

CHAPTER V.

There were among the early Schoharie settlers, some remarkable for great personal strength. Cornelius, Samuel, Peter and Isaac, sons of Peter Vrooman, are said to have possessed the strength of giants. They erected the first saw-mill in the county, which stood in *clawer-wy*, on the little Schoharie kill. Two of those brothers could easily carry a good sized log on the carriage. Many anecdotes are related by the aged, showing the strength of the Vrooman family. At the hill mentioned as the Long-berg, on the road to Albany, Cornelius, the strongest of the brothers, always made a practice when going to Albany with wheat, to carry one or two bags, each containing two or three skipples, up this hill to favor his horses. Twenty-five skipples was the ordinary load to Albany, and usually brought fifty cents per skipple.

Samuel Vrooman is said to have carried at one time, twelve skipples of wheat and a harrow with iron teeth, from his father's house across a small bridge back of it, and set them down in a field. At another time, Cornelius carried ten skipples of peas, the same harrow, and a brother on the top of them, the same distance : in either case, eight or nine hundred pounds.

The stout Vroomans had a remarkably strong sister. A quarrelsome man being at her father's, warm words passed between him and her brother Cornelius, when the sister, fearing the consequences, if her kinsman laid hands upon the intruder in anger, seized him, although a pretty stout man, and pitched him neck and heels out of the house. This we may look upon as a very charitable act, considering it was done solely to save his life. There were other individuals in Schoharie who, if not as strong

as the brothers mentioned, were sufficiently so to protect themselves. Several of the Boucks and Borsts, it is said, could easily raise a barrel of cider and drink from the bung-hole.

Before the revolution, and for some forty years after its close, there was much horse-racing and sporting of different kinds in the Schoharie and Mohawk valleys. An *ox-race* once took place in Cobelskill. There was also much fair boxing, and many quarrels were settled by personal combat. The settlers sometimes played cards for coppers, but seldom for silver.

About the year 1770, a challenge was given and accepted between the people of the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys, to try speed and strength. Which gave it, is uncertain. The Mohawk champions went to Schoharie at the appointed time, and multitudes were assembled to witness the strife. A sleigh was placed on bare ground, and with twelve heavy men in it, Cornelius Vrooman, by the end of the tongue, drew it one and a half feet. Cornelius Fonda, the Mohawk bully, attempted, but in vain, to start it. On the same day, Adam Crysler ran a foot-race with one Dockstader from the Mohawk valley—the former winning the race with ease.

Formerly, almost every country woman, in some parts of America, was to be seen in certain seasons of the year, at work on a farm. It is now very justly determined, that *woman's* place is in the house and *man's* in the field.

Wheat and poultry were the most important articles of traffic taken from Schoharie to Albany, an hundred years ago, which was usually done by sleighing. But little grain, except wheat, was carried to market for many years by the early settlers: in fact, much of that grain was fed their horses by the Germans and Dutch. The fondness of the Dutch for good horses, has originated a proverb, that "a Dutchman thinks more of his horse than his wife."

In going from the Schoharie and Mohawk valleys, to and from Albany, some fifty years ago, the Dutch were in the habit of running their horses up a good share of every hill. Starting the team as they neared it, they dashed on at a furious rate, thus gain-

ing an impetus which carried them nearly to the top of the hill, arriving at which they often halted to rest or feed.

It was customary, as already observed, for the people of Schoharie to go to market in squads, and not unfrequently fifteen or twenty teams were seen together, some of which were driven by the wives and daughters of the farmers, who were of the party. The custom yet prevails of their accompanying their husbands, fathers and brothers to market; not, however, in the capacity of drivers. Mounted upon the top of a good load of grain, the tidy house-wife or neatly clad daughter is often to be seen as a passenger—or rather as a *mortgage* on the load, as they are not inaptly termed: for she claims some portion of the proceeds to be appropriated to the purchase of a new dress, or such other articles as her wardrobe may require.

Weddings, in the days of which I am speaking, were celebrated differently from what they now are. The law then required the publishing of the bans three successive times, in a religious meeting, before a couple could get married. After the notice had been once read, the young friends usually had a dance, and after the couple were united, they had several dances. Some good anecdotes are told of these weddings. Before the revolution, says *George Warner*, a man came from Freehold and married a Miss Schaeffer. Her father was rather fastidious about asking some of his neighbors, on the score of their not being sufficiently opulent, but invited among the guests an Indian friend, and gave him permission to ask such of *his* friends as he chose. The Indian, on such an occasion, shows no great respect for persons—indeed, he never does unless it be for distinguished prowess, and acknowledged personal favors—and the sequel proved he had many friends: for when the guests began to assemble, a large part of the Schoharie tribe were there, some with wedding garments on, and others with few garments, if any at all on. The dismayed parent was not a little perplexed, and in order to get rid of his red guests, he freely distributed several gallons of rum, when they pronounced the wedding a good one—gave a glorious whoop and retired, to the great relief of the family.

Judge Brown related the following—to use his own words—as “a nobleman’s wedding;” which took place in his younger days. George Henry Stubrach was married to a daughter of John Frederick Bouck, who lived in the present town of Fulton. In an open field near Mr. Bouck’s residence, a booth was erected and a liberty pole raised. The marriage ceremony took place in the early part of the day, and the guests resorted to the booth. On such occasions, there was generally some *quidnunc* present, who assumed the responsibilities of a captaincy, to direct the movements of the joyous company. At the time of which we are speaking Nicholas York was the admitted dictator. While all were busily engaged in such occupations as their own taste selected, a circumstance took place which afforded the party an unexpected source of amusement. A woodchuck made its appearance in a fallow near the booth. Captain York instantly ordered the field surrounded, directing a simultaneous march to the centre. The party had not approached to a concussion, before the intruder was slain. It was handed over to the captain—whose word on such occasions was law. He cut a piece of flesh from the warm victim and ate it, requiring all, male and female, to follow his example. Most attempted, but few succeeded in getting down the dainty morsel. A general “removal of deposits” was the result of this austere mandate; after which the guests again resorted to their chosen occupations. In this jolly manner the festivities were continued for three successive days. What disposition to make of the guests nights, I am at a loss to know. On the evening of the third day, the blushing bride was taken home to the residence of her husband, in Kneiskern’s dorf. *Two barrels of home brewed beer, twenty-two gallons of rum and a proportionate quantity of wine,* were the spirits poured down to raise the spirits of the party up, on this noted occasion: and it is a fact worthy of remark, that all the liquors were quaffed from *wooden dippers*. This wedding took place when it was the fashion for ladies to wear short dresses—flowered silk hose—and French-heeled slippers, fastened with silver buckles. The large *pocket* made separately and worn loose over the dress, as also the *hoop*,

