Endicott

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ACCOUNT

OF

LESLIE'S RETREAT

AT THE NORTH BRIDGE, IN SALEM,

ON SUNDAY, FEB'Y 26, 1775.

BY CHARLES M. ENDICOTT.

PRO ARIS ET FOCIS.

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LESLIE'S RETREAT:

OR THE

RESISTANCE TO BRITISH ARMS,

AT THE NORTH BRIDGE IN SALEM,

ON SUNDAY, P. M., FEBRUARY 26, 1775.

[NOTE. IT is much to be regretted, that antiquarian research, had not been directed to this affair, before the principal actors in the scene were gathered to their fathers. Before the task was undertaken by any one, the twilight of uncertainty had cast its shadows over a large portion of the incidents connected with it, and the night of forgetfulness, we have reason to conclude, had also shrouded many in total oblivion. The fragments spared by the hand of time, beside the very imperfect accounts published at the period, are now only met with in tradition or upon the trembling lips of extreme old age, which

> "Tells what it knows, as if it knew it not,
> And what it remembers, seems to have forgot."

The following account however is believed to embrace all the *principal* facts in the case; and we have endeavored to cull from the materials in our possession such as appeared the most authentic and reliable; and to avoid as much as possible drawing upon the imagination of others, or of our own, at the risk of making the account tame and uninteresting.]

"PRO ARIS ET FOCIS."

SALEM, the mother of the Massachusetts Colony, and the oldest town, save Plymouth, within the present jurisdiction of the commonwealth, was rich in historical interest long before the period of the American Revolution. In her soil were imprinted the first footsteps of the Massachusetts Colony. She

was the first to receive upon her shores, a few persecuted and care worn emigrants, the *avant couriers* of liberty, from the far off British Isle, voluntary exiles from the civilized world, bent upon the accomplishment of a noble enterprise, but without home or shelter where to recruit their exhausted strength after the usual privations and sufferings experienced by landsmen on a protracted sea voyage. *Here*, amid the solitude of the primeval forests, were heard the first sounds of civilized life in the colony. *Here*, upon the skirts of the same dark and forbidding forests, and in fearful proximity to their remorseless tenants, were seen slowly rising the first rude log cabins and mud hovels of the settlers, scarcely deserving the name of human habitations, being inferior in many respects to the wigwams of the native savages.

> "Their brown log huts peered rudely forth,
> Mid copse and thicket gray;
> With fragile tents, that scarcely kept
> The mocking storms at bay."

Here were planted the first cornfields, and *here* were made the first graves. *Here* famine and pestilent disease stalked abroad at noon day, numbering among their victims, during the first winter, nearly one half the entire population. Beneath her soil repose the sainted remains of the Lady Arbella, and the pious and godlike Higginson. *Here* was established the first independent church, the mother of all the congregational churches in New England, and *here* was organized the first civil and ecclesiastical government in the "Mattachusetts." *Here*, the bold, excentric, persecuted Roger Williams, sustained by the people of Salem, stood manfully forth in defence of his peculiar views of religious freedom and liberty of conscience. *Here* the energetic, ill-fated Hugh Peters, "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come," while the neighboring hills resounded with the glad tidings of the gospel.* *Here* the choleric magistrate flourished aloft his trusty rapier, and regardless of personal consequences, struck the first blow in defiance of Royal authority, by cutting the offending cross from the King's colours.

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* His first sermon here was preached at Enon, now Wenham, but then a part of Salem. The place of his preaching was on a hill which overlooked a spacious pond.—*Felt's Annals.*

At a subsequent period it was *here* that dire delusion, witchcraft, with all its train of mournful consequences, filling so dark a page in New England history, first developed itself. Salem, it is true, enjoys no enviable notoriety from this circumstance, yet it serves to strengthen the interest created by other facts, in her early history.

Dropping down nearly another century of time, we find her entering with her whole heart and soul into the issue then pending with the mother country, and furnishing her full share of the interesting incidents which distinguished the first dawning of the American Revolution. *Here* too we claim, the first blow was struck in the war of independence, by open resistance to both the civil and military power of the mother country; comparatively bloodless, it is true, but not the less firm and decided. All the events of that eventful period have long since become matters of history, and comparatively nothing can now be added to the facts already elicited by the historian. But of individual deeds of heroic valor and reckless daring, which distinguished our fathers in that fearful struggle, the half has never yet been written. Scarcely an octogenarian is now met with, who cannot tell a thrilling tale of the adventures of a father or brother, the bare recital of which, even at this distance of time, will "chill the blood and harrow up the soul." The opportunities to gather up the fragmentary and yet unwritten incidents in the lives of those brave men are becoming every day more rare, and ere long will have passed away forever. The grave is fast closing over the few remaining actors in those scenes. How many interesting facts will thus soon be lost to history, despite all the efforts to elicit and preserve them!

For a better understanding of the event in all its bearings, which we propose to relate, let us look for a moment at the situation of the country at that time, and for a few years antecedent; and also at the state of feeling of the inhabitants of Salem, consequent thereupon:—

The disputes between Great Britain and her American Colonies had been carried on with little or no intermission for a period of ten years. The most prominent and exciting of these disputes, was the right claimed by England to tax the colonies for the benefit of the British treasury. It had been at times agitated in Parliament for upwards of twenty-five years. In 1739, a scheme for this purpose was opposed by Sir Robert Walpole, then the Prime minister. At length in the spring of 1765 the Parliament, having previously levied duties on all

goods imported into the colonies from such of the West India Islands as did not belong to Great Britain, made the first move in the hazardous game, on the issue of which were staked the destinies of the American people by the passage of the odious stamp act. When the news of this fact reached the colonies, it produced the utmost commotion. In Boston, the bells of the churches were first muffled, and then made to send forth the most solemn peals. This was succeeded by outbreaks of the people, in which the officers of the crown were severely handled and their property in several instances destroyed. Salem shared with other towns in their detestation of this measure, but no violence was committed here. She contented herself with protesting against it in the Legislature, as "very injurious to liberty, since we are therein taxed without our consent, having no representation in Parliament."

This act was, however, rendered entirely inoperative by the resistance of the Colonies, and after its repeal, the calm of a few months, which followed, was again disturbed by the passage of the revenue act of 1767, which imposed heavy duties on glass, paper, painter's colors, and teas. The colonies at once resolved to abstain from the use of all foreign commodities as far as possible. By this step the imports from Great Britain in one year were decreased in amount nearly four millions of dollars, and the revenue from America decreased from five hundred and fifty thousand dollars to one hundred and fifty. Salem was among the foremost to declare in favor of this policy. Massachusetts issued a circular to the other colonies denouncing this oppressive measure, which on being desired by the King through the Royal Governor to rescind, the House by a vote of 92 to 17 refused to obey him. These were called the "glorious 92," and "infamous 17." Salem, indignant that her two representatives had voted with the minority, called a town meeting and passed a vote of thanks to the majority, in the following words:—"Voted, that the said town do thank the Hon. House for their firmness and resolution shown in maintaining our just rights and liberties."* The places of the gentlemen who had thus voted with the minority were the next year filled by others more friendly to the cause of liberty.† Only a kind of truce followed the partial repeal of that act in 1770,

* Essex Gazette files, August 2, 1768.

† Richard Derby, jr. and John Pickering, jr.

the duty on teas being still reserved. This exception was made by Great Britain to show the colonies that she did not relinquish *the principle*, that she possessed the right to tax them. This scheme so far from appeasing the colonists served only to keep alive their jealousy. Throughout the country the use of tea was not only strictly prohibited, but destroyed wherever found or exposed for sale. In Salem a quantity was, on one occasion, taken from a store, strewed about the streets, and the package, which had contained it, ignominiously consigned to the public whipping post. Bonfires, to the no small amusement of the children, were also not unfrequently made of it. An octogenarian, now living, relates that he can vividly remember the burning of a quantity in Court street, in which the late Walter Price Bartlett took a leading part. He was passing a store, in front of which he observed a collection of combustibles, when he saw a gentleman handsomely dressed, with a determined look and face the color of crimson, bring out in his arms a package of the odious tea, place it upon the pile and ignite the mass with his own hands. This he afterwards learned was Mr. Bartlett. Three hundred and sixty of her citizens, mostly heads of families, immediately signed an agreement to abstain from the use of this herb, and these were afterwards joined by several others.* Finally, the destruction of a quantity of this article in Boston harbor, in December, 1773, was followed by an act of Parliament to close the Port of Boston and remove the Custom House and its dependencies to Salem. This was known as the Boston Port Bill. It was supported by the Lords Mansfield, Gower, Littleton, Weymouth and Suffolk; and was opposed by the Dukes of Richmond and Manchester, the Marquis of Rockingham, Lord Campden, and the Earls of Shelburne, Temple and Stairs. The debates were long and warm. A measure of such deep aggression towards Boston, the principal seaport of Massachusetts, called forth the indignation of all the other colonies who sympathised deeply with her on the occasion. Salem, on whose interests this measure was calculated to have a favorable influence by directing the course of trade to her port, possessed too much magnanimity to raise her fortune on the ruin of her suffering neighbors, and at a town meeting in May, 1774, she voted that in her opinion, "if the colonies would stop all exports to, and imports from Great

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* Essex Gazette files, May 8, 1770.

Britain and her West India Islands, until the act for closing the port of Boston is repealed, the same would prove the salvation of North America and her liberties." The right to refuse and resist parliamentary taxation was the universal conviction throughout the country. The more the people thought, read or reflected, the more they were convinced of its injustice. The ruling powers of Great Britain, on their part, insisted upon the right to demand and enforce submission to it. A standing army was in consequence stationed in Massachusetts, at the sight of which the people felt insulted,—aye,—degraded, and every feeling of patriotism and manhood revolted.*

The next aggressive measure of the Parliament, which passed both bodies by large majorities, was an "Act for the better regulating of the government of the Province of Massachusetts Bay." This step, taken in the mere wantonness of tyranny, appeared the concentration of every thing, which malevolence could invent to degrade and oppress the children of the soil. By it the whole executive government was taken out of the hands of the people. The Royal Governor was clothed with supreme power, and his council was to be appointed by the crown. The Governor could appoint and remove the judges of the several courts of justice and all other officers, thereunto appertaining. Nothing could be expected from men holding situations during the pleasure of the Governor, but to be the ready instruments of arbitrary power. Town meetings of the inhabitants were strictly forbidden to be held without leave first obtained in writing from the Governor or Lieut. Governor. It having been anticipated, that this act might occasion riots, it was further provided, that if in the attempted execution of these laws the people resisted so as to cause the death of any one, who was assisting to enforce them, such persons should be transported to another colony, or to England, for trial. These inhuman measures, taken together, were justly considered by the colonists a complete system of tyranny, from the operation of which it was impossible to make a peaceable escape. The alternative was plainly *submission or the bayonet.* They reduced the people to a state of the most degraded vassalage. The friends

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* In July, 1774, there were stationed in Boston two companies of the Royal Train Artillery, with eight pieces of cannon each, and the 4th, 5th, 38th, 43d and 64th British regiments; and it was stated that more were daily expected.

of the rights of humanity every where were aroused. The women also stood forward in this hour of their country's peril, and like their spartan sisterhood of old, encouraged, by their presence and council, the sterner sex to acts of resistance. Nor was this state of feeling confined wholly to this country. A lady in London thus expressed herself to her friends in Boston :*

"The unhappy affairs of Boston, now lay near my heart! From my soul I feel for Boston and for all America. I was in the Parliament House and heard the Port Bill brought in and read.

"A bill is this day passed to destroy your trade, and another is bringing in to subvert your whole constitution of government. Expect no mercy from them. For the love of your country and posterity, for the love of justice, and for God's sake, use all your powers to prevent your town's submission. Tell them to hold out only six months and all will be well. England will rise on the occasion.

"STOP ALL TRADE, BE SILENT, BE STRONG, BE RESOLUTE. Their plan was kept secret through fear that had it been known, the Parliament House would have been destroyed. Depend on my intelligence to be good. *Stand it out, or die! If you give up you are undone! Call your people together, alarm them—rouse them—call on them to humble themselves before God, by fasting and prayer, that the intended blow may be mercifully averted from America!*

"All letters are to be stopped—all Governors are to be changed—three hundred tax men are coming over—all officers are to be sent from England—Juries taken away—a large fleet to frighten you into compliance."

