



The Volunteer Review

AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada

VOL. IV.

OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, JUNE 13, 1870.

No. 24.

THE REVOLT OF THE British American Colonies, 1764-84.

CHAPTER LVI.

As Holland had acted deceitfully and treacherously throughout this contest she was justly punished by being made the victim of her own duplicity, and it was after considerable discussion she was admitted to treat of peace, and a final end was put to a contest which changed the political destinies of the civilised world.

The lives of the actors in such an extraordinary revolution is undoubtedly very interesting, and an analysis of the motives by which they were actuated would be most instructive as contributing to throw much light on the original power by which the machinery of that revolution was put in motion.

American writers point with exultation to the names of John Hancock, John Adams, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington as the chief actors in the drama which prepared the way for new nationalities, the reconstruction of the map of Europe, and the introduction to the civilised world of a new power, whose tendency hitherto has been that of an element of disturbance. If the after course of man's life is generally shaped in accordance with the influences by which it is surrounded at its commencement no character which this revolution produced could have been more in accordance with resistance to authority or admiration of extreme democracy than that of John Hancock, the descendant of a line of Puritan Ministers at a time when the ecclesiastical order in Massachusetts had almost degenerated into a caste, which had for its masters the mass of the people of its congregations, and whose efforts through life were directed to secure the support of a majority; brought up in the counting house of a Boston merchant, with the confined and illiberal views of a trader of his times, living in the midst of an organised hypocrisy where the

would be aspirant for public confidence must needs wear the semblance of a saint. It is not wonderful to find John Hancock an ardent republican, a member of the club of which James Otis was the head, where the shipwrights, carpenters, tradesmen and caulkers held periodical meetings in Otis's garret, and from which camara the term "caucus," as applied to a political meeting, is said to have originated nor to account for the readiness with which the mob of Boston obeyed his behests. Succeeding to his uncle's estate and business as the leading merchant of that town his social position was not recognised by the Royal Governor or his surroundings, nor was there any effort made to detach a man of his wealth and influence from the evil councillors by which he was surrounded. That he was utterly unscrupulous the fact of his being the most extensive smuggler in America before resistance to his lawful Sovereign was dreamt of is decisive. The proceedings of the Boston mob on the occasion of the seizure of his sloop "Liberty" in 1768, in a flagrant breach of the customs, were the first symptoms of that organised resistance to any law, which culminated in the rebellion of 1775. It was manifestly *his interest* to create occasion for the disruption of relations with Great Britain and the overthrow of her authority, for, as a distinguished countryman of his (Hon. Lorenzo Sabine, of Boston,) says, he was on trial, with John Adams as his counsel, in the Admiralty Court for \$500,000 of which he had defrauded the customs at the time of the battle of Lexington, and with Samuel Adams moved out of that town to a place of safety during the engagement. It needs no extraordinary stretch of imagination to account for the motives by which he was inspired, and his wealth, notwithstanding his want of dignity and poverty of intellect, gave him the means of being peculiarly mischievous.

Samuel Adams, a man of far more intellectual ability and power of mind, was a poor, unsuccessful, and thoroughly discontented man. Able, unscrupulous, and tenacious he saw that for such as him there was no promise in public affairs, except in play-

ing the part of a second Cataline, and this he acted with a prudence and caution rarely surpassed. His own description of his rascality will be found on page 462 of vol. iii., in which he talks of treachery, treason and falsehood as matters of self-glorification and applause, for which he desired the gratitude of mankind. A consummate hypocrite, he succeeded in attaining the Governorship of Massachusetts; when under British rule he would have been a defaulting collector of the municipal taxes of Boston, consequently with a keen eye to his own interests he was a monomaniac in his hatred of Britain and the British people.

A very different character indeed was his cousin, John Adams, afterwards second President of the United States. A man of considerable literary ability, a lawyer and a gentleman, but of an aspiring turn of mind and unbounded ambition. He has acknowledged that he could not look with complacency upon any man who was in possession of more wealth, more honor, or more knowledge than himself. Thrown early and friendless into the soothing arena of petty Colonial politics, at that time directed by an unscrupulous, bigotted and ill educated clerical caste, always suspicious of, at variance with and plotting against any government but their own, it is little wonder if his mind received impressions of his allegiance to the British Crown at variance with what his plain and legal duty should be, and being a prudent man withal he found the popular question pay best. Neglected by the Colonial Government, who carried their disregard so far as to refuse him the commission of the peace and other slights, propelled him to the Whig side of the great political question of the day, which he followed to its logical conclusion. For it had been a doctrine taught by Pitt and Fox, that the only method of crippling and destroying despotic power was to circumscribe the area of its possessions,—in other words, the only way to destroy the balances of the British Constitution was to rob that country of her Colonies and elevate its mob democracy to power on the ruins of its limited monarchy. This doctrine, so pleasing to the mere mob, was re-