both of which were part of female attire at a later period, may have been in service at the time of this wedding. This brief description will serve to give the reader a pretty good idea of the manner in which most weddings of consequence were celebrated in bygone days. Nearly all the people—old as well as young—were then in the habit of dancing on such occasions. Their style, perhaps, was not of the most graceful kind. The French steps had not then been taught in that beautiful valley. The last wedding which *seventy-two hours* were required to complete, is believed to have been that of the late Judge Swart, and took place in April, 1775. The revolution broke them up, as they could not in safety be celebrated then; and after the war was over, few felt as though they could afford to give them—many being under the necessity of erecting themselves new dwellings, upon the ashes of their old ones.

Jacob Becker related an anecdote, which shows the faithful manner in which those weddings were celebrated. They had in his father's family at one time a shoemaker at work, so that a brother of his might learn the trade. While he was there, Joseph Kneiskern—a widower, was married. Becker's brother George, several years older than himself, attended the wedding. As he was putting on a new pair of shoes with very thick soles—the workmanship of the cobbler, the latter good humoredly told him if he danced those soles through, he would put on a new pair for nothing. Away went the guest to the wedding, from which he returned home on the evening of the *third* day. He pulled off his shoes and threw them to the mechanic, who, on examining, found he had been taken at his word—and that not only the outer, but the inner soles of both were worn entirely through. In those days house-floors in New England and New York, were scoured clean, and instead of a carpet, received a coat of fine white sand—which will enable the reader to understand how the shoes could have been *used up*.

It was customary for the groom, after the ordeal of proposing *the* question, to make his intended a present of some kind—usually a pair of silver shoe-buckles, sleeve buttons—or snuff-box.

Whether the modern *low-lived* and *ill-bred* custom of celebrating weddings in the street, usually termed *horning*—now in vogue in *ignorant* communities—prevailed before the revolution in Schoharie, I can not say.

Several black fiddlers were, in their day, noted persons. Jack, a slave belonging to Col. Zielie, and another of the same name, belonging to John Lawyer, who, to distinguish them, were called Jack Zielie and Jack Lawyer, flourished in their way, about the time of the revolution. A frolic could not easily be sustained then, unless one of them was present. They played the fiddle, holding it in various positions, sometimes before and at others behind them. One of the two was formerly represented on a tavern sign (painted by George Tiffany, Esq.) as playing for a jolly company; some part of which device is still visible on the sign now in the cabinet of John Gebhard, jr., Esq. of Schoharie.

Dancing or *frolicing*, as then called, was still the order of the day some fifty years ago, in most of the Dutch and German settlements. Old, middle-aged, and young—dressed much alike—usually assembled on those occasions, which were on Saturday evening, and as often as two or three times in a month. Males frequently danced with their hats on. The female dress was strapped caps of lawn, striped linsey petticoats, with short-gowns of differently striped calico or silk, an outside chintz pocket tied round the waist with ribbon or tape, and high heeled cloth boots. After the guests were assembled, a six or eight reel, then a four, a jig, and a hornpipe were danced in succession, in the centre of a room crowded by spectators to a small space for the dancers, if a fight did not take place before the hornpipe was reached—which was very frequently the case—owing to the impatience and frequent liquoring of the gentlemen not dancing. Then might have been seen a happy couple, manifesting great disparity of age, "*jigging merrily down the middle, through a line of succeeding generations.*" The musician was generally either Jack Lawyer or Jack Zielie, who accompanied the motion of his bow with a continual stamping of one foot—saying, in effect, *hear dis nigger mark time on de floor.* The slaves of the citizens, on those oc-

casions, were permitted to witness the performance at the doors and windows, which they literally filled. At the period of which I am speaking, much liquor was drank in all the frontier settlements, and *pugilism*, though not then treated as a science, was of very frequent occurrence. It was not at all uncommon during those personal encounters, for a young miss to hold the coat and hat of her lover, while he was knocking another man down, or being knocked down himself. The reader is aware that the banner of *Temperance*—the friend of peace and social order—was not unfurled o'er the land *fifty years ago*.

Judge Brown assured me, that in his younger days he often made bows and arrows, and hand-sleds, to sell to boys. The ordinary price for one of the latter was three coppers. This fact is mentioned to show the value of money in the French war. He said he had, among other things to gain a livelihood when young, often fiddled for a respectable company to dance. His wife humorously remarked to him while relating that fact—"and from a *fiddler* you rose to be a *Judge*."

Few dishes were formerly seen upon the tables of the Schoharie people. It was no uncommon sight to see a family of eight or ten persons seated at an old fashioned *round table*—which was turned up in every dwelling when not in use—each with a spoon eating from a single dish of *supaan*. Every member had a cavity in the pudding filled with milk, from which he or she, was allowed freely to scoop. On eating through into each other's divisions, a quickened motion of the spoon ensued, if trouble did not. If bowls were not then found indispensable in a large family, for eating a supper of *supaan* and milk, neither were plates in eating a hearty dinner. Each member of the family—seated at the round table, the quality and neatness of which no cloth concealed—was given a large slice of bread upon which they ate their meat and potatoes; after which, the time serving plate was broken up, thrust into a dish to receive a coat of *dope* (gravy,) and soon devoured. Bread was then sliced by one of the heads of the family, and dealt out around the table as a whist player would deal his cards. Rice and milk was, like *supaan*, also eaten from one

dish, after receiving the liberal scrapings of a cake of maple sugar. Happy days were those when the good house-wife had few bowls or plates to wash, and little envy about the quality or number of those possessed by her neighbor.