These were the sentiments in "thoughts that breath and words that burn," of noble, magnanimous, sympathising woman.

Such was the state of affairs and of public feeling when Gov. Gage, who had recently succeeded Gov. Hutchinson, convened the Provincial Assembly at Salem, which had now become the metropolis, on the 7th June, 1774. Their place of meeting was the Town House, then situated on the south eastern corner of Washington and Essex streets. It was a wooden building, two stories high, of no architectural pretensions, the chambers being occupied by the courts of justice, and the whole area of the lower story, which was supported by columns, was used as a town hall. It was usual for the inhabitants at that period to congregate at this place, for the purposes of gossip, to arrange any matter of business, or to discuss the more grave and impor-

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* Essex Gazette files, June 14, 1774.

tant political events of the day as occasion might arise. Within the walls of this plain and simple council house, consecrated to the cause of liberty by the eloquence of many a bold, zealous, and uncompromising patriot, scenes of the most thrilling interest had been frequently enacted during the last ten years. Every oppressive measure, devised by the British Parliament to humble and degrade the American colonies, had here been warmly and earnestly discussed. Its walls had often shaken with denunciations of the wicked policy pursued by the mother country. Here the "sons of liberty," as the patriots were called, smarting under the rod of the oppressor, "in clear bell-tones of deepest meaning," branded every timid and vacillating advocate and apologist of arbitrary power with the name of *tory*, a name full of reproach and infamy. For the glorious associations which would have hallowed this simple building, in which was taken the first step which ultimately led to the independence of America, would it had been preserved from the destroying elements, and the still more fatal hand of man.—Between the royal Governor and the body now assembled here, altercations were constantly occurring, and the session lasted only ten days. Loyalty had so far lost its influence, and power its terrors, that the House immediately proceeded in secret, by a self constituted committee, to consider the crisis in which it found the country, and to propose certain resolutions. Previously to disclosing these measures, the doors of the House were locked and a vote passed that no one should be allowed to enter or depart, until a final determination was had upon the important questions before them. Information, however, of these bold proceedings was secretely conveyed to Governor Gage by one of the members, who, under pretence of indisposition, obtained leave to withdraw. The Governor forthwith dispatched his Secretary, Thomas Flucker, to dissolve the court. When he arrived at the house he found the doors barred, and admittance refused him. He was consequently obliged to read the proclamation for their dissolution on the stairs outside the door. The assembly, however, did not heed it, but continued its session in defiance of the proclamation, until it had passed resolutions, declaring it expedient that the several colonies should choose committees to meet in a General Congress at Philadelphia, in September next, to deliberate upon the condition of the country,—appointed its own delegates for that purpose, and addressed letters, signed by the Speaker, to the other colonies, re-

questing their concurrence in this measure.* Troops, it is said, were ordered up from the fort to enforce obedience to the proclamation, who having marched most of the distance, again returned. On the 18th of the same month, the day after the House had been dissolved, a protest against the Boston Port Bill, signed by one hundred and twenty-five of the most influential merchants and traders of Salem, was presented to the Governor. This protest has ever been admired for its spirit and the generosity of its sentiments.†

In July, by order of Governor Gage, two companies of the 64th regiment came here by water from Boston. They landed and marched through the town to the Governor's head-quarters in Danvers, then the country residence of Robert Hooper, of Marblehead, an eminent merchant, familiarly known in those

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* We say this was the *first step which ultimately led to the independence of America.* By this we mean that our independence was the final result of the deliberation of such a meeting as is here for the *first time* definitely proposed—namely,—a General Congress. We are aware that in some of the colonies suggestions of independence had already been loosely and vaguely thrown out by certain individuals in the heat of debate, but the colonies *separately* could effect nothing towards it, and it was only by the concentrated action and united efforts of the whole together, that any thing like independence would ever have been attempted. The *avowed* object of the Congress here proposed, we know to have been "the restoration of union and harmony between Great Britain and the Colonies;" but if this had been the *real* motive in the minds of those who proposed this measure, why the observance of so much secrecy? Viewed in this light only, there was no taint of treason about it. "The fact is," to quote the language of Graham in his history of the United States, "all the ardent friends of America, all the partizans of Great Britain, and all, in short, except those whose penetration was obscured by divided hope and purpose, plainly perceived that the formation of a general deliberative council for America, at a crisis like the present, as it was an essential requisite, was also a bold and deliberative approximation to united revolt." Therefore, we repeat, that as our independence was the result of the action of a general Congress of all the Colonies thus assembled, it was here, in *Salem*, the first, the initiatory step, which led to that great event, was taken at this time. Out of 129 members present, only 12 voted against it. The names of 11 of those who opposed it were published at the time in the *Essex Gazette*. Next to the building where the Declaration of Independence was consummated, no spot more richly deserves a monument than that of the once humble "*Town House*" of Salem.

† For the names of the persons who signed this protest see Essex Gazette files, June 21st, 1774.

days as "King Hooper." The 59th regiment,* under Colonel Hamilton, also arrived here in August, from Halifax, and encamped upon Winter Island, near the fort. It was the object of Gage, by this manœuvre, to suppress by force of arms any further attempts for liberty on the part of the inhabitants. In August a fruitless effort was made by the Governor to prevent a town meeting in Salem, called to choose delegates to meet in Convention at Ipswich, "to consider and determine on such measures as the late acts of Parliament, and our other grievances render necessary and expedient." A proclamation was issued, and troops ordered to be in readiness, who were prepared as if for battle, and eighty of them marched to within one-eighth of a mile of the Town House, but to no purpose. The people of Salem could not be prevented exercising their just rights either by threats or the exhibition of force. In fact, all the powers of government were apparently annihilated. There was not a judge, justice of the peace, or sheriff, who would venture to withstand the inflamed and determined people; and British bayonets had also lost both their terrors and their influence. In March, 1775, the celebrated Edmund Burke remarked, in the House of Commons, "a vast province has now subsisted,

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* This regiment was afterwards in the battle of Bunker Hill, and suffered severely in common with other British troops. Of the subsequent history of Colonel Hamilton, we have the following from Lockhart's Life of Sir Walter Scott, which, although there may be none now among us who remember the Colonel, may still possess some historical interest:

"Robert Hamilton, Sheriff of Lanarkshire, and afterwards one of the Clerks of Session, was a particular favorite with Scott—first, among many other good reasons, because he had been a soldier in his youth, had fought gallantly, and had been wounded severely in the American war, and was a very Uncle Toby in military enthusiasm; secondly, because he was a brother antiquary of the genuine Monkbarns breed: thirdly, (and last, not least,) because he was, in spite of the example of the head of his name and race, a steady tory. Mr. Hamilton sent for Scott when upon his death-bed in 1831, and desired him to choose and carry off as a parting memorial, any article he liked in his collection of arms. Sir Walter (by this time sorely shattered in his own health,) *selected the sword with which his good friend had been begirt at Bunker Hill!*"

Of Colonel Hamilton's imperturbable good nature, Sir Walter relates the following:—

"A laugh with Hamilton, whose gout keeps him stationary at Lerwick, but whose good humor defies gout and every other provocation, concludes the evening."

and subsisted in a considerable degree of health and vigor, for near a twelve month, without governor, without public council, without judges, without executive magistrates."

The Ipswich Convention passed, among others, the following resolve :—

"Though above all things (slavery excepted,) we deprecate the evils of a civil war, yet, if the violence and despotism of our enemies should finally reduce us to the sad necessity, we, undaunted, are ready to appeal to the last resort of States, and will, in support of our rights, encounter even death, sensible that he can never die too soon who lays down his life in support of the laws and liberties of his county."

The Salem representatives were now empowered, with other members of the House, to resolve themselves into a Provincial Congress, which was recommended by the Ipswich Convention. On the 1st of September, Governor Gage ordered another meeting of the Legislature in Salem, to take place on the fifth of October; and the several towns throughout the Province elected their representatives accordingly; but on the 28th he adjourned it indefinitely, convinced, no doubt, of the determination of the people to resist at any hazard the late aggressive acts of Parliament. Notwithstanding this interdiction, the Legislature *did* convene at the appointed time in Salem, "there to be qualified, according to charter, for taking seats and acting as representatives in said Great and General Court; but were not met by the Governor or other constitutional officers, by him appointed for administering the usual oaths and qualifying them thereto." Whereupon, having waited one day, they chose John Hancock chairman, and Benjamin Lincoln clerk, and passed resolutions declaring the course of the Governor in adjourning the House before it had first "met and convened," to be unconstitutional, and "against the express words, as well as the true sense and meaning, of the charter." They then resolved themselves into a Congress, and adjourned to meet at Concord on the 11th of October following.

Governor Gage had already removed his head-quarters to Boston, having left Danvers on the 27th August, and was followed by the 59th regiment from this town, and the two companies of the 64th from his late head-quarters, on the 10th September. The former were stationed on Boston Neck, at the entrance of the town, where they threw up entrenchments, and where the most hostile preparations were carried on.

The deputies from most of the colonies met at the appointed time in Philadelphia. They approbated the stand taken by

Massachusetts; addressed a letter to Governor Gage; published a declaration of rights; formed an association not to import or use goods of British manufacture; sent a petition to the king; an address to the inhabitants of Great Britain; another to the inhabitants of Canada; and another to the inhabitants of the Colonies.

The exportation of all military stores to America had been strictly forbidden by order of the King in Council; and every vessel, of what nation soever, was liable to be seized if employed in carrying thither arms and amunition. The country was sadly deficient in all the munitions of war, and the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, now considered the executive of the Province, was therefore collecting them through their agents from every quarter where they could be obtained. This, however, was done as quietly and secretly as possible. A quantity of powder in the arsenal at Charlestown had recently been seized by Governor Gage, in pursuance of a late order of the King. This produced great excitement throughout the Colony. About the middle of December, 1774, a report also reached Salem that a regiment of troops had embarked the preceding Sabbath in Boston, said to be destined for this place for the purpose of "arresting, detaining and securing gunpowder." This, however, was a false alarm.

The people were also industriously collecting arms for themselves, wherever and from whomsoever they could obtain them. Every patriot held, with Macbriar, that "well is he who shall barter his house for a helmet, and sell his garment for a sword;" and several shameful outrages were committed by the British in Boston upon persons charged with *the crime* of attempting to purchase a musket.

The year 1775 was ushered in without any improvement in the condition of the oppressed and down-trodden colonists. Dark and portentous clouds hung thickly about their political horizon, indicating that a fearful storm was not far distant. The petition of the Philadelphia Congress to the King had proved an entire failure. It was treated with silent neglect. The repeal of a few acts of Parliament would then have satisfied America, and her independence would have been a plant of later growth. The idea of dissolving the tie which united them with the mother country appears scarcely to have been entertained at that time. The Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, seven days after the battle of Lexington, uses the following language.— "But they [the ministers,] have not yet detached us from our Royal Sovereign. We profess to be his loyal and dutiful

subjects, and so hardly dealt with as we have been, are still ready with our lives and fortunes, to defend his person, family, crown and dignity." England, however, manifested no disposition to relax her iron sway over her comparatively weak and feeble dependencies; but appeared determined to try the issue by an appeal to arms. Troops were distributed throughout the country to overawe and intimidate the inhabitants; and be ready to quell any demonstrations of resistance. The colonists on their part had scarcely any thing to oppose to a powerful nation whose strength and resources appeared unlimited, except a righteous cause, and fixed determination, never ignominiously to submit to her despotic control. The most sanguine, however, could not have promised themselves a successful result, from an open rupture and actual collision with the mother country. England too, in the plenitude of her power, could not believe that the colonists would actually buckle on the panoply of war against her. It was unfortunate that all the colonial governors sympathized with the mother country, in her attempt to extort a revenue out of the provinces. This was the root of all the evil then entailed upon them.* Governor Hutchinson stated that the colonists would not by force of arms resist the authority and powers of Great Britain; "that a *few* troops would be sufficient to quell them if they did make opposition." Governor Carlton represented "that America might easily be conquered, but they would want a considerable army for this purpose; that he would not pretend to march to New York or Boston without 10,000 men." Governor Tryan said, "It would take large armies and much time to bring America to their feet." "The power of Great Britain," said he, "is equal to anything; but all that power must be exerted before they put the monster in chains." The colonists were not however discouraged by these representations; they trusted their cause to the God of battles, not to human strength—they believed heaven itself would fight for them as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera—resistance to tyranny, being in their view, obedience to God.

