

The Assembly of the Province of Massachusetts entered into resolutions of a directly opposite tendency, accusing the British Parliament of injustice, tyranny and oppression, and violation of the rights of freemen, they also voted charges against their Governor for misconduct and petitioned for his removal, and these documents were transmitted to their agent to be laid before the Privy Council. In some of the other Provinces the resolutions of the Houses of Assembly were of such an acrimonious and disrespectful nature that it became necessary to dissolve them, but this only had the effect of leavening the mass of the people with a larger proportion of treason.

From this time the non-importation associations met with very little obstruction. Those who opposed them were overawed by violence, and the people, as if charmed with the exercise of irresponsible power, surrendered themselves without control to the illegal jurisdiction exercised by self-constituted committees. Thus in every town there was a committee whose business it was to examine cargoes imported from Great Britain and report to the associations whether the engagements entered into were faithfully observed. Meetings were regularly held to receive those reports. Votes of censure were passed on delinquents and their names published in the newspapers for the purpose of directing the hatred of the mob against them. In some instances goods imported from Great Britain contrary to the regulations were stored to prevent their being sold, in others they were re-shipped to prevent their destruction.

The effect produced on the commerce of Great Britain was sufficiently apparent. It was found that the merchandise exported into the American Colonies in 1769 was less by £744,000 sterling than what had been exported in the previous year. The revenue arising from duties payable in those Colonies was also yearly decreasing, being

In 1767.....	£110,000	Sterling.
" 1768.....	70,000	"
" 1769.....	30,000	"

and as the proscription was only against the produce or manufacture of Great Britain, a brisk contraband trade in similar commodities sprang into existence. It was thus when the rebellion of those Colonies was consummated they had secured the sympathies of Europe, and England had to deal not only with the treason of her own children but the actual hostilities of the civilized world.

The Customs Act of 1767 was thus made the principal ground of complaint and the action of the Colonists thereon converted it into a prohibition on British manufactures, and as a bounty to those of foreign countries, and it so alarmed the merchants at home that they presented a petition to Parliament praying for its repeal in consequence of the decline in trade and future serious consequences.

In consequence of these representations the British Chancellor of the Exchequer on

5th March, 1770 moved sundry resolutions in the House of Commons for discontinuing all duties payable in the American Colonies under the Act of Parliament of 1767, the duty on tea alone excepted. In moving those resolutions the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not hesitate to condemn the Act by which these duties had been imposed as a measure that was at least impolitic, simply because being British manufactures the exportation to the Colonies should have been encouraged; and he also stated the duty on tea was retained for the sole purpose of saving the national honor.

In the whole of those proceedings the British administration appears to have entirely ignored or overlooked the true state of the case between themselves and the Colonies. It was not that a duty on any particular importation or exportation had been imposed, but that the Customs regulations had virtually suppressed and interfered with the most profitable trade both the Colonies and Great Britain pursued—that to the West Indies and the Spanish Main. And thus by ruining the traffic of the New England Colonies, interfering with the agricultural development of the Middle and Southern Provinces laid the foundation of that widespread discontent aggravated by distress that provoked the deplorable scenes described. The Colonists themselves, carried away by the heat of political conflict, lost sight of its origin and seized on the most prominent Act of the British Parliament as an excuse for their actions. If at this period any statesman had been wise enough to propose throwing open this trade the Colonies of North America would never have questioned the right of Great Britain to impose taxes to be expended within their own territories, and the advent of a new nationality would have been indefinitely postponed.

The British minister gained nothing by sacrificing the authority of Parliament, and the result fully justified what has been written—that the repeal of the duties imposed were not the real grievances the Colonists had to complain of. The resolutions were carried and a bill prepared on them passed through both Houses of Parliament and received the Royal assent on the 22nd of April.

In the mean time events were occurring in Boston tending to widen the breach between the Mother Country and the Colonies, and by the folly of the Governor affording opportunities for an organized resistance which eventually wrapped them in civil war.

Experience had demonstrated the policy of keeping the turbulent mob of Boston in order by a strong military force, and both justice, policy and humanity would have warranted its being placed under Martial law in 1768, but owing to the vacillation of the ministers the treason of the Provincial Council and the imbecility of the Governor, two regiments out of the four originally occupying the town were withdrawn, and as soon as this was done a plot was laid to drive away

the remainder by force, in which the inhabitants of the surrounding country were to assist. The troops were vilified and lampooned by the press, and the soldiers who were met singly were beaten and abused by the mob, pelted with snow balls on parade, and otherwise ill-treated.

On the evening of 5th March, the day on which the British minister was preparing his ill-considered concessions to Provincial turbulence, a quarrel arose at Boston between some soldiers and townsmen; a fight ensued and the latter being beaten were pursued by their conquerors through the streets. Immediately the bells of the churches rang an alarm, drums beat to arms and the mob assembled in force at the Custom House began to crowd around the sentinel who was posted there not only insulted him but threatened his life. Captain Preston, the officer on duty, proceeded immediately to the main guard, and fearing that the Custom House might be attacked, sent a sergeant's guard to protect the sentinel and secure the Custom House, and for greater precaution followed immediately afterwards and took the command himself. He endeavored to prevail on the people to disperse, but in vain. They became more outrageous, pelting the soldiers with stones and what ever else came to hand; one of the latter being struck by some missile leveled his musket, but Captain Preston, stretching out his arm to prevent the soldier from firing, was struck with a club and the musket was discharged. The attack from the mob became more violent which was answered by an irregular fire, by which four of them were killed and several wounded, on which they fled but rallied immediately in an adjoining street. In the mean time the drums beat to arms and the remainder of the troops turned out, while the whole town was in confusion. A town meeting was called but instead of attempting to restore order they sent a deputation to the Governor requesting him to remove the troops from the town. The Governor called together the Council, that sapient body giving it as their advice that it would be for the benefit of His Majesty's service that the troops should be withdrawn. The commanding officer promised to comply with their advice.

It is a hard matter to decide in this transaction whether the mob, the corporation, the Council or the Governor were the greatest traitors, but the commanding officer was a witless dolt. The mob-leaders having attained their desires withdrew their followers, the troops were sent to Castle William on the following day and Captain Preston surrendered himself and his command for trial.

The most was made of this occurrence by the mob-leaders; the bodies of the rioters slain were buried with imposing ceremonies and every opportunity taken to impress the Colonists with the enormity of the "barbarous and wanton slaughter" perpetrated by the British troops.