That good custom of calling on friends and reciprocating kind feelings on the first day of the year, which still prevails in our larger towns, existed in Schoharie before the revolution: and no people improved the privileges of the custom or turned them to better account, than did the Indians. They not only called on the whites with a happy *neiw-jahr*, expecting to renew their claims to friendship by eating cakes and drinking liquor, but also expected a liberal donation of eatables to take to their cabin, the squaws carrying baskets on their heads to receive them. On those gala days, the tables of the Germans and Dutch were loaded with several skipples of bread and fried cakes, and a fearful array of liquors. Said *Mattice Ball* to the author—"I have alone cut up six loaves of bread on new year's day, and distributed to the Indians."

In the Dutch settlements along the Mohawk, calls began among neighbors on new year's day at midnight, with the following greeting:

"Ik wens u glucksaalic nieu jar!
Dat gy lang leben mag—
Veel geben mag—
En de kernigh-reich von de himmel erben mogh!"

I wish you a happy new-year!
May you long live—
Have much to give—
And in heaven at last appear!

Christmas is a day still observed in the Dutch and German settlements of New York, though not as much as formerly. On the evening before Christmas, children hang up their stockings on going to bed, expecting to find them filled in the morning with presents, such as cakes, fruit, nuts, &c. by an imaginary visitor called Santa Claas. If the children have been wilful and refractory, the messenger of St. Nicholas, who is only a neighbor disguised, sometimes arrives before bed-time with a whip instead of

a present; and lucky are the mischievous urchins who can hide themselves under a bed, or their mother's apron to avoid chastisement. Formerly, the occasion was improved to punish disobedient slaves, whose superstitious fears prevented them from penetrating the disguise which often concealed some member of the family in which they lived.

Paas, Easter-day; and *Pinkster*, Whitsunday, are days also noted in the annals of the Dutch. The former day is ushered in by the young, with presents of eggs colored various hues; while the latter is more particularly observed by the colored population. The blacks are seen with smiling faces on that day, clad in their best apparel, going to visit their friends—often bearing flowers called by them *Pinkster-bloomies*; which are known in New England as blossoms of the swamp-apple.

The early farmers of Schoharie turned their attention mostly to raising wheat, as do their descendants—or rather did, until the *weevil* prevented. They have ever kept too many horses, and too few cattle and sheep for profit—the well fed horse being a very expensive boarder. Not many of the Dutch to this day keep large dairies, as very few of them make English cheese. Some of them, however, make considerable butter, and the world may be challenged to excel them in making it palatable. Many of them churn the milk with the cream, and when that is not done, it goes through a process in working it called washing, which in either case, divests it of a greasy flavor more common to butter made in English settlements. The Dutch also make excellent bread.

*Sour-cROUT** is a German dish much eaten in the Schoharie and Mohawk valleys. Many families make a barrel of it every fall.

* This article is made as follows. Late in the fall a quantity of good sound cabbage is prepared as it would be for *slaugh*, or salad, to conform to Webster. It is cut with knives set in a plank. In a clean barrel the packing is commenced. A layer of cabbage is closely laid by the aid of a heavy pounder, after which a handful of common salt is sprinkled upon it, and also a little water, to moisten the whole. This process is repeated until a sufficiency is secured; when a board is laid upon the top and kept down by weights. The barrel is then put in the cellar. Fermentation causes a scum to rise upon

I have before observed that witchcraft was believed in by some of the Schoharie people, many years ago. A man by the name of Rector once shot, with impunity, an old woman living on the bank of the Schoharie, opposite the present village of Esperance, said to have been bewitched. She was shot through a window of her own house. Cattle were sometimes killed for the same supposed malady and burned up. I have spoken of old Doctor Moulter, as a believer in witchcraft. He is said to have had repeated battles with witches, and on one occasion to have encountered seven at once, at a small brook, near the corner of the roads in the north part of Schoharie village, and retreated until he placed his back against the brick church, when he overpowered them. It is not unlikely he met a *Mary Magdalene*, as they still lurk at times about the same corners. One anecdote more of the old Doctor. He pretended he could drive *rats* from one house to another, and was often hired by the superstitious—by whom he was very liberally paid, to drive the rats from their dwellings to those of their neighbors with whom they were not on good terms. Moulter, at precisely such an hour of the night, would rap on the corners of the house—repeat a lingo of his own, and command every rat, dead or alive, to leave the house thus thumped, and go to such an one as he was hired to send them to. Possibly he threatened to *bewitch* them if they did not pack up and be off. The silly doctrine of witchcraft has fled the Schoharie valley, never more to enter it.

The inhabitants of Schoharie suffered but little in the French war. A block fort was then erected on the west side of the road, nearly opposite the residence of the late Philip Dietz. It is said, however, to have been but little used and not even garrisoned. The Six Nations of Indians which embraced the Schoharie tribe, were English allies in the war, consequently the frontier settlements were not much exposed. A small number of hostile Indians entered Schoharie once during this war. Jacob Folluck

the board, which should be cleansed as often as the barrel is disturbed. Sourcrout is usually cooked with potage, and for persons who exercise, it is very nutritious. It is much used in long voyages at sea.

was the only person killed by them. Near the present residence of David Lawyer, on Foxes creek, the enemy were secreted by an oat-field, intending the capture of several persons expected there to cut oats. Mr. Folluck with his dog and gun had just left home to go hunting. Passing the Indians, his dog began to bark; when the former, fearing discovery, shot the dog and his master, whom they scalped; and then precipitately left Schoharie. Mr. Sternberg, returning from Beaver Dam, passed unmolested by his concealed foes, just before his neighbor was shot. They were desirous of taking several prisoners at once, and he, being alone, passed unmolested. Sternberg had lost part of his nose, which was observed by the Indians in ambush. After the war he was recognized by some of them in the Mohawk valley, by the deficiency of his nasal organ. He was asked if he did not remember passing by the oat-field on the morning his neighbor was killed, *leading a cow by a rope*? He replied that he did. He was then assured that Folluck would not have been injured, but for his dog.