SALEM, at the commencement of the Revolutionary war, contained a population of some 5000 souls. Her commerce, always the principal source of wealth, was then chiefly confined to Spain, Portugal, and the West Indies. The cod fishery, to

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* Edmund Burke, in the House of Commons, March 9th, 1774, advised a thorough *change of American Governors*, remarking, "*that the folly of the present had brought on the mischiefs of which we now complain.*"

a considerable extent, was also carried on successfully from the town at that period, and some fifty sail of vessels, principally schooners, were employed in that business. The fish were cured upon the southern banks of the North River, and the flakes extended from the neighborhood of the North Bridge, to the present location of Conant street. Here was often presented a busy, active, enlivening scene. But the vengeance of the British ministry was about to visit even this humble branch of industry, with its blighting effects. A bill prohibiting the New England Provinces from fishing for a certain time, upon the banks of Newfoundland, was passed during the month of March, 1775. This measure was calculated to bear particularly hard upon the interests of Salem, whose commerce was almost wholly sustained by the fishery. Her inhabitants generally were a frugal, industrious, enterprising people, remarkable for their sagacity and intelligence, with a keen sense of their just rights, and an indomitable love of liberty; ready to peril life, property, and all they held dear in her cause. Strange as it may appear, at this day, there was also found here a small sprinkling of the friends of arbitrary power,* some of whom, from constitutional timidity, perhaps, dreaded a contest with Great Britain, and the fearful consequences which would overwhelm the country in case of defeat.

Foremost among the friends of liberty, and the resolute and daring enemies of oppression and arbitrary power, stood Captain JOHN FELT, who, without any disparagement to others, appears entitled to the distinction of the HERO of the British repulse at the North Field Bridge. He was at this time about fifty years of age. His frame, square, strong and muscular, denoted him a man, whom it would be the part of prudence to avoid in single combat. Salem possessed many men whose social position in life was perhaps superior;—men of wealth—of more erudition—of more influence in her public councils;—but none of greater moral worth, or irreproachable private character. He belonged to that class thus elegantly apostrophized by the poet:—

> "Heart of the people—WORKING MEN!
> Marrow and nerve of human powers;
> Who on your sturdy backs sustain,
> Through streaming time this WORLD OF OURS."

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* We forbear to specify them; their names can mostly be found prefixed to an address to Governor Gage on his arrival in Salem, in June, 1774. See Essex Gazette files, June 14th, 1774.

His love of independence, and hatred of tyranny. had shone through his whole life, and with these qualities was blended the most intrepid resolution. There lived no one in whose heart glowed a warmer love for the liberties of his country—and none more ready to peril. and if need be, to sacrifice his life in support of her cause. In a word, he was just the man for an emergency; of cool, determined bravery.—calm and collected in the hour of danger. These qualities inspired every one with confidence in his ability successfully to control, and direct any daring enterprise, or forlorn hope, which his inclination prompted him to lead.

Among other prominent friends of liberty—men of standing, weight of character, and influence. was Colonel David Mason, universally esteemed and respected by his fellow townsmen. He was a native of Boston, but for the last nine years had been a resident of Salem. He was a self made man; one of nature's nobility; courtly and refined in manners and address. In early life he manifested great fondness for learning, and a public education was contemplated for him. But the death of his father when he was but fourteen years of age, defeated this purpose. The inquiring mind of young Mason, and his thirst for knowledge, could not however be checked by this disappointment. Although apprenticed to a mechanical trade, he made himself proficient in the science of military tactics and gunnery, for which he had great taste, and in due time received an appointment and served as lieutenant of British Artillery in the French war in Canada in 1756. He commanded a battery of brass cannon at Fort Wm. Henry, in 1757, when it was taken by the French, and fired the last ball in that fort. In 1763, he organized and commanded an artillery company in Boston, which it is believed is still in commission. Previously to entering the army he had also studied the then newly discovered science of electricity, Dr. Franklin having been a particular friend in his father's family. He had lectured upon that subject in Boston, Salem, and elsewhere, and made some valuable discoveries, which he was prevailed upon to journey to Philadelphia, to communicate to Dr. Franklin. He had shown himself on all occasions, when the expression of public and private opinion was called for, a consistent and high minded patriot. His active mind was constantly employed either in promoting directly the cause of his country, or in subverting the iniquitous schemes and stratagems of its oppressors. He was appointed by his townsmen one of a committee to prevent tea

from being brought into Salem, and was instrumental in discovering and destroying it on one or more occasions.

Salem also possessed at this time, many other prominent sons of liberty, who were distinguished for their high minded patriotism, their influence, and the esteem of their fellow citizens. Among them, I need only mention Timothy Pickering, jr., then recently chosen colonel of the first Essex regiment. He was ever active in stimulating and encouraging his townsmen to resist all the attempts of Great Britain to grind their liberties beneath the iron heel of despotism. Through the various public offices afterward filled by Mr. Pickering, the whole country has been made familiar with the uncompromising integrity of his character.

In November, 1774, Colonel Mason received an appointment of Engineer from the "Massachusetts Committee of Safety," which his memoir states to have been the first military appointment in the Revolutionary War. He was from this time, actively engaged in collecting military stores for the use of the country, and making secret preparation for the approaching contest, which now appeared inevitable. His memoir further relates, that in prosecution of this design he purchased a number of cannon (believed to be seventeen,*) from Mr. Derby, of Salem, which he committed to the care of Captain Robert Foster, a blacksmith, to affix the iron work to the carriages, and have them otherwise properly prepared for the service of resisting British aggression, if occasion should require. They were twelve-pounders, and had originally belonged to the French, in Nova Scotia, from whence they were brought after the war there, and were captured, as it was understood, from the enemy. The work shop of Captain Foster was on the north side of the North River, over which was a draw-bridge, and the cannon were secreted in and about the premises as securely as circumstances would permit. Five thousand flannel cartridges were also prepared for these cannon by the wife and daughters of Colonel Mason.

About the last of February, 1775, a number of these carriages were completed† and the guns mounted. Intelligence of this

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* Mr. Samuel Gray states the number to have been twelve.

† A portion of these carriages were made at the New Mills, in Danvers.

fact, and what was further going on under the direction of Colonel Mason, was communicated, according to the Memoir, to the head-quarters of British power in Boston, by the treachery of an "old countryman," employed by Colonel Mason.* It would appear that suspicion rested upon several other individuals, some of whom came out in the public newspapers with a denial of the charge. Upon this information, General Gage ordered the 64th regiment, consisting of some three hundred men, which was stationed at the Castle, in Boston Harbor, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Leslie, an estimable officer, to embark forthwith on board a transport, land at Marblehead, and from thence march to Salem and take possession of the rebel cannon in the name of His Majesty. The better to effect his purpose, the Sabbath, so often desecrated by military movements, was selected for this expedition. The time thus chosen, aside from other considerations, did not well accord with a proclamation recently issued, by this same Governor, for the encouragement of piety and virtue. The regiment embarked on board the transport two hours after sunset on Saturday evening, to avoid discovery, but it was designed not to reach Salem until the next day. At the appointed time, therefore, being the 26th of February, 1775, during divine service in the afternoon, while the inhabitants were unsuspectingly resting in the apparent security of the day, their ears were startled with the cry of

"The foe! they come! they come!"

which now suddenly reverberated through the otherwise quiet streets of Salem. Intelligence was received from the citizens of Marblehead, that a body of British troops had just landed there, and was marching in the direction of Salem. "A transport," says an account published at the time, "had arrived at Marblehead, manned as usual. Between two and three o'clock,

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* We are inclined to doubt if the intelligence was communicated in this way. If, as the Memoir states, the "old countryman," left Salem on this errand on Saturday afternoon, (no doubt on foot,) he could not have reached Boston to inform Governor Gage the same night, in season for him to send orders to the Castle, and have the regiment despatched "*two hours after sun-set*," as appears to have been the case. Our own opinion is, either Sargent, or the "*young tory lawyer*," whose name was Samuel Porter, had previously given the information. This Porter, came originally from Ipswich, in November, 1773, and had an office "just south of the Town House."

(as soon as the people had gone to meeting,) the decks were covered with soldiers, who had been secreted under the hatches. Having loaded their muskets and fixed their bayonets, they landed in great dispatch, and instantly marched off. Some of the inhabitants, suspecting they were bound for Salem, dispatched several messengers to inform us of it." Colonel Leslie took the precaution to land his men at Homan's Cove, upon Marblehead Neck, the most retired spot he could well find, in the hope that this circumstance, taken in connection with the fact of its being the hour of public worship, would shield him from discovery, and prevent an alarm. In this, however, he was mistaken. No sooner had the troops began to land, than the alarm was sounded in the town by a drummer, who ran to the door of the church and beat the alarm signal, previously agreed upon, at the appearance of any danger. Since the intention of Governor Gage to disarm the colonists had become generally known, they had been constantly on the alert, knowing that the subversion of this scheme depended upon their being vigilant, and closely watching the military in all their movements. The troops were soon observed coming out of Neck-Lane in single file, form upon Bubier's plain, and march in double quick time in the direction of Salem, their music playing "Yankee Doodle" by way of derision. Nothing could have been more injudicious than this selection of a landing place; it showed an entire ignorance or misconception of the temper and spirit of the inhabitants of the whole Bay, and particularly of Marblehead. More ardent lovers of liberty, more devoted friends to the interests of their country, or more bitter enemies to the arbitrary power exercised by Great Britain over her colonies, could no where be found throughout the length and breadth of the whole land. It would have been impossible to select any class of men with souls more completely devoted to the welfare of their country. The hardy sons of the ocean, who formed a majority of the inhabitants, had acquired from the nature of their employment, that which is almost inseparable from the usual character of seamen,—great self reliance and indomitable independence. Marblehead had stood shoulder to shoulder with Salem and Boston, against all the oppressive measures recently imposed by the mother country. Meetings of the inhabitants had been repeatedly held to express their abhorrence of the course now pursued by their common enemies. She was among the first to join the "GRAND UNION FOR THE SALVATION OF AMERICAN LIBERTY," in May of the preceding year. In a letter of

instructions to her representative, in June, 1774, after recapitulating the late oppressive measures of the British Parliament, she says, "Americans thus situated, with no other interests but what can be granted by the Commons of Great Britain, are in a state but little above that of abject slaves on farms and plantations. Surely, no men on earth *can* think these measures right; and heaven itself, the Grand Court to whose decrees earthly ones must be subservient, will (we confidently hope) forbid the execution of them. Do the minions of power tell us, not to submit to these measures is death? We coolly answer, that in our opinions, *to* submit is infinitely worse than death." To Marblehead belongs the honor of being the birth place of one of the signers of the Declaration of American Independence. It was wholly fallacious for a moment to suppose, that an expedition landing at a place so imbued with the spirit of liberty, could be permitted to surprise the inhabitants of Salem, or that the news of their approach by such a route would not precede them. Their chance of success would have been far better, had they proceeded by water directly into the harbor of Salem.

Colonel Mason,* who resided in a house near the North Bridge, and contiguous to Dr. Barnard's church, was one of the first persons to whom the tidings of the approach of the British troops were communicated. For the purpose of alarming a portion of the inhabitants, he ran into the North Church and cried out at the top of his voice, "the reg'lars are coming and are now near Malloon's Mills!" The congregation immediately dispersed, and the greatest excitement prevailed throughout the town; the intelligence of the approach of the British troops having

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* Perhaps the accounts of individuals who claim for any member of their families the almost exclusive management of this whole affair, should be received with considerable allowance. Beside the manuscript memoir of Colonel Mason, we have seen another, the author of which claims for a certain gentleman of Marblehead, of somewhat doubtful patriotism at the time, the whole credit of apprizing the people of Salem of the approach of the British troops, and for the successful termination of this encounter. Some recent publications also claim the principal credit for Danvers. The author of the "History of Danvers," *very modestly* says: "The people of Danvers, *joined* by those of Salem, opposed and beat back the foe:" thus representing Salem as acting a subordinate part to Danvers in this affair. In another account we hear "*what the people of Danvers said to Colonel Leslie.*" The fact is, *all* behaved nobly on the occasion, and vied with each other who should be foremost.

spread with electric rapidity. All was now hurry and confusion. Every one gazed, with an anxious eye, into the face of his neighbor as if to read his thoughts. Bells were rung and drums were beat to spread the alarm as far and wide as possible. Col. Mason mounted his horse and rode with all speed to the place of deposit to secure his treasure,—he, and the inhabitants generally, suspecting the design of this visit to be the seizure of the cannon in North Salem. A desire to do everything that could be done, and that instantly, to defeat this purpose, infused itself into the soul of every lover of his country; and the inhabitants impetuously rushed towards what they believed would be the important place of action. To remove as many of the guns as the time would permit beyond the reach of the troops, and to a place of safety, appeared the universal determination of the people. Mr. David Boyce, who lived in a house adjoining the North Church, is remembered to have been seen hurrying away with his team, and all the truckmen of the town were upon the spot without delay.

