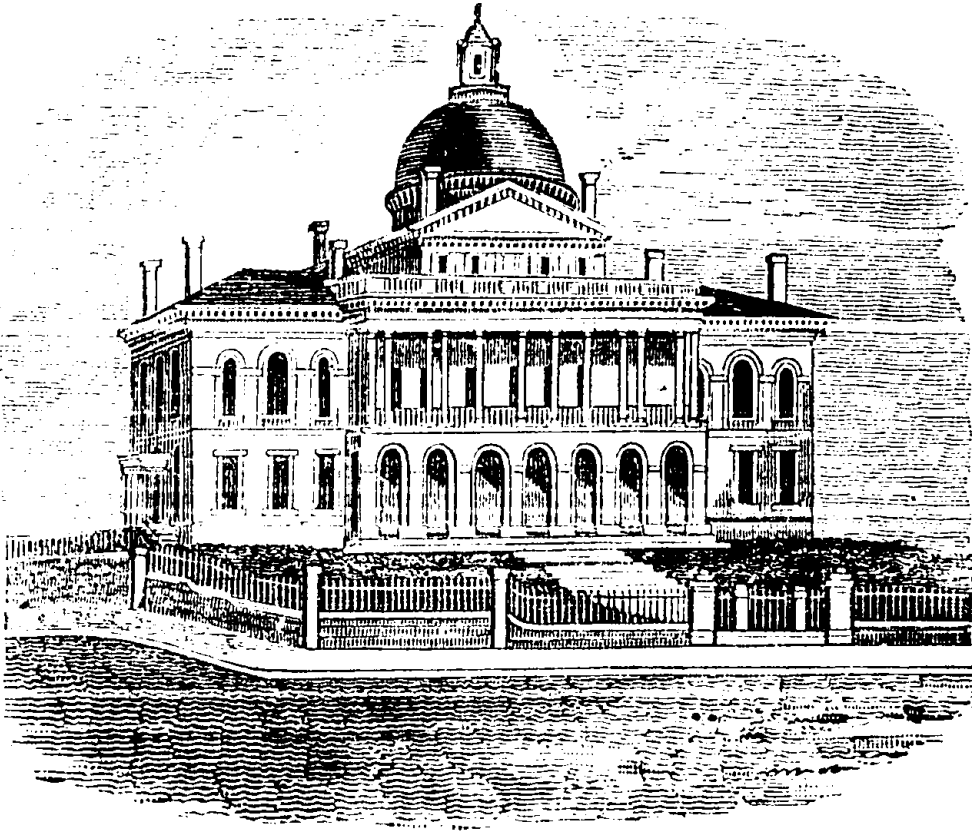


HISTORY OF BOSTON.



BY ROBIN CARVER.

BOSTON :

LILLY, WAIT, COLMAN, AND HOLDEN.