At the beginning of the French war a treaty was held with the Indians near where Boyd's mill now stands, in the present town of Middleburgh. The meeting was very numerously attended. Queter, (Peter,) an Oquago chief, who it would seem was in the French interest, closed a speech as follows. Laying down an iron wedge upon a fallen tree, said he, alluding to their union with the French, "*We are like that—strong and can not be broken!*" Mrs. Josiah Swart, who perfectly understood the Indian dialect, is said to have acted as interpreter on the occasion. When the symbol was explained, Mrs. S. emphatically addressed Queter in his native tongue, and in behalf of the British interest as follows. Said she—taking a guinea from her pocket and laying it upon the wedge, "*We are like that, which is equally strong and can outlive your symbol; for if both be buried in the ground the rust will destroy yours, while ours will come out as strong and as bright as ever!*" When the squaw's speech was interpreted—Indians call all women squaws—it was pronounced superior to any other delivered on the occasion. It is supposed

Sir William Johnson—under whom some of the white citizens and Indians of Schoharie served during this war, was present at this meeting, as there were chiefs assembled from several tribes. Abraham, a Schoharie chief, was among the speakers on the occasion. On the same ground, after the Canadas were conquered, a jubilee was held, at which time *a barrel of rum was drunk*. A bonfire was also made by piling a large quantity of pine knots around a dry tree, the light of which, when “the evening shades prevailed,” beautified the rich mountain scenery around. At this jolly festival, *Judge Brown*, from whom these facts were obtained, wrestled with a young Indian and threw him. He bellowed terribly when he got up, and his mother hearing his cries, ran to the spot and struck Brown upon the head with a pine knot, which felled him to the ground and nearly extinguished life.

Pleasure wagons were unknown in Schoharie in former times, and persons attending church, going to frolics, or to visit distant friends, usually went on horse-back. Many a horse, to which had been fed a double allowance of wheat for the occasion, has borne not only his master to a dance, but at the same time a substantial guest of the gentler sex. Riding on horse-back was a healthy exercise much indulged in by ladies formerly. The side-saddles upon which they rode, exhibit the pretty form of a large mud-turtle.

When neighbors returned from social visits, they always carried home for the children, a liberal quantity of *oli-cooks*—small round cakes with raisins in the centre and fried in lard, and *sweet cakes*.

The practice among the early Germans and Dutch, of sparking it without fuel or rush-light, has now become obsolete.

That the Americans as a people have degenerated from their ancestors in point of stature, limitation of life, and ability to endure fatigue, would seem to be a fact generally admitted. Some of the causes it may be well to notice, as it is highly important as a nation, we should not only have vigorous understandings, but strength of body to plan and execute any undertaking man may perform. One of the most obvious causes of declining

strength, is the sedentary life of an increasing number of our citizens, added to the fact that far too little exercise is taken in the open air. It is so ordered on our planet, that man shall acquire a living *by the sweat of his brow*—and it is further ordained, that the labor implied in the mandate shall invigorate his bodily powers. Another reason why we do not possess the constitutions of our ancestors, is, our luxurious mode of life when compared with theirs. We use more tea, coffee and sugar than they did, and our food is frequently seasoned to death. In fact, modern cookery is becoming a science, calculated to pamper the appetite of the indolent; leaving the victim no other excuse than *pastry* for becoming a gouty dyspeptic. Another palpable cause of pulmonary habits, is *fashionable dressing*. What tends much to weaken us, although perhaps not so considered, is the use of stoves instead of fire-places for warming rooms: and I may add to this another, in the general introduction of bolting-cloths into grist-mills. *Andrew Loucks*, who, at our interview, was in his ninety-seventh year, in answer to the question, “why were people of your day healthier than those born at a later period,” replied—“We ate lighter food when I was a boy than at present, such as soups; used a great deal of milk and but little tea and coffee: we sometimes made chocolate by roasting wheat flour in a pot, though not often. But ah! added the old man, “young people are now up late nights—to run about evenings *is not good*, but to take the morning air *is good*.”

I should, perhaps, have remarked that the feeding of candy and sweat-meats to children, has tended more than most people imagine, to destroy the vigor of our race. There are, however, in spite of the evils of infant pupilage, causes beginning to operate favorably, for the extension of human life, so that in the aggregate, it is estimated that the average limitation of man's existence is now annually on the increase. Reasons obvious for this are, that *science* is augmenting its *mastery* of disease, while *temperance* is manifesting its benevolent operations in its *prevention*.

The first *tea party* in Schoharie county was given by one of the Vrooman families, in Vrooman's Land. Miss Loucks, a sister of

my informant, was a guest. When the *enlivener* was announced as ready, the party gathered about a round table, upon which stood not a morsel of any thing to eat, except a liberal lump of maple sugar, placed beside each cup. As the India beverage entered the cups from a kettle in which it had been boiled as one would boil potatoes, great was the curiosity to know how it might taste; but it was soon satisfied in most of the guests, who sipped and did nothing but sip, at a beverage that would have borne an egg. No milk was used in the tea at Vrooman's. Miss Loucks, who did not like sugar, ashamed to have the rest of the party think she had not used her's, slipped it into a side pocket and carried it home. The ancient Dutch custom always placed a lump of sugar beside each cup, and did not allow it to dissolve until it entered the mouth, when a frequent nibble sufficed.—*A. Loucks*. In doing the honors of a tea-table 25 years ago, the question—*will you bite or stir?*—was asked each guest.