Some of the guns were conveyed to the neighborhood of Buffum's Hill, so called at that time, which is situated westward of the main road leading to Danvers, near the present residence of General Devereaux, where there was a thick wood, and the dried leaves (there being no snow) covered the ground to a considerable depth. Beneath these leaves a portion of the guns were buried, and the carriages otherwise disposed of. Other portions were removed at the time, or a few hours after, to New Mills, in Danvers, assisted by teams from that place, and buried in a gravel pit on the left of the road; while again, others were sent in the direction of "Cole's Spring," or "Orne Point," in North Salem.* A gentleman who assisted to remove them to Danvers, used to relate, that while sitting at his (*we cannot say tea*) table, he saw a man with head uncovered,† although the day was severely cold, running with all speed towards his house. He immediately rose and met him at the door;—found him to be one of his acquaintances, living upwards of a mile distant, who immediately exclaimed on seeing him, as well as his want of breath would permit, "the reg'lars are in Salem

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* The late Judge Holton, of Danvers, used to state that some of these guns were carried to Burley's Wood, formerly "Lindall's," beyond Danvers Plains, and there secreted.

† The late Mr. Aaron Cheever, who was subsequently in the battle of Lexington.

after the guns, tackle up your team with all speed, and help carry them beyond their reach."

The vanguard of the troops had now arrived at the bridge, at the southern entrance of the town, where their further progress was somewhat impeded, a portion of the plank of the bridge having been removed. This however they soon repaired, and having marched over, took the direction of Long Wharf, marching through what is now Front, Fish and Water streets, with a view the better to conceal their real design, while the main body which arrived soon afterwards, marched directly to the Court House, with loaded muskets, fixed bayonets, colors flying, and drums beating, with all the insolent bearing of a victorious army entering a conquered city. Here they halted for a short time. Mason who had been superintending the arrangements for the removal of the cannon, now rode into town to watch the movements of the troops. Here he found Colonel Leslie in conversation with a "young tory lawyer." These two were soon joined by Colonel Sargent,* the half brother of Colonel William Browne,† a mandamus counsellor,

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* John Sargent was a merchant of Salem. His name is at the head of those who addressed Governor Gage on his arrival in Salem, in June, 1774; in which address they acknowledge they "are deeply sensible of His Majesty's paternal care and *affection* to this Province in the appointment of a person of His Excellency's experience, wisdom, and *moderation* in these troublesome and difficult times." This was pronounced a most contemptible "tory production," which disgraced the public prints. Sargent was a notorious tory, and was proscribed in the banishment act of 1778. Went to England.

† Colonel Browne was one of the most prominent inhabitants of Salem, and previous to the troubles which led to the Revolution, enjoyed great popularity; but by espousing the cause of the mother country he forfeited all claim to the favorable consideration of the people. He was one of the "infamous seventeen" rescinders in 1768,—signed the address to Governor Hutchinson in 1774,—accepted office under Governor Gage. Upon the breaking out of the Revolution, he became a refugee, and was included in the act of banishment of 1778, and the conspiracy act of 1779. His landed estates which were numerous and valuable, were all confiscated to the use of the government; and in 1779 his homestead, in Salem, was sold to the late Elias Hasket Derby, senior, where, in 1799 he erected his princely mansion at an expense of eighty thousand dollars, which was taken down in 1815, and near its site now stands our City Market House. Colonel Browne, after leaving the country, was appointed Governor of Bermuda, and died in England in 1802, aged sixty-five. He was a graduate of Harvard College, of the class of 1755.

and who had formerly commanded the Essex regiment, but had recently been compelled to resign in consequence of his officers refusing to serve under him while he held a seat at the council board.* Sargent had been observed by some of the inhabitants, on the top of his house, near the First Church, and in the vicinity of the Court House, waving a white handkerchief as the troops approached. Colonel Leslie having received from them, as was believed, the necessary information as to the locality of the guns, the troops resumed their march in the direction of the North Bridge, obviously anticipating no resistance to the successful fulfilment of the enterprise, their bristling bayonets and martial bearing apparently defying all opposition from peaceful and unarmed citizens. There was now no longer any doubt in the minds of the people as to the real object of this visit, if the "lanterns, hatchets, pickaxes, spades, handspikes and coils of rope," with which the regiment were equipped, had not already told the tale. Mason, in all haste, immediately returned to his post on the north side of the bridge to concert further measures to defeat their design. Captain John Felt, in sullen silence, followed close upon the footsteps of Leslie from the moment he left the Court House. The troops, accompanied by a large concourse of the inhabitants, marched through Lynde to North street, and as soon as they came in sight from the Bridge, the northern leaf of the draw was raised to stop their progress beyond this point. The determination of the people to resist with firmness and resolution, at the utmost hazard, all attempts of the troops to capture the cannon, was thus made manifest. Among the multitude who accompanied them to the Bridge was the late amiable and highly respected pastor of the North Church, the Reverend Thomas Barnard,† to whom the following lines of the poet

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* See Essex Gazette files, October 25th, and November 1st, 1774.

† The most obnoxious act committed by any of our citizens, was singing an approbatory address to Governor Hutchinson on his departure from this country, where his tory principles had made it inconvenient for him any longer to reside. It was taken for granted that those who participated in it approved of the recent acts of Parliament so universally and justly odious to all America. Among the number who signed it, inconsiderately, perhaps, was the Reverend Mr. Barnard. In May, 1775, he, with eleven others, of the inhabitants came out with a public recantation of the act, and expressed much contrition therefor. Mr. Barnard says, "I would request my countrymen to throw the veil of charity and forgiveness over the incautious act which has led them to think

Cowper were peculiarly applicable:

> "There stands the messenger of truth: there stands
> The legate of the skies! whose heart is warm,
> Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life
> Coincident, exhibit lucid proofs,
> That he is honest in a sacred cause."

Mr. Barnard was accompanied by his intimate friend and parishioner, Mr. Jonathan Gavett. They had left the yard of Mr. Gavett's house together as the troops marched up North street. His companion being of rather a social nature, had been quite intimate with many of the soldiers in Colonel Hamilton's regiment, which the summer before was stationed at Fort William, on Winter Island, and he was now curious to ascertain if he could recognize any of his old acquaintances among the present troops. This desire led him to scan their faces with such nice scrutiny as to give offence. and he was treated as a prying, inquisitive fellow, and jostled and assailed with language anything but complimentary. The people who had preceded the troops had mostly collected on the north side of the river, and now calmly awaited their approach, ready to brave a danger which their daring spirits led them to undervalue. The compressed lip, the fixed determined look, the sober thoughtful demeanor of the inhabitants indicated their suppressed indignation, and presaged some fearful tragedy. But not a lip was blanched—not a nerve was paralyzed;—all felt that the hour for action had indeed come—that something serious was about to be enacted, and that firmness could alone secure success. Prompted by the genius of liberty, and smarting under the tyranny of their oppressors, they were about to peril their lives in a contest with well disciplined and veteran soldiers, convinced that not one drop of blood spilled in such a cause would be lost, but would invigorate the soil and stimulate the growth of freedom throughout the land, "till the tiny seed became the giant oak." The only arms seen in the hands of any one was a brace of pistols peeping out from under the cloak of

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unfavorably of me, and grant me a place in their esteem." These recantations were considered of so grave a nature, as to be submitted to the "Committee of Safety," to obtain from them a certificate that the same was satisfactory, and that they recommended such persons to the favor of the people. These incidents, "*show the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.*"

a person, to my informant unknown.* Onward the troops pursued their march, apparently ready and able to bear down all opposition, their commander not appearing to discern the barricade thus raised against him by the people, until within a few rods of the open chasm before him. Had a huge boa-constrictor, like the serpent that stopped the army of Atilius Regulus, suddenly elevated its head, and extended its capacious jaws to receive him, he could not have appeared more surprised than at this unexpected obstruction. As soon as he had recovered his self possession, he demanded in a voice which was accustomed to be obeyed, that the leaf should be immediately let down. But this command was given to the winds,—the assembled multitude utterly disregarded it, and the very draw itself, as if participating in the feelings of the inhabitants, and conscious of the part it was expected to perform, frowned defiance.

The regiment was now brought into line on the west side of the bridge, facing to the eastward. Colonel Sargent, the tory informer, had also followed the troops to the bridge with the other inhabitants, and when he saw the leaf raised, exclaimed, "it is all over with them." "What is all over with them," said his companion. He then whispered, "they were going after the guns." This man thought it best to absent himself ever after from Salem.

The people on the north side of the bridge had climbed upon the top of the upraised leaf by the help of the chains, and there set astride, in the language of my informant, "like so many hens at roost." The indignation of the Colonel at having his design thus suddenly and unexpectedly baffled, was excited almost to frenzy, and he gave utterance to his feelings, to say

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* Mr. Samuel Holman states that "his father's apprentice took his gun and equipments under his cloak, saying he would lodge them in some private place where he could put his hand on them in case of need." Some recent accounts state, that Colonel Pickering, with a force of forty armed men, was on the north side of the bridge, where also large numbers were rallying around him. This statement is however said to be a mistake by persons now living. In fact, Colonel Pickering must have been gifted with the power of omnipresence on that day, to reconcile the conflicting accounts respecting the part taken by him in this affair. Beside the statement here referred to, there is another, that he was, the while, mustering his regiment in School street—and yet another, that he was on the south side of the bridge, with Felt, Barnard and others, and that "he scuttled with his own hands one of the gondolas."

the least, in no mild or becoming language: one account says, "he stamped and swore, ordering the bridge to be immediately lowered." Being questioned as to his design in making this movement, and why he wished to cross the bridge, he replied that he had orders to cross it, and he would do so if it cost his life, and the lives of his men. Here was however a dilemma from which this bravado could not relieve him. To advance under the present circumstances without the consent of the inhabitants, was impossible, and to retreat, disgrace. In the bitterness of his feelings he then went upon West's (now Brown's) wharf, to reconnoitre,—closely followed by Captain Felt, who was observing every motion and order with the keen, unremmitting watchfulness of the tiger,—and turning to an officer near him, said, "you must face about this division, (or company,) and fire upon those people." These were the inhabitants on the northern side of the river, who had collected upon a small wharf which jutted out from the eastern side of the bridge, conspicuous among whom was Captain Robert Foster, recently an officer in the Essex regiment, and the owner of the premises upon which the cannon had been deposited. This order to fire having been overheard by Captain Felt, who stood within two yards of Colonel Leslie, "he cried out with a loud voice, for his resentment was kindled by the order to fire: fire! you had better be d——d than fire! you have no right to fire without further orders! if you do fire, (said he) you will all be dead men!" Mr. William Northey, a respectable citizen of the quaker persuasion, now endeavored to check the impetuosity and rashness of Captain Felt, by saying, "do you know the danger you are in, surrounded by armed troops, and an officer with a drawn sword in his hand?" But such prudent caution found no favor in his highly excited mind, and was therefore unheeded. He had hurled defiance in the very teeth of the instruments of British power and aggression, and he was not a man to be induced by any considerations of personal peril to retreat from the stand he had taken. This language, sustained by the dauntless bearing of its author, acted like magic upon the minds of the people in this the hour of their danger. So sudden had been the appearance of the troops in town, that no concerted plan of operations, and no organized opposition had been formed. The inhabitants had hastily collected together, bent only upon opposing the troops, but without any acknowledged head to direct them.

At the moment these words were uttered by Captain Felt, a

thrill of confidence was felt through the whole multitude. The people saw at once that he was just the man for the present emergency, and with unanimous, though tacit consent, looked to him as their leader in any movement which should be made for the further defence of the bridge. He was the spirit on whom the crowd now depended. How far such language induced Colonel Leslie to use a praiseworthy forbearance cannot be determined; but had the command to fire been enforced, probably not a man of that whole regiment would have escaped death, and the first *bloody battle* of the Revolution would have been fought at the North Bridge, on the 26th of February, instead of the 19th of April, at Lexington. The English account published at the time, stated that the Colonel "was not prevented from giving any orders he should have thought necessary by the threat of the townsman." However this may be, the order was not repeated, and "the company neither faced nor fired."

