Britain was ready to support the great landholders, each with his fifty or sixty thousand acres in a single patent. In fact an aristocracy was rapidly forming in the Colonies, and it was the ambition of some its leaders which precipitated this contest. In the effort to secure recognition by hereditary title and privilege they

forced a revolution which ended in, abolish- ing both and finally swept themselves away.

In the New England Provinces the clergy feared for their own privileges and influences; the merchant because his smuggling operations were restrained. Between them both they led the rural population to believe that the British Parliament and people meant to enslave them. Unable of themselves to carry on the rebellion with success they deferred, or seemed to defer, to the "haughty Southern Sultans," and won their hearts by the appointment of Washington as Commander-in-Chief. This measure, commendable alone for its policy, bound North and South firmly together, for Washington's agreeable temperament maintained the just equilibrium of parties in the rebel congress and gave the tone of unanimity to their councils.

While skillful and able men were busily employed in combining the different elements in the Colonial politics, under the plea of patriotism, in open rebellion against Great Britain, the statesmen and politicians of England seemed to be sadly wanting in duty to the Empire. The Colonial Governors were obliged to furnish to the recently created office of Secretary for the Colonies periodical reports representing truly the state of public opinion in their several Provinces. Such documents necessarily contained much which should be seen by the Privy Council alone, but owing to treachery or carelessness their contents were spread abroad amongst the opposition from whom they finally reached the Colonies, and, as a matter of necessity, exasperated the party leaders against the Governor, while it totally destroyed his influence, not only in that but every department of the State had opened its secrets to the agitators and rebels. The parliamentary opposition at home, to their eternal infamy, being most active in disseminating intelligence treacherously received.

In 1775 the Governor of Virginia was the Earl of Dunmore, who had been very popular in the Colony; at the commencement of the disturbances in Massachusetts he had transmitted to Great Britain a Memorial on the State of the Provinces. In this docu-