Before tracing those events of the American Revolution, which the reader, in the course of this work, is to expect, I will insert for the benefit of the young, some of the leading causes which brought it about.

Much had occurred during the colonizing of the several American states, to estrange their affection and allegiance from the British Crown. Repeated attempts had been made to abrogate their charters—limit their manufactures, and circumscribe their commerce: while numerous measures were adopted to render them more servile, and less confident in their own capacity for government and self-protection.

The war between Great Britain and France, called the French war, which lasted from 1755 to 1762, and ended so gloriously for Britain in the conquest of Canada and other French possessions in America, discovered to England the importance of her American colonies. The English, at that period, knew but little of the true state of feeling existing in America, except that obtained through prejudiced sources: which remark is not wholly inapplicable, even at the present day. The war to which I have alluded, created for Britain a heavy national debt. To liquidate this debt, the colonies were taxed, without having a voice in the councils

of the mother country ; against which they firmly, and with great unanimity remonstrated. The British ministry, ignorant of the geography of the colonies, treated those popular remonstrances with a degree of indifference and contempt, that tended to lessen the confidence of the colonists in the English government. To the mad policy the British ministry pursued, there were in England some most honorable opposers. Among the foremost may be registered the illustrious names of a Pitt, a Conway and a Barre. From the fact, that the colonists found some noble champions in England to assert their rights, they were the more united and untiring in their attempts to obtain redress. As the criminal, if restrained even for an imaginary offence, is the more closely confined and watched if he makes any attempt to regain his liberty, so it was with the colonies ; the more they remonstrated, the heavier the manacles that were wrought for them. It is not to be wondered at, that a people taught from the cradle to appreciate liberty, should manfully assert and maintain it.

A system of taxation was devised by the British ministry as early as 1754. The plan proposed that the colonies should erect fortifications, raise troops, &c.; with power to draw on the British treasury to defray the expense of the same—the *whole ultimately to be reimbursed by a tax from the mother country on the colonies*. This plan was objected to by the sagacious Franklin, who, in a written reply to Governor Shirley of Massachusetts, proved clearly that the Americans could never submit to a tax that would render them *servile*—that they were already taxed indirectly without having a voice, being compelled to pay heavy duties on the manufactures of the mother country ; although many of the articles might be manufactured on American soil, or purchased cheaper in some other foreign market.

Dissatisfaction was for years gaining ground in the colonies ; and as the intelligence of the people increased, so that they could the better appreciate the value of *liberty*, the prejudices against the mother country were correspondingly augmented. Every new step the ministry took, having for its ultimate object to fix upon the Americans a system of taxation, was regarded with jeal-

ousy. They were aware that Great Britain had so fettered their foreign trade, as almost wholly to confine their commerce to herself.

The French war had swelled the national debt of England to nearly *three hundred and twenty millions* of dollars. George Grenville, then prime minister of England, wishing to devise some means for raising a revenue to meet the increased expenses of the British government, which should not prove onerous *at home*, proposed to raise a revenue *in America* to go into the exchequer of Great Britain. The first act for this object was passed in 1764. It imposed a duty on "*clayed sugar, indigo, &c.*," and would have been submitted to, had it not been closely followed by others still more oppressive. Governor Bernard, of Massachusetts, issued a pamphlet, doubtless from sinister motives, justifying the course of England. He recommended abolishing the colonial charters—a new division of the colonies—a nobility for life in each division—the whole to come under one general government, and that to be under the control of the King, abolishing, at the same time, religious freedom of opinion, etc. It may well be imagined what effect sentiments would produce in America, which were intended to demolish colonial rights. In March, of the same year, Mr. Grenville reported a resolution imposing certain *stamp duties* on the colonies. It was not to be acted upon, however, until the next session of Parliament. Opportunity being thus afforded the colonies, nearly all expressed in the interim, their disapprobation. In strong terms the House of Burgesses, of Virginia, signified their sense of the measure. They addressed lucid and sensible remonstrances to the King and both houses of Parliament. In those, they exhibited the want of a precedent to such a proceeding—the subversion of their rights as subjects of Great Britain—the exhausted state of their finances by the late war, which left that colony involved in a debt, to cancel which must impose for years to come a tax on her citizens—the general depression of business—their present exposed state, as the Indians on the frontier were unsubdued, and might increase their colonial debt, &c. The addresses throughout, breathed a tone of humble firmness. Those

memorials *were not even allowed to be read* in the House of Commons. Doctor Franklin, who was then in England, waited upon Mr. Grenville in person, to persuade him to abandon a measure, he well knew must excite the whole continent. Grenville persevered, and in March, 1765, the obnoxious bill was brought into the House of Commons. General Conway was the only member who openly contended against the *right* of Parliament to enact such a law. Charles Townsend, an advocate for the bill, closed a long and rather eloquent speech as follows :

“ And now will those Americans, children *planted by our care, nourished by our indulgence*, till they are grown to a degree of strength and opulence, and *protected by our arms*, will they grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under ?”

Colonel Barre, one of the most respectable members of the House of Commons, with strong feelings of indignation in his countenance and expression, replied to Mr. Townsend in the following eloquent and laconic manner :

“ **THEY PLANTED BY YOUR CARE ?**—No. Your oppressions planted them in America. They fled from your tyranny into a then uncultivated land, where they were exposed to all the hardships to which human nature is liable ; and among others, to the cruelties of a savage foe, the most subtle, and, I will take upon me to say, the most terrible, that ever inhabited any part of God’s earth. And yet, actuated by principles of true English liberty, they met all these hardships with pleasure, when they compared them with those they suffered in their own country, from men who should have been their friends.