A desire not to irritate the troops generally prevailed, nevertheless it was impossible to control the exasperated feelings and reckless daring of some of the citizens, who raised their voices amid the din of bayonets to anathematize their oppressors, and several acts of determined bravery and defiance were exhibited by them on the occasion. A citizen, named ———, who was upon the leaf of the draw, cried out in a stentorian voice, "*Soldiers, red jackets, lobster coats, cowards, da—na—n to your government!*" A threat being made to those on the leaf if they did not desist in their jeers and opprobrious language they should be fired upon, one of them called out, "fire, and be d——d!"* It was an extremely cold day, and the soldiers by a quick march from Marblehead became quite heated, and in the exposed situation where they now stood, the perspiration was so suddenly checked, that they trembled violently with the cold, when a man named Teague, who was also one of the daring spirits on the leaf, jeered them by saying, "I should think you were all fiddlers, you shake so."

It was at this time low water, and three gondolas lay aground on the west side of the bridge. Apprehensive they might be used by Colonel Leslie for the purpose of transporting his forces to the other side, as soon as they were afloat, Captain Felt to whom one of them belonged, recommended they should be scut-

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* The late Captain Joshua Ward.

tled, or rendered useless for that purpose, by cutting holes through them. This suggestion was enough, and the work of destruction was immediately commenced with axes and what other implements were found ready at hand. Conspicuous among the daring spirits who undertook this task, were observed Jonathan Felt, a shipmaster, familiarly known as Hunter Felt, and who afterwards commanded an American Privateer, Frank Benson, and Joseph Whicher, the foreman in Major Sprague's Distillery, which was situated in the immediate vicinity of the bridge. Colonel Leslie was not an unconcerned spectator of this movement, which he knew, if carried into effect, would deprive him of his last chance of forcing a passage to the other side of the river. He therefore ordered his soldiers into the gondolas to prevent the inhabitants from executing their design; but they pursued their work, totally regardless of British bayonets, until it was completed. A scuffle however was the consequence, in which both Benson and Whicher were observed to open their breasts to the soldiers and dare them to use their bayonets. Whicher was sufficiently pricked to draw blood, of which wound he was somewhat vain and proud of exhibiting in after life.

Col. Leslie had now become thoroughly convinced of the determination of the inhabitants to resist, at any hazard, a forcible passage over the bridge, and he retired at this stage of the affair to the centre of his regiment and summoned his officers about him, for the purpose of consultation. It was in vain he had attempted to intimidate the people into compliance with his request—on the contrary, they were every moment becoming bolder and more encouraged, while the patience of the troops were fast giving way, and matters appeared verging towards a serious conflict. The council of war being ended, the commander, still unwilling to abandon the enterprise as hopeless, advanced once more and said to the by-standers, "I am determined to pass over this bridge before I return to Boston, if I remain here until next autumn;" and further declared he would make barracks for his troops of the two stores on West's, now Brown's wharf, belonging to Wm. West and Eben Bickford, until he could effect a passage. Capt. Felt, to whom this remark was more particularly addressed, answered that "nobody would care for that,"—upon which the Colonel, nettled no doubt by this expression of contempt, replied, "By God I will not be defeated;" to which Felt coolly answered, "you must acknowledge that you have been already baffled."

And now, amid all the uproar, confusion and excitement, which by this time had reached a fearful height,—the angry menaces of the troops on the one side and the language of defiance on the other,—was heard the firm, but mild and gentle voice of the Rev. Mr. Barnard, endeavoring to quiet the billows of commotion, thus awakened into their fiercest activity, by expostulating with Col. Leslie not to fire "upon these innocent people," and "that his troops might be restrained from pushing their bayonets." On being thus addressed, Col. Leslie turned short round and inquired "who are you, sir?" Mr. Barnard replied, "I am Thomas Barnard, a minister of the Gospel and my mission is peace." The Colonel then complained that his soldiers were much insulted, and expressed his determination to cross the bridge, saying he was upon the King's highway and would not be prevented from passing freely over it. Old Mr. James Barr replied "it is *not* the King's highway,—it is a road built by the owners of the lots on the other side, and no king, country or town has any control over it." The Colonel remarked "there may be two sides to that," and Mr. Barr rejoined "Egad I think it will be the best way for you to conclude the King has nothing to do with it."

Upward of an hour and a half had now been consumed in the fruitless attempt to pass the bridge, and the day was fast drawing to a close, without any indication that the sun would be commanded 'to stand still in the midst of heaven and hasten not to go down,' as was done in Gibeon, 'until they had avenged themselves of their enemies.' Threats and bravado were therefore laid aside as useless, Col. Leslie being at length convinced that it would be the safest and most politic course for him to make some overtures towards a compromise, and endeavor to effect by diplomacy, what it was in vain any longer to think could be extorted by force. With this in view he addressed Capt. Felt, and inquired if he had any authority to cause the leaf of the draw to be let down, and was answered "there was no *authority* in the case, but there might be some *influence*." A conference between the besiegers and besieged was the consequence of this suggestion, in which Felt, Barnard, Mason and Pickering more particularly participated. Mason being upon the northern side of the bridge was mounted during the time upon a ladder at the top of the leaf, where he could address Col. Leslie, with whom he was personally acquainted. This conference resulted in Col. Leslie's pledging his word and honor, if the inhabitants would remove the obstruction, he would

march in a peaceable manner not above fifty rods beyond the bridge, and then return, without molesting any person or property. That his orders were to pass the bridge, and he could not disobey them. Intercession was now made with the people by Mason and others, that they should accept these terms, the word and honor of Col. Leslie, which were unimpeachable, being considered sufficient guaranty for their fulfilment. Felt, however, was not yet ready to yield to any conditions, and when the inhabitants on the north side were requested by the Rev. Mr. Barnard to lower the leaf, they replied, "We dont know you in the business;—when Felt orders it, it will be time enough." There was now however, scarcely any danger in allowing the troops a passage free from any pledge, as "the geese were flown;"—the guns having been all secured and placed beyond their reach. The preliminaries however, being at length settled, the consent of Felt obtained, and the distance which the regiment was to march beyond the bridge accurately ascertained, the leaf was lowered, and the troops quietly passed over; marched the stipulated distance, then wheeled and set out with all haste on their homeward march, having been completely foiled in the object of their expedition. On this march, while they were leaving town, their music is said to have played "the world's turned upside down."*

The feelings of the inhabitants, not even excepting those of the gentler sex, were highly excited by this unceremonious appearance of British troops in our streets on the Sabbath, and while they were in the act of wheeling, a nurse named Sarah Tarrant,† in one of the houses near the termination of their route in North Salem, placed herself at the open window, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, and assailed them in the following language:—"Go home and tell your master he has sent you on a fool's errand, and broken the peace of our Sabbath,—what! do you think we were born in the woods to be frightened by owls?" One of the soldiers pointed his musket as if to fire at her, when she exclaimed, "fire if you have the courage, but I doubt it."

* After the troops had left town many of the inhabitants still lingered about the bridge, and among them the Rev. Mr Barnard, who is said by some old people now living, to have remarked, "this is a season for the exercise of prayer," and immediately made a very appropriate one upon the occasion.

† This woman died in Salem, May, 1828, aged 85.

Near the same spot, a solitary individual was seen standing, prompt for action in front of his dwelling, with his musket at his shoulder, and a look of fixed defiance, as if single handed and alone he was ready to defend to his last drop of blood, any violation of his own or his country's rights by these military free-booters. The name of this man was Symonds, who like Cuddie Headrigg, appears to have composed the whole infantry upon this side of the bridge.

We have noticed particularly the pertinacious manner in which Capt. Felt dogged the footsteps of Col. Leslie from the moment he left the Court House, and during all the time he was upon the bridge. It was his object, as he afterwards avowed, in case the troops had fired upon the people, to grapple with the Colonel and jump into the stream, there, like the doughty Balfour of Burley, to try the death struggle together, —"for," said he, "I would willingly have been drowned myself, to have been the death of an Englishman."†

The foregoing are but a few individual instances, the concentration and embodiment as it were, of the intensity of the bitter feelings of scorn and hatred almost universally entertained by the Colonists towards the Military, and the desperation to which they were driven by the inhuman acts of oppression practiced by their rulers.

The inhabitants, who were not disposed, from various causes, to enter into the conflict, should matters proceed to extremities, including the women who always proved themselves in these times which tried men's souls, of true Spartan blood, assembled on Odell's hill, at the eastward of the road, where they could overlook all that was passing at the bridge, and by their cheers, waiving of handkerchiefs, and other tokens of encouragement to their husbands, fathers and brothers engaged in the melee, not to yield to the military, showed that but one spirit actuated the entire population.

Immediately upon the appearance of the troops in Salem, expresses were sent out into all parts of the country to spread the alarm as far and wide as possible.* On the instant the

† Captain Felt subsequently died of a cancer, in Danvers, January 20th, 1785.

* In this respect, Mr. Benjamin Daland is said to have done good service. He rode with all speed through the main part of Danvers to spread the alarm, and returned by the way of the North Fields, just as the troops were resuming their march homeward, and riding up to the Colonel he thus addressed him:—"Well Colonel, I think you have done right to march off, for in a short time we shall have more men here than your soldiers have l-ce in their heads."

tidings reached Danvers, a company of cavalry mounted their horses and rode with all speed in various directions to arouse the people to arms,

> "Each with warlike tidings fraught,
> Each from each the signal caught,"

and they were soon pouring in from the neighboring towns in great numbers, apparently eager for an encounter.

Not only in the neighboring towns were the people mustering, but those situated at 30 or 40 miles distant, soon caught the alarm, and were hastening to the scene of action; so that in a short space of time it was estimated that some twelve or fifteen thousand men would, without doubt, have been assembled at this place.

A company of militia under Capt. Samuel Eppes, of which the late venerable Gen. Gideon Foster was 2d lieutenant, arrived from Danvers, and took up station near the distillery, where they could overlook what was passing at the bridge, and as "the reg'lars" marched off, they formed across Federal on the west side of North street, in double rank, and after the regiment had passed, formed in behind, and marched by the English music to the boundary of the town in South Salem, just beyond the Mills. Many of the inhabitants of Beverly arrived at the bridge in hot haste, before the troops had left it, impelled by the desire to support their fellow countrymen in the unequal contest.

By the prudence and praise worthy forbearance of Colonel Leslie, any serious collision with the troops was happily averted. His conduct did not, however meet with the approbation of his superiors, and for the failure of this expedition "he was tried by a court martial, and cashiered, but was afterwards restored to his former rank."*

On the arrival of the troops at Marblehead they immediately embarked on board the transport for Boston. The militia of this place, like those in other towns, had also mustered, but observing that the troops were disposed to return peaceably, they offered them no molestation and made no demonstration of triumph.†

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* Mason's Memoir. We think, however, there is some mistake in this statement, as no mention is made of it in any of the newspapers of the day, which they certainly would not have omitted to publish, had it been a fact.

† The following account is from our late venerable fellow townsman, John Howard, then a resident in Marblehead, and who was himself un-

But the excitement did not immediately cease with the occasion which gave it birth. We have already said that among the inhabitants of Salem, was found a small sprinkling of the friends of arbitrary power. After this defeat of the troops, that portion of the community were filled with apprehension for their personal safety. All who were suspected of aiding in any way this attempt to seize the cannon, by giving information or otherwise, were anxious to clear themselves of the obloquy, and the affair finally passed off without further trouble. From the following extract of a ballad, which finds its recommendation more in the simple truthfulness which appears to pervade the narrative than any intrinsic merits, we learn

"The tories in the town
Were all put to fright;
Some left their houses
And others watched all night.
Prince, he kept close,
John Sargent, he fled,
And *Grant* was afraid
For to sleep in his bed."

Thus, on the soil, and from the inhabitants of SALEM, the military arrogance of Great Britain received its first check in the fearful struggle just then commencing between her and her American Colonies. *Here* was spilt the first blood of the Revolution after the arrival of Governor Gage. *Here* was raised the first standard of liberty.* The failure of this expedition should have convinced the ruling powers of the unconquerable spirit of the people, and their resolution to defend, at whatever disparity of strength, and at any hazard, their just rights and privileges.