“ **THEY NOURISHED BY YOUR INDULGENCE ?**—They grew up by your neglect of them. As soon as you began to care about them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule them in one department and in another, who were perhaps the *deputies* of *deputies* to some members of this House, sent to spy out their liberties, to misrepresent their actions, and to prey upon them.—Men whose behavior on many occasions, has caused the blood of those sons of liberty to recoil within them.—Men promoted to the highest seats of justice, some of whom to my knowledge were glad, by going to a foreign country, to escape being brought to the bar of a court of justice in their own.

“ **THEY PROTECTED BY YOUR ARMS ?**—They have nobly taken up arms in your defence. They have exerted a valor amidst their constant and laborious industry, for the defence of a country whose

frontier was drenched in blood, while its interior parts yielded all its little savings to your emolument. And believe—remember I this day tell you so, that same spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first, will accompany them still: but prudence forbids me to explain myself further. God knows I do not at this time speak from any motives of party heat; what I deliver are the genuine sentiments of my heart. However superior to me in general knowledge and experience the respectable body of this House may be, yet I claim to know more of Americans than most of you, having seen and been conversant in that country. The people, I believe, are as truly loyal as any subjects the King has, but a people jealous of their liberties, and who will vindicate them, if ever they should be violated: but the subject is too delicate—I will say no more.”

The bill was passed by the Commons, and met with no opposition at all in the House of Lords. On the twenty-second of the same month, 1765, it received the royal assent. Soon after the passage of the bill, Doctor Franklin, in a letter to Mr. Charles Thompson, afterwards secretary to Congress, thus writes: “The sun of liberty is set; you must light up the candles of industry and economy.” Said Mr. Thompson, in his reply to Franklin,—“Be assured that we shall light up torches of quite another sort.” To Mr. Ingersoll, who left London about the time the bill passed, Doctor Franklin said: “Go home and tell your people to get children [for soldiers] as fast as they can.” The act, which was not to take effect until the following November, provided, that all contracts should be written on *stamped paper*, or have no force in law. As a matter of course, the paper was to be furnished at extravagant prices. As it was foreseen that unusual measures would be required to enforce a law, which, from its very nature, must meet with resistance, provision was made that all penalties for its violation might be recovered in the admiralty courts, which received their appointment from the crown. This was intended to obviate the process of trial by *jury*, as it was supposed no colonial jury would aid in enforcing a law so obnoxious. The news of its final passage was received in the colonies with sorrowing of heart. Almost every thing was done by the people that could be, to manifest their abhorrence of the stamp act. The shipping in the harbor at Boston displayed colors at half mast; church-

bells were muffled and tolled, and societies in most of the colonies were formed to resist the execution of the law. Masters of vessels who brought the stamps, were treated with indignity, and compelled to deliver up the stamps to the populace, who made bonfires of them and the law. Effigies of Andrew Oliver, who had been appointed stamp-distributer for the colony of Massachusetts, and the British minister, lord North, (who had succeeded Mr. Grenville,) and some of his advisers, were made, and in solemn mockery, publicly burned. Justices of the peace refused to interpose their authority to enforce the law. Stamp officers were compelled to yield to the popular will, and agree never to deliver a stamp. And what was most alarming to Great Britain, many of the merchants entered into solemn engagements to import no more goods from the mother country, until the act was repealed.

In the month of May following the passage of the act, five spirited resolutions against the law were introduced into the legislature of Virginia, by Patrick Henry, and after a very warm debate, were adopted. The fifth resolution read as follows :

“*Resolved* therefore, That the General Assembly of this colony have the sole right and power to lay taxes and impositions upon the inhabitants of this colony; and that every attempt to vest such power in any person or persons whatever, other than the General Assembly aforesaid, has a manifest tendency to destroy British as well as American freedom.” [Nearly at the same time the Assembly of Massachusetts adopted similar resolves.]

In the city of New York the stamp-act was printed, under the title of “The folly of England, and the ruin of America,” and thus hawked about the streets. When it became known that colonial assemblies were evincing hostility to the law, the timid became more bold and the tendency to mobocracy could not be restrained. In many parts of Connecticut and Rhode-Island, mobs to oppose the law were collected, while in Boston the populace wantonly destroyed the buildings and property of the stamp officers. In June the Legislature of Massachusetts proposed the expediency of calling a Continental Congress, to meet in New York the following October. Nine of the colonies sent delegates. The result of their deliberations was, a declaration of rights, in which

they claimed the exclusive right to tax themselves, and the privilege of trial by jury, a memorial to the House of Lords, and a petition to the King, and Commons. Colonies prevented by the pro-roguing power of their governors from sending delegates to the convention, expressed their earliest possible approbation of the proceedings. On the first day of November, when the stamp-act was to take effect, sadness was manifest in all the colonies. In Boston the workshops and stores were closed, and while the bells tolled as for a funeral, effigies of the friends of the act, were marched in solemn procession through the streets, to a gallows on Boston neck, where, after the hang-man had done his duty, they were cut down and destroyed. At Portsmouth, public notice was given to the *friends of liberty* to attend her *funeral*—a coffin was prepared, upon which was inscribed in large letters the word *Liberty*. This was followed by a numerous procession, while the bells were tolling and minute guns were firing, to the grave. There an oration was pronounced, in which it was hinted, that the *deceased* might possibly *revive*. The coffin was then disinterred, the word *Revived* conspicuously added to the inscription, after which the bells rang a merry peal. Printers boldly printed and circulated their papers, without the required stamp. Associations were formed from Maine to the Mississippi, entitled the “Sons of Liberty,” composed of the talent and wealth of the people; pledging their fortunes and their lives to *defend the liberty of the press*, and put down the stamp-act. The scheme of continental alliance, which afterwards followed, sprang from these associations. Nor were the males alone patriotic—females of the highest rank, and bred to luxurious ease, became members in all the colonies, of societies, resolving to forego luxuries, and to card, spin, and weave their own clothing. Fair reader! a suit of home-spun, was then a mark of popular distinction. Such was the spirit of opposition, to a favorite measure of the British ministry. Parliament again convened in January, 1766; when a multitude of petitions, from all parts of England and America, were presented for the repeal of the stamp-act. Some changes had taken place in the English Cabinet, more favorable to the colonial

cause, but Mr. Grenville still retained a place in it. After the speech of the King had been read, Mr. Pitt, the great champion of equal rights, occupied the floor. He briefly censured the acts of the late ministry, after which he thus expressed himself.