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der arms on the occasion: "There were eight military companies in Marblehead at that time, comprising nearly the whole male population, between sixteen and sixty years of age. They were all promptly assembled under Colonel Orne. Mr. Howard thinks that they numbered more than a thousand men. They were ordered to station themselves behind the houses and fences along the road, prepared to fall upon the British on their return from Salem, if it should be found that hostile measures had been used by them; but if it should appear that no concerted act of violence upon the persons or property of the people had been committed, they were charged not to show themselves, but to allow the British detachment to return unmolested to their transport."—*Upham's 4th July Address*, 1842.

* The Gentleman's Magazine of 17th April, 1775, published in London, contains the following:—"By a ship just arrived at Bristol, from America, it is reported that the Americans have hoisted their standard of liberty at Salem."

The exhibition or use of military force could not swerve them from their purpose:—they held life cheap in comparison. They were confident of the smiles of heaven upon their efforts to break the rod of their oppressors; and their forbearance already tasked to its uttermost, was now ready to give way to open rebellion if their manifold grievances were not speedily relieved. But justice had fled from the councils of their rulers and oppression had usurped her place. The hearts of their British task-masters, like the heart of Pharaoh of old. (and we trust for the same wise and benificent purpose.) were hopelessly hardened towards their brethren in the colonies. "Deaf to the voice of justice and consanguinity," and blinded by an undue estimate of their superior power, they persisted in pursuing the same cruel course of policy in defiance of the spirit of determined opposition exhibited by the people. until it brought about the disastrous battle of Lexington, and the standard of revolt was finally raised throughout the land. Then the people poured in like an avalanche to the rescue. 'The shepard tarried no longer by his sheepfold. or the seedsman continued in the ploughed field. The footmen came like the rushing of winds, and the horsemen came up like the sound of many waters, and the passages of the destroyers were stopped, and the face of their men of battle were turned to flight. The banner of freedom was spread abroad upon the mountains;—heaven was with them and broke the bow of the mighty!' Finally, after a struggle of upwards of seven long years, the government of Great Britain was completely annihilated in the colonies, and on its ruin was established the INDEPENDENCE OF THESE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!

It is a grave and solemn reflection, that the busy throng who filled our streets on this occasion, all bustling with life and activity, and the brave men who breasted the British bayonets, in the battles of the Revolution which followed, have nearly all disappeared from among us. They were a peculiar people, purposely trained and disciplined, we believe, by an overruling Providence to release our country from the aggravated wrongs inflicted upon it by its oppressors. We confess our admiration of these men rises the more we contemplate their fearless, independent, daring natures. Down to the Revolution, the colonists were loyal and dutiful subjects of Great Britain; and notwithstanding an ocean of three thousand miles in width rolled between them and the parent country, they still looked to England as their homes. Her glory, her honor, and

her prosperity they felt to be essentially their own. They were ever ready to fight her battles and shed their best blood in her behalf. But the long continued unholy chastisements of a parent's hand had at length alienated their love, and undermined their loyalty: and in defence of what they esteemed their inalienable rights, they felt themselves compelled, as their last resource, to make bare the arm of flesh against their oppressors. Contending with fearful odds, no dangers were too imminent for them to encounter, and no sacrifices, however great, to which they did not willingly submit. Who so dead to high and generous impulses as not to feel his gratitude enkindled, and his patriotism warmed by the recital of their glorious deeds? Peace to their ashes, and light the soil that covers their venerated remains—where honor shall come,

> "a pilgrim gray,
> To bless the turf that wraps their clay,
> And Freedom shall awhile repair,
> To dwell a weeping hermit there."

APPENDIX.

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The following account of the affair at the North Bridge, was published in the Essex Gazette, under date of Feb. 28, 1775, and is believed to have been written by Col. Timothy Pickering:

"Last Sabbath the peace of the town was disturbed by the coming of a regiment of the King's troops, the particulars relative to which are as follows. A transport arrived at Marblehead apparently manned as usual. Between 2 and 3 o'clock (as soon as the people had gone to meeting) the decks were covered with soldiers, who having loaded and fixed their bayonets, landed with great dispatch, and instantly marched off. Some of the inhabitants suspecting they were bound to Salem to seize some materials there preparing for an artillery, dispatched several messengers to inform us of it. These materials were at the north side of the North River, and to come at them it was necessary to cross a bridge, one part of which was made to draw up for the convenience of letting vessels pass through. The inhabitants kept a look out for the appearance of the troops. The van-guard arrived, and took their route down in town as far as the Long-wharf; perhaps to decoy the inhabitants thither, away from the place to which the main body were destined. The main body arrived soon after and halted a few minutes by the Town-House. It is said inquiry was immediately made by some of the officers for a half

brother of Col. Brown,* the mandamus counsellor. Be this as it may, he was very soon whispering in the Colonel's ear, in the front of the regiment; and when he parted from the Colonel, the regiment marched off with a quick pace, in a direct course for the North Bridge; just before their entrance upon which the draw-bridge was pulled up. The regiment however rushed forward till they came to the draw-bridge, not observing (as it seemed) that it was drawn up. The Colonel who led them expressed some surprise: and then turning about, ordered an officer to face his company to a body of men standing on a wharf on the other side the draw-bridge, and fire. One of our townsmen† (who had kept along side the Colonel from the time he marched from the Town-House) instantly told him he had better not fire, that he had no right to fire without further orders, "and if you do fire (said he) you will be all dead men." The company neither faced nor fired.

The Colonel then retired to the centre of his regiment, assembled his officers, and held a consultation; which being ended the Colonel advanced a little, and declared he would maintain his ground, and go over the bridge before he returned, if it were a month first. The same townsman replied, he might stay there as long as he pleased, no body cared for that. The half brother before mentioned (it is said) made towards the bridge, but seeing the draw-bridge up, says "it is all over with us." He has since disappeared. Meanwhile two large gondolas that lay aground (for it was low water) were scuttled, lest they should cross the channel in them. But whilst one gentleman with his assistants was scuttling his own gondola, a party of about twenty soldiers jumped into it, and with their bayonets charged against our unarmed townsmen (some of whom they pricked) compelled them to quit it; but before this a sufficient hole had been made in the bottom. This attack of the soldiers, and some other occurrences, occasioned a little bickering, but by the interposition of some of the inhabitants the disputes subsided.

At length some gentlemen asked the Colonel what was his design in making this movement and why he would cross the bridge? He said he had orders to cross it, and he would cross it if he lost his life, with the lives of all his men. And now (or before) asked why the King's highway was obstructed? He was told it was not the King's road, but the property of the inhabitants, who had a right to do what they pleased with it. Finally the Colonel said he must go over; and if the draw-bridge were let down so that he might pass, he pledged his honor he would march not above thirty rods beyond it, and then immediately return. The regiment had now been on the bridge about an hour and an half; and every thing being secured, the inhabitants directed the draw-bridge to be let down. The regiment immediately passed over, marched a few rods, returned, and with great expedition went back again to Marblehead, where they embarked on board the transport without delay. The regiment brought with them, lanthorns, hatchets, pickaxes, spades, hand-spikes, and several coils of rope.

When all the circumstances are considered, there can remain no doubt that the sole purpose of the menœuvre was to steal away the artillery materials before mentioned. In the first place the regiment was taken from the Castle, so that the inhabitants of Boston might be pre-

* Col. Sargent. † Capt. John Felt.

vented giving us any intelligence: The transport arrived at Marblehead a considerable time before the regiment was landed, but the men were kept snug under hatches: As soon as the inhabitants of Marblehead had got to meeting, the troops landed, and pushed on their march to Salem, and proceeded to the very spot where the materials for the artillery were lodged. But meeting with this sad rebuff, and finding their plot was discovered, they then made a retreat. 'Tis regretted that an officer of Colonel Leslie's acknowledged worth, should be obliged, in obedience to orders to come upon so pitiful an errand.

Various reports were spread abroad respecting the troops.—the country was alarmed; and one company arrived in arms from Danvers just as the troops left the town. We immediately dispatched messengers to the neighboring towns to save them the trouble of coming in; but the alarm flew like lightning (and fame doubtless magnified the first simple reports) so that great numbers were in arms, and soon on the march before our messengers arrived."

Further Extract from the Essex Gazette of March 7, 1775.

"The account published last week in this paper and republished in the Spy. of the march of the 64th regiment [in Draper's *true* account 'tis called a *detachment* of the 64th regiment: But we are informed only 15 or 20 of the men remained at the Castle] is in Mills & Hicks's paper said to contain several falsehoods: In answer to this charge we say, that we endeavored to collect a true state of the facts, by enquiring of those who were eye and ear witnesses. In the hurry and alarm there might be a misapprehension in some things; but there was no intention to detract from Col. Leslie's courage, honor or prudence: or deviate from the straight path of truth; but to establish the latter we are constrained to make a few remarks on Draper's account, and on that published by Mills & Hicks. The latter declare "they are authorised to say—that the Colonel never ordered any part of the troops to fire, but that he was not prevented from giving any orders he should have thought necessary by the threat of the townsman,"—as was insinuated in our account. The townsman and others of the inhabitants, men of undoubted veracity, still say they are absolutely certain that the Colonel talked about firing on the people; and the townsman (who stood within two yards of him) declares that the Colonel, turning to an officer near him, expressed himself in this manner—"You must face about this division (or company) and fire upon those people." This, and this only occasioned the townsman to make a reply (with a loud voice, for his resentment was kindled by the order to fire) in these words as exactly as he can now recollect: "Fire! You had better be damn'd than fire! You can have no right to fire without further orders." We added, in our account, "The company neither fired nor faced." Whether it were prudence, or want of orders, or disposition, or any other motive that prevented an act so manifestly unjustifiable as this would have been we could not tell:—We related a simple fact that "The company neither fired nor faced."

Mills and Hicks go on, "Nor is there the least truth in what is asserted of the Colonel's having pledged his honor, as he absolutely insisted on going over the bridge." No other answer to this will be re-

quired than the declaration of the clergyman† referred to in Draper's account. These are his words—"Concerned for the welfare of my townsmen, I addressed Col. Leslie, and desired the soldiers under his command might be restrained from pushing their bayonets. He told me they were much insulted; and intimated to me his determination to pass over the bridge; but concluded with saying,—if the inhabitants would lower the brige he would give his word (and I am pretty certain) his honor, that he would not march above fifty rods." For the sake of those who are strangers to the clergyman we add, that he is a gentleman of unimpeached veracity, virtue and honor, and universally respected by the inhabitants for his manly, prudent and judicious conduct on the occasion.

The declaration that "no half brother of a mandamus counsellor, *or any other person, in Salem*, whispered or spoke to Col. Leslie while he was in the town of Salem!' is very extraordinary. Even Draper admits that the clergyman conversed with him. But we know that at least *two* other persons spoke to him; tho' in a strain somewhat different from that attributed to the half-brother. 'Tis a fact that the half brother was in the front of the regiment, whispering or talking with an officer, who the inhabitants naturally concluded was the commanding officer of the regiment; for at that time Col. Leslie was *known* to very few. This half brother afterwards walking with one of the inhabitants (while the soldiers were on the bridge) they had some conversation to this effect,—"'Tis all over with them"—said the half-brother: What is over, said his companion? He replied "The bridge is drawn up:" What then rejoined the other? The half brother then whispered "They were going after the cannon." It must be granted that these circumstances (especially when connected with others known to the inhabitants) might very justly raise their suspicions that he was the informer. If he is not in any measure guilty we wish his innocence may appear.

In Draper's account 'tis said the troops under Col. Leslie "landed at Marblehead at 4 o'clock in the afternoon." This is a palpable falsehood: They arrived in Salem soon after four; and as the distance between Salem and Marblehead is about four miles and an half, they must have been at least an hour in marching.

It is said also that the commanding officer received intelligence "that some trucks were seen going out of Salem that morning." This we doubt: However the inhabitants saw none till he and his troops were just entering the heart of the town.

'Tis said also that the people, *discovering* Col. Leslie's intention to ferry a few men over in a gondola as soon as it could be got afloat, jumped into her, and with axes cut through her bottom. That "Col. Leslie seeing this, ordered a party to drive them out of her, some of the people however having obstinately refused to quit her, the soldiers were obliged to use force." Strange language this—a gentleman *obstinately* refused to quit *his own* gondola! And notwithstanding the hurry and bustle, the other gondola was not scuttled 'till leave was expressly given by the owner: Yet for doing it the blood of the inhabitants must be drawn. We did not know 'till now who gave this violent order; and are sorry to find it was Col. Leslie. The people *suspected*

† Rev. Mr. Barnard.

not *discovered* his intention to ferry over his men in the gondolas; and could not conceive that the soldiers had any other right to interrupt their work in cutting the bottoms, than the right of arms, which frequently regards neither law nor property, when standing in the way of their design who wield them."

The following is also extracted from the same paper.

"Col. Leslie's ridiculous expedition, on the 26th ult., occasioned such an alarm, that the people of all the neighboring towns, as well as those at 30 or 40 miles distance were mustering, and great numbers actually on their march for this place; so that it is thought not less than 12 or 15,000 men would have been assembled in this town within 24 hours after the alarm, had not the precipitate retreat of the troops from the drawn-bridge prevented it."

From the Massachusetts Spy of March 2, 1775.

Mr. Thomas—Please to give the following TRANSLATION a place in your valuable paper, and oblige yours, LXIV.

"Cæsar, though celebrated for an heroic mind, was liable to be betrayed by the villainous toad-eaters at his table, into *low freaks;* in the prosecution of which he would sometimes disgrace even his most worthy officers,—for such undoubtedly was *Caius Lessala.* This brave, sensible, polite man, was dispatched from Castellinum *two hours after sun-set* on the 5th of the Kalends of March (answering to our 25th of February,) with *near* 300 *picked men* in a galley under verbal orders to land at Marmoreum, and proceed to Saleminum while the inhabitants of both places were engaged in celebrating a solemn institution. *Lessala* was not to open his written instructions till he reached the causeway. He conducted the affair with a dispatch and propriety worthy of his character, expecting to find he had been sent to surprize one of *Pompey's* fortified magazines. But great indeed was his chagrin when he read that his errand was only to *rob* a private enclosure in the North-Fields of that village. He suddenly returned to Castellinum mentioned some obstruction of a Fly-Bridge, and with not a little resentment in his eyes told Cæsar that the "*geese were flown.*" The base courtiers enjoyed the HUM, which they had contrived against the veteran; and laid their heads together for a new scheme to *dupe* Cæsar.

Vi. Cæs. Eds. Americ. Fol. 1775.

Mr. WILLIAM GAVETT'S *Account.*

On Sunday, 26th Feb'y, 1775, my father came home from church rather sooner than usual which attracted my notice, and said to my mother "the reg'lars are come and are marching as fast as they can towards the Northfields bridge;" and looking towards her with a very solemn face remarked "I don't know what will be the consequence but something very serious, and I wish you to keep the children in." I looked out of the window just at this time and saw the troops passing the house. My father then stepped out, and stood at the foot of the

yard looking into the street. While there our minister Mr. Barnard came along and took my father by the arm, and they walked down towards the bridge beside the troops. My father was very intimate with Mr. Barnard, but was not a deacon of his church as some accounts state. This is all I saw of the affair myself; what I was afterwards told, the subject being very often discussed in my hearing for a long time, is as follows:

Col. David Mason had received tidings of the approach of the British troops and ran into the North Church, which was contiguous to his dwelling, during service in the afternoon, and cried out, at the top of his voice, "the reg'lars are coming after the guns and are now near Malloon's Mills." One David Boyce, a quaker, who lived near the church, was instantly out with his team to assist in carrying the guns out of the reach of the troops, and they were conveyed to the neighborhood of what was then called Buffum's hill, to the N. W. of the road leading to Danvers and near the present estate of Gen Devereux. My father looked in between the platoons, as I heard him tell my mother, to see if he could recognize any of the soldiers who had been stationed at Fort William on the Neck, many of whom were known to him, but he could discover no familiar faces—was blackguarded by the soldiers for his inquisitiveness, who asked him, with oaths, what he was looking after. The northern leaf of the draw was hoisted when the troops approached the bridge, which prevented them from going any further. Their commander (Col. Leslie) then went upon West's, now Brown's, wharf, and Capt. John Felt followed him. He then remarked to Capt. Felt, or in his hearing, that he should be obliged to fire upon the people on the northern side of the bridge if they did not lower the leaf. Capt. Felt told him if the troops did fire they would be all dead men, or words to that effect. It was understood afterwards that if the troops fired upon the people, Capt. Felt intended to grapple with Col. Leslie and jump into the river, for said he "I would willingly be drowned myself to be the death of one Englishman." Mr. Wm. Northey, observing the menacing attitude assumed by Capt. Felt, now remarked to him, "don't you know the danger you are in opposing armed troops, and an officer with a drawn sword in his hand"! The people soon commenced scuttling two gondolas which lay on the western side of the bridge and the troops also got into them to prevent it. One Joseph Whicher, the foreman in Col. Sprague's distillery, was at work scuttling the Colonel's gondola, and the soldiers ordered him to desist and threatened to stab him with their bayonets if he did not—whereupon he opened his breast and dared them to strike—they pricked his breast so as to draw blood. He was very proud of this wound in after life and was fond of exhibiting it.

It was a very cold day, and the soldiers were without any overcoats, and shivered excessively, and shew signs of being very cold. Many of the inhabitants climbed upon the leaf of the draw and blackguarded the troops. Among them was a man, (name not recollected,) who cried out as loud as possible, "*Soldiers, red jackets, lobster coats, cowards, d—na—n to your government!*" The inhabitants rebuked him for it, and requested nothing should be done to irritate the troops. Colonel Leslie now spoke to Mr. Barnard, probably observing by his canonical dress, that he was a clergyman, and said, "I will go over this bridge before I return to Boston, if I stay here till next autumn."—

Mr. Barnard replied, he prayed to heaven there might be no collision; or words of a similar import. Then the Colonel remarked, he should burst into the stores of William West, and Eben Bickford, and make barracks of them for his troops until he could obtain a passage; and turning to Captain Felt said, "By God! I will not be defeated;" to which Captain Felt replied, "You must acknowledge you have already been baffled." In the course of the debate between Colonel Leslie and the inhabitants, the Colonel remarked that he was upon the King's highway, and would not be prevented passing over the bridge. Old Mr. James Barr, an Englishman, and a man of much nerve, then replied to him; "it is *not* the King's highway, it is a road built by the owners of the lots on the other side, and no king, country or town has anything to do with it." The Colonel replied, "there may be two words to that;" and Mr. Barr rejoined, "Egad, I think that will be the best way for you to conclude the King has nothing to do with it." Then the Colonel asked Captain Felt if he had any authority to order the leaf of the draw to be lowered, and Captain Felt replied there was no authority in the case, but there might be some influence. Colonel Leslie then promised, if they would allow him to pass over the bridge, he would march but fifty rods, and return immediately, without troubling or disturbing anything. Captain Felt was at first unwilling to allow the troops to pass over on any terms, but at length consented, and requested to have the leaf lowered. In this he was joined by Mr. Barnard and Colonel Pickering, and the leaf was lowered down. The troops then passsd over, and marched the distance agreed upon without violating their pledge, then wheeled and marched back again, and continued their march though North street, in the direction of Marblehead.

A nurse, named Sarah Tarrant, in one of the houses near the termination of their route, in Northfields, placed herself at the open window, and called out to them :—"Go home and tell your master he has sent you on a fool's errand, and broken the peace of our Sabbath; what," said she, "do you think we were born in the woods, to be frightened by owls?" One of the soldiers pointed his musket at her, and she exclaimed, "fire if you have the courage,—but I doubt it."

The inhabitants generally, including the women, congregated on Odell's Hill, where they could see all that was passing at the bridge, and waved their handkerchiefs, and cheered the inhabitants in token of encouragement, showing that but one spirit animated the whole mass.

A company of militia from Danvers, under Captain Samuel Eppes, came into town, and went back of Colonel Sprague's distillery, and sat down, so as to expose their persons as little as possible, watching the movements at the bridge until all was over The account recently published of Colonel Pickering's being on the North side of the bridge with forty armed militia, Mr. Gavett says "is all poetry," it has no foundation whatever. The Colonel was on the south side of the bridge like any other citizen. In Marblehead a company of militia turned out to be ready for any emergency. It was thought that one Colonel Sargent had the principal agency in conveying the information about the guns to General Gage.

Mr. Gavett feels confident of all the facts stated in the preceding account, although in some instances perhaps the exact phraseology may be somewhat uncertain.

Mr. SAMUEL GRAY'S *Account.*

Mr. Gray was at the time in his 10th year—was 10 the next June Lived with his grandmother in St. Peter street. The family had all gone to meeting, except himself and grandmother. Was out in the yard—while there heard a drum and fife—went in and told the old lady of it—she thought he was mistaken—but he was convinced of it and took his cap and went in the direction of the music—had reached the N. E. corner of Essex and Washington streets, when he saw the troops coming round the corner of School, now Washington street, from Mill street. They marched up to the Town House and halted a few minutes—does not know what took place there—did not notice any thing in particular. When the troops recommenced their march followed close to them, was near enough to touch Colonel Leslie most of the time.—The Colonel was a fine looking officer, rather stout with agreeable features; followed them through Lynde street to the North Bridge; should think the platoons about twelve deep, and when they halted at the draw of the bridge, they reached from there to Colonel Sprague's distillery; should think there could not have been less than 300 men. When they came to order they formed a line on the west side of the street facing to the eastward. Saw that the Colonel was quite disconcerted to find the draw of the bridge up; noticed his impassioned manner, but cannot recollect any thing he said; don't know that he heard any words he uttered. Saw his minister, Mr Barnard, in the crowd, and saw him speak with Colonel Leslie; don't know that he heard what he said, but was afterwards told, that when Mr Barnard heard the Colonel say that he *would* pass the bridge, that he addressed him in these words: "I desire you would not fire on those innocent people;" (meaning those collected on the north side of the bridge,) at this Colonel Leslie turned short round and said to him "Who are you, sir?" Mr. Barnard replied, "I am Thomas Barnard, a minister of the gospel, and my mission is peace." Saw three gondolas laying aground; saw the people jump into them for the purpose of scuttling them; recognized Frank Benson and Jonathan Felt—saw Frank Benson open his breast to the soldiers; did not hear what he said. Did not know Capt. John Felt at the time, and cannot therefore say anything of my own knowledge of the part he took; knew him afterwards—he was a tall, muscular, well-made man; knew Capt. Robert Foster, and recognized him conspicuous among the crowd on the north side of the bridge. Colonel Leslie had given some orders, and the soldiers were doing something to their muskets; cannot say what; but being a small boy it frightened him, and he with two or three others about his age, ran off and lay down under the fish flakes which covered almost the whole southern bank of the river from north bridge to what is now Conant street; did not return; it was a very cold day, and he was almost frozen, while laying down upon the ground under the flakes; did not see the troops leave town.

The affair caused considerable talk at the time; heard a great many things said; among them, that Colonel Sargent was seen on the top of his house, near the first church, waving his handkerchief and pointing in the direction of the north bridge; he was suspected of having given

the information about the guns; he was alarmed and left the town immediately and never returned. Went the day after the affair to the north fields, where the cannon had been deposited, in the barn of Capt. Foster; stood upon a cannon he found there; asked why they did not carry it away; was told it was injured—looked round and saw a crack in the breech; asked how many guns there had been in all, was told twelve; understood they were French pieces, and came from Nova Scotia after the late French war; were guns taken from the French; does not know to whom they belonged previous to being fitted up on this occasion. Heard they were distributed in various directions—some to Cole's hole, in what is now called Paradise; others towards Orne's point, &c.; were not all carried to one place, for fear if they were discovered by the troops they would all be lost. The only arms seen in the hands of any one at the bridge was a brace of pistols peeping out from under the cloak of a person whom he did not know.

With reference to Colonel Pickering and his forty militia men, the late Mr. Samuel Holman stated, in a memorandum written by himself: "There was no embodying of armed men on our side, and, of course, Colonel Pickering did not perpetrate the shamefully ridiculous manœuvre of running backwards with his forty men in front of a battalion of regular troops marching in quick time." Mr Holman was at that time 11 years old.