“It is a long time, Mr. Speaker, since I have attended in Parliament: when the resolution was taken in this House to tax America, I was ill in bed. If I could have endured to have been carried in my bed, so great was the agitation of my mind for the consequences, I would have solicited some kind hand to have laid me down on this floor, to have borne my testimony against it. *It is my opinion, that this kingdom has no right to lay a tax upon the colonies.* At the same time, I assert the authority of this kingdom to be sovereign and supreme in every circumstance of government and legislation whatsoever. Taxation is no part of the governing or legislative power; the taxes are a voluntary gift and grant of the Commons alone. The concurrence of the Peers and the Crown is necessary only as a *form* of law. This House represents the commons of Great Britain. When in this House we give and grant, therefore, we give and grant what is our own, but *can we give and grant the property of the Commons of America?* It is an absurdity in terms. There is an idea in some, that the colonies are virtually represented in this House. I would fain know by *whom?* The idea of *virtual representation* is the *most contemptible* that ever entered into the head of man:—It does not deserve a serious refutation. The commons in America, represented in their several Assemblies, have invariably exercised this constitutional right of giving and granting their own money; they would have been *slaves* if they had not enjoyed it. At the same time this kingdom has ever professed the power of legislation and commercial control. The colonies acknowledge your authority in all things, with the sole exception that you shall not take their money out of their pockets without their consent. Here would I draw the line—*quam ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum*”—[right forbids you to go beyond or fall short of it.]

Mr. Grenville, the prime mover of all the mischief, arose to defend his measures. He compared the tumults in America to an open rebellion—said he feared the doctrine that day promulgated would lead to *revolution*. He justified the right of taxing the colonies, &c. Said he—

“Protection and obedience are reciprocal. Great Britain protects America, America is therefore bound to yield obedience. If not, tell me, when were the Americans emancipated? The seditious spirit of the colonies, *owes its birth to the factions in this House.* We were told we trod on tender ground; we were bid to

expect disobedience; what is this but telling America to stand out against the law? To encourage their obstinacy with the expectation of support here? *Ungrateful people of America!* The nation has run itself into an immense debt to give them protection; bounties have been extended to them; in their favor the act of navigation has been relaxed: and now that they are called upon to contribute a small share towards the public expense, they renounce your authority, insult your officers, and break out, I might almost say, into open rebellion."

Mr. Grenville took his seat, and Mr. Pitt, with permission of the House, rose, with indignation visible in his countenance, to reply.

"Sir," [addressing the Speaker,] "a charge is brought against gentlemen sitting in this House, for giving birth to sedition in America. The freedom with which they have spoken their sentiments against this *unhappy act*, is imputed to them as a crime; but the imputation shall not discourage me. It is a liberty which I hope no gentleman will be afraid to exercise; it is a liberty by which the gentleman who calumniates it, might have profited. *He ought to have desisted from his project.* We are told America is obstinate—America is almost in open rebellion. Sir, *I rejoice that America has resisted.* Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty, as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to have made slaves of all the rest." [After a very happy reply to some old law passages cited by Mr. Grenville; he thus continued]—"When," said the honorable gentleman, "were the colonies emancipated?" At what time, say I in answer, were they made slaves? I speak from accurate knowledge when I say, that the profits to Great Britain from the trade of the colonies, through all its branches, is two millions per annum. This is the fund which carried you triumphantly through the war; this is the price America pays you for her protection; and shall a miserable financier come with a boast that he can fetch a pepper-corn into the exchequer, at the loss of millions to the nation? I know the valor of your troops—I know the skill of your officers—I know the force of this country; but in such a cause your success would be hazardous. America if she fell, would fall like the strong man: *she would embrace the pillars of the State and pull down the Constitution with her.* Is this your boasted peace? Not to sheathe the sword in the scabbard, but to sheathe it in the bowels of your countrymen? The Americans have been wronged; they have been driven to madness by injustice. Will you punish them for the madness you have occasioned? No: let this country be the first to resume its prudence and temper; I will pledge myself for the colonies, that on their part animosity and resentment will cease. The system of policy I would earnestly adopt in

relation to America, is happily expressed in the words of a favorite poet :

“ Be to her faults a little blind,
Be to her virtues very kind,
Let all her ways be unconfined
And clap your padlock on her mind.”

Upon the whole I beg leave to tell the House, in a few words, what is really my opinion. It is *that the stamp-act be repealed, ABSOLUTELY, TOTALLY AND IMMEDIATELY.*

In addition to the information contained in the numerous petitions laid before Parliament, Doct. Franklin was called to the bar, and questioned freely as to the real state of feeling existing in the colonies towards the act. By a division of the House a large majority were in favor of not enforcing; and shortly after a bill passed for repealing the law. The news of its repeal produced joy throughout England and America. Illuminations and decorations took place in the former, while in the latter country, public thanksgivings were offered in the churches—non-importation resolutions rescinded, and the home-spun apparel given to the poor. The difficulty between the two countries would soon have been healed, had not the repeal of the stamp-act been followed with the “*Declaratory Act*,” which was, “that Parliament have, and of right ought to have, *power to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever.*” In this the *right* to tax was still maintained: in addition to this probe to open the wound anew, a law remained unrepealed, which directed that whenever troops should be marched into any of the colonies, necessary articles should be provided for them *at the expense of the colony.* The Assembly of New York refused obedience to this law, and Parliament, to punish that body, suspended its authority. The alarm occasioned by this act, considered by the people despotic, had not time to die away, before a new and aggravated cause of grievance was added, by the passage of a law imposing duties on the importation of *glass, tea,* and other enumerated articles, into the colonies, provision by the act being made for the appointment of commissioners of the customs, to be dependent solely on the Crown. About the same time Gov. Bernard of Massachusetts who had received private in-