Abijah Northey *Esq's Account of what he heard his Father relate.*

Colonel Leslie came in pursuit of some cannon which were at a blacksmith's shop, on the north side of the North Bridge, where they had been left to be repaired, and the iron work put upon the carriages. Where the cannon came from, or how many, or what became of them after being carried off out of the way of the troops, Mr. Northey did not know.

The northern leaf of the draw was raised, to stop the troops in their march, and the people on that side climbed upon the top of it by the help of the chains which held it, and sat astride there, as many as could do so, *like hens at roost.*

When the alarm was given, men from the south side rushed over and raised the draw, and with the neighbors, who lived on the other side, made the collection there; most of whom stood on a small wharf which jutted out from the east side of the bridge. Capt. Robert Foster was conspicuous among them.

The Rev. Mr. Barnard tried to persuade the people upon the draw to let it down, as he in the spirit of a christian minister was very anxious to prevent a collision; he was answered, "We don't know you in the business, when Felt orders it 'twill be time enough."

Mr. Felt during the whole affair kept close by Colonel Leslie, narrowly watching him in every movement and order. When Leslie ordered his troops into the gondolas, Felt ordered his men to scuttle them; a scuffle ensued in which one or more of our citizens were

slightly wounded,—cannot remember the name of any, or that he ever heard.

After the accommodation had been arranged, Leslie asked Felt why he stuck so near him all the time. Felt answered "Had your men fired, 'twas my purpose to have immediately seized and sprung with you into the channel." Capt. Northey who knew Felt afterwards remarked, "He could have done so, and drowned him and then swam off."

The reckless spirits upon the draw blackguarded the soldiers by every epithet they could think of, and while it aggravated the soldiers to repeated threats that they would fire upon them, they still tantalized them by daring them to do it. The soldiers had been heated by a quick march, and during the delay (the day being very cold) they had become chilly and trembled violently, when one ——— Teague, who was on the draw, cried out "I should think you were all fiddlers you shake so." The majority of the people however it is believed desired not to exasperate the troops but to overcome them by a determined and manly resistance.

When the alarm was first given, Mr. Benjamin Daland mounted his horse and rode with all speed and alarmed the people of Danvers, where there was a company of cavalry who rode in every direction into the country and spread the alarm far and wide. Daland returned from Danvers through the North fields in season to march off with the troops and riding up to Col. Leslie, with whom he was personally acquainted, he jeered him in these words, "Well Colonel, I think you have done right, for in a short time we shall have more men here than your soldiers have l–ce in their heads."

Col. Leslie had about 300 men with him. They marched about as far as Mason street. On this march in Northfields a woman opened her window and gave them the length of her tongue. They threatened to shoot her if she did not desist.

A company of militia commanded by Capt. Samuel Eppes arrived from Danvers, and as Col. Leslie's troops marched off, they were formed across Federal street, on the west side of North street, in double rank, and after the regiment had passed they formed in behind and marched thus to the bounds of the town in South Salem, where they met a Marblehead company, when the Danvers company returned. The Marblehead company formed in behind as they had done and marched by the music of the English.

Capt. Northey says whenever his father spoke of the affair "it was all *Felt, Felt, Felt.*" He was the spirit on whom the crowd depended. Col. Pickering's regiment was forming in School street, now Washington street. Did not remember anything about Col. Mason. Capt Northey's father was at the bridge,—never heard him say anything of himself in connection with the occasion. Mr. William Northey mentioned in Mr Gavett's account was the brother of his father.

Extract from a Manuscript Memoir of Col. DAVID MASON, *written by his daughter.*

In the summer of 1774, he [Col. Mason] was one of a committee to prevent any tea being brought into the town, [of Salem] or being sold,

and I remember a large chest being smuggled into the town by a colored man, that was taken from him and brought to our house and put in my mother's chamber closet for safe keeping over night, and taken away the next day by the school boys, and burnt in the public square to their no small amusement. As a specimen of the feeling that prevailed among the female lovers of liberty, my mother was in feeble health, and could take but little nourishment excepting tea, and my father fearing she would suffer much in her health if deprived of it, proposed to procure her the liberty of using it; but she said no! she would rather suffer *any* inconvenience than that it should be said, she was enjoying a privilege her husband was appointed to take from her friends and neighbors.

Early in the autumn of this year there was a committee of safety appointed, by the legislature of Massachusetts, to make private preparation for the gathering storm that they foresaw was soon to burst upon their heads; and he was from this time actively engaged in collecting military stores for the use of the country; and in November, 1774, received the appointment from this committee as Engineer, with a fixed salary, which I have often heard him say, was the first military appointment in the revolutionary war.

After this he purchased a number of iron cannon of a Col. Derby, of Salem, as I find the painting of seventeen carriages for these guns accounted for in his memorandum book, from which I take many of these notices and facts. Among other accoutrements wanted for these guns were flannel cartridges, which must be sewed very smooth and of course done by females. My father fearing to let more into the secret than was absolutely necessary, engaged my mother though in very feeble health to cut out five thousand of these cartridges, and set my sisters and myself to make them, and we were often locked up in a chamber for fear some of our prying mates or neighbors should find out the nature of our employment; and undoubtedly the first instruments for the defence of our National liberty were made by my sister and myself.

In preparing carriages for these guns my father had employed a Capt. Foster to do the iron work, who had a shop on the north side of Danvers river, which skirts the North side of the town of Salem, over which was a draw bridge. In the progress of the work he had also employed an "*old countryman*" in whom he had great confidence, but who it proved soon after was not worthy of it. About the last of February, they had got a number of the carriages done, and the guns mounted, when this man came to him on a Saturday afternoon and requested his pay for his work, stating he had some pressing necessity for the money; accordingly he paid him his due. The man then went directly to Boston and gave information of what was going on under my father's directions, to Gov. Gage, who immediately ordered Col. Leslie to embark with his regiment from the Castle, and land at Marblehead, and from thence march to Salem and take possession of these guns, in his Majesty's name. Accordingly they landed at Marblehead about 12 o'clock the next day, being Sunday; but for reasons not known he did not get information till about 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when two of the selectmen came to him with the intelligence that these troops, 300 in number, were marching into the town; and it was supposed it was to take possession of his guns;—which he no sooner heard than he was

immediately upon his horse, and at the place of deposite to secure his treasure.

The alarm was now given in the town, the bells were ringing, the drums beating, and the people in a state of great agitation. The troops had met with some little obstruction by the people breaking up a bridge about half a mile from the town. This however they soon repaired and marched into the public square with all their martial music, and colors flying, to the great terror of the women and the children, if to no others. In the mean time my father was busily engaged in securing his guns;—it fortunately happened that near to these shops there was a piece of thick oak wood which was covered a considerable depth with dried leaves, there being no snow on the ground at the time. The guns were buried under these leaves, and the carriages otherwise supposed to be secured.

After this was done he rode into the street where the troops had halted, and found Col. Leslie conversing with a young tory lawyer, who pointing with his cane in such a direction as he knew must lead him to the bridge. Seeing their manœuvres he immediately returned to his post and with a number of others concerted measures to defeat their enterprize. They were now coming towards the bridge in full glee while the people in sullen silence stood prepared for them, and the instant Col. Leslie set his foot on the first half of the bridge my father ordered the other half to be drawn up, presenting him a chasm of forty feet, it luckily happening to be low water. On finding his progress arrested in such an unexpected manner the Colonel stamped and swore, ordering the bridge immediately to be lowered; but that was all he could do, as there was no one disposed to obey him, but his own troops, and it was not in their power to do it: He then ordered some soldiers to get into several boats that lay in the river, and pass over and let down the bridge; but as soon as this was perceived to be their design several young men who were the owners, sprung into them, and with axes knocked out the bottoms. This occasioned something of a scuffle and several were slightly wounded; but the time not being come for open hostilities to commence they took no other way to force their passage over the bridge.

As all now seemed to be at a stand, not knowing what would next take place, my father mounted a ladder at the top of the draw and addressed Col. Leslie, with whom he was personally acquainted, and advised him to desist, as there were expresses gone out, and in a few hours there would be a thousand men on the ground, and probably his men would all be cut to pieces, should they once fire upon the people. He replied that he had orders to pass the bridge, and he would do it, if it cost him the life of every man he had; but if he would order the bridge to be let down he would give him his word and honor to go over and repass it without molesting any person or property. My father then consulted with the people, and advised them to let him pass over, as he had full confidence in Col. Leslie's honor. Accordingly the draw was let down and they marched over ten or twelve rods and returned in the same order and back to Marblehead as rapidly as they could without running. For the failure of this enterprise, Col. Leslie was tried by a court-marshal and cashiered, but was afterwards restored to his former rank."

In corroboration of the statement made in the foregoing account of the tea smuggled into town by a colored man, I subjoin the following, published in the Essex Gazette, under date of

SALEM, Oct. 4, 1774.

Whereas a small cask (said to contain Bohea Tea) was brought from Boston yesterday in a wagon under my care; in order to justify my conduct in the affair would beg leave to inform the public, that on Sunday the 2d inst., a negro man, belonging to, or employed by Mrs. Sheaffe of Boston, came to me and inquired whether I had a wagon going to Salem the next day; I answered, yes; he said his mistress wanted to send a small cask. I told him the wagon was loaded, and could not carry it; he replied the cask was small and very light, and that Mrs. Sheaffe would take it kind of me to carry it. To oblige that lady, I consented (not knowing the contents) to bring it; I have likewise the greatest reason to believe that the servants who drove the carriage committed to my care were ignorant of the contents of the cask.

And furthermore, I most solemnly declare I never saw the above mentioned cask until it was brought into School street, in this town, to be committed to the flames.

(Signed) BENJAMIN JACKMAN, and sworn before

PETER FRYE, Jus. Peace.

Extracts from an Account dictated by Mrs. STORY, *the mother of the late Judge Story.*

In the year 1774 some of the most influential men in the colonies received information that Gov. Gage had received orders and was determined to disarm the colonists by seizing their arms and amunition. Many persons who were friendly to Great Britain, were determined to resist all acts of usurpation and tyranny on the part of the crown. They did not believe the Governor would attempt to enforce this order, but were very watchful and jealous of every movement made by him.

Some tories in Salem gave Gov. Gage notice that there were some cannon and military stores in a certain place in Salem which they pointed out and described. On the 26th February, 1775, the Governor ordered from Castle William, Lieut. Col. Leslie with the 64th regiment in a transport, to land at Marblehead, and from thence to march to Salem and seize the cannon and munitions of war. His orders were peremptory—he landed his troops upon Marblehead neck in a very quiet manner, expecting not to be discovered, or his movements suspected in such an obscure spot; but he little knew the jealous watchfulness of the Americans; by the time their feet touched the land a man went into the town of Marblehead who saw them land, and the alarm was immediately given by a dozen men running to the door of the new

meeting house and beating the alarm signal agreed upon, and crying out, "To arms—to arms!" A person, on the watch, saw the soldiers come out of the neck lane [in] single file, [form] upon Bubier's plain, and then march to Salem, playing "Yankee doodle." Mrs. Story also states that after the draw was lowered, Col. Leslie and his men passed over and advanced upon the road the number of paces agreed upon, wheeled about, the music playing the old fashioned tune of "*the world's turned upside down*," and marched to Marblehead neck, whence they embarked.

From the Essex Gazette of Feb'y 28, 1775.

As it is reported about this town, much to my injury, that I gave information of certain pieces of artillery, which was the occasion of a Regiment's marching to this place yesterday;—I take this public method of acquainting the good people, that the character of an *Informer*, is of all characters the most odious to me, that I was in no way instrumental in bringing troops hither, and shall be ready to satisfy any one, who will call upon me, of my innocence.

SALEM, Feb. 27, 1775. ANDREW DALGLEISH.

This man was one of the signers of the *tory* Address to Gov. Gage on his arrival in Salem, in June, 1774, and kept an English goods store in "King street," afterwards "Old Paved street," and was burnt out at the great fire of October 6th, 1774, when the Rev. Dr. Whitaker's meeting house, situate near Balch's corner, eight dwelling houses, the Custom House, and fourteen buildings occupied as stores, shops and barns, besides sheds and other small outhouses, were wholly destroyed.

[*Essex Gazette*, *Oct.* 11, 1774.

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ERRATA.

Page 1—for February 28 read February 26.
" 8—14 lines from the bottom, for *secretely* read *secretly*.
" 11—12 " " " top, for *county* read *country*.
" 37—15 " " " bottom, for *were* read *was*.