structions to see that the colony made provision to remunerate the losses of those who had honored the stamp-act, being already very unpopular with the people, assumed, in his message to the Assembly, a tone of haughty reproach. This message produced a sarcastic and indignant reply. From this time the friends of liberty daily increased, and the court party correspondingly declined. The joy felt in the colonies for the repeal of the stamp-act, was of very short duration. The non-importation agreements were revived—looms and cards once more set to work—the spinning-wheel, the *piano* of the times, was heard buzzing in the dwellings of the rich—articles of domestic manufacture became again, with *patriots*, the fashion of the day—petitions and remonstrances were drawn up and circulated—and India tea, yielded its place on the tables of its fond drinkers, to a decoction of sassafras, sage, or a glass of cold water.

In 1768, troops were stationed in New York and Boston, to awe the people into submission to the acts of Parliament. Early in the same year, Massachusetts addressed a *circular letter* to the legislatures of the sister colonies, to have them unite in advising what course it was best to pursue. A series of essays, published in a Philadelphia newspaper at this period, entitled, "Letters from a farmer in Pennsylvania to the inhabitants of the British Colonies," from the pen of that enlightened patriot, John Dickinson, Esq., augmented the spirit of *union*. In 1769, resolutions were adopted in Parliament reprobating in strong terms the conduct of the people of Massachusetts, and directing that pliant tool of oppression, Governor Bernard, to make strict inquiry into all treasonable acts committed in that province since 1767, that persons thus guilty might have their offences investigated, and their fate decided upon *within the realm of Great Britain*.

The House of Burgesses of Virginia, which met shortly after, adopted, with closed doors, from fear of being prorogued by the Governor, resolutions expressive of their sense of the injustice and unconstitutionality of transporting criminals for trial among strangers, believing it to be *highly derogatory to the rights of British subjects*. Soon after this public manifestation of popular

displeasure, the general court of Massachusetts convened at Cambridge, the public buildings in Boston being filled at that time with British soldiers. Governor Bernard wished them to provide funds to defray the expenses of quartering his Majesty's troops—no notice, however, was taken of the request: and he shortly after left the province—unhonored and unlamented. He had for some time been a pliant tool for the British ministry, and his system of espionage had won for him the curses of the *Union*, which was then forming. Had the colonies been governed by men who were more willing to redress known grievances, and less anxious to please a ministry three thousand miles distant, it is possible the separation of the colonies from the mother country might have been delayed, if not prevented. Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, it should be observed, was an exception to the general rule.

Nothing occurred in 1769, to avert the impending storm. The mass of the people, in the mean time, were properly investigating the *causes* which were agitating the country, and which were fast approaching a crisis. Non-importation agreements were now assuming a form, and producing an effect which told on the mother country. In June of that year, delegates from the several counties in Maryland met at Annapolis and adopted spirited resolves: in one of which they took measures to secure to the country the article of wool, by agreeing not to kill any *ewe lambs*.

The troops quartered in New York and Boston were a constant source of irritation and difficulty with the inhabitants. On the second day of March, 1770, a quarrel took place at Boston, between a British soldier and a man employed at a rope-walk. This quarrel was renewed by the citizens on the evening of the fifth, when a part of Captain Preston's company, after having been pelted with snow-balls, derided, and dared to, fired upon the multitude, killing three and wounding five others. The ringing of bells, the beating of drums and the shout *to arms!* by the people, soon brought together thousands of citizens. A body of troops, sent in the mean time to rescue Preston's men, would doubtless have been massacred, had not Governor Hutchinson and some of the leading citizens, among whom was Samuel Adams,

interfered. The Governor promised that the matter should be amicably adjusted in the morning; and the mob dispersed. The anniversary of this first martyrdom in the cause of American liberty, was celebrated by the Bostonians until the close of the war. The immortal Warren delivered two of the anniversary orations. In the first, which he delivered in 1772, on alluding to the events of that memorable evening, he thus speaks:

“When we beheld the authors of our distress parading in our streets, or drawn up in a regular *battalia*, as though in a hostile city, our hearts beat to arms; we snatched our weapons, almost resolved, by one decisive stroke, to avenge the death of our *slaughtered* brethren, and to secure from future danger, all that we held most dear: but propitious heaven forbade the bloody carnage, and saved the threatened victims of our too keen resentment, not by their discipline, not by their regular array,—no, it was royal *George's* livery that proved their shield—it was that which turned the pointed engines of destruction from their breasts.” [In a note of reference to the forgoing extract, he thus adds:] “I have the strongest reason to believe that I have mentioned the only circumstance which saved the troops from destruction. It was then and now is the opinion of those who were best acquainted with the state of affairs at that time, that had thrice that number of troops, belonging to any power at open war with us, been in this town, in the same exposed condition, scarce a man would have lived to have seen the morning light.”

Three days after the massacre, the obsequies were solemnized. Every demonstration of respect was manifested. The stores and work-shops were closed—the bells of Boston, Charlestown and Roxbury were tolled, and thousands followed the remains to their final resting place. The bodies were all deposited in one vault. This unhappy event and its annual observance, tended greatly to widen the breach between the colony of Massachusetts and the mother country. In New York, quarrels also arose between the citizens and soldiers. Liberty poles, erected by the former, were cut down by the latter.

While such events were transpiring, an attempt was made in England to repeal the laws for raising a revenue in America. The duties were removed from all articles except *tea*, it being thought necessary by Parliament, to have at least one loaf constantly in the oven of discord. The repeal of a part of the obnoxious law

produced little effect in the colonies, except to modify the non-importation agreements so as to exclude only *tea* from the country ; and those patriots who had not before substituted, instead of tea, a cold water or herbaceous beverage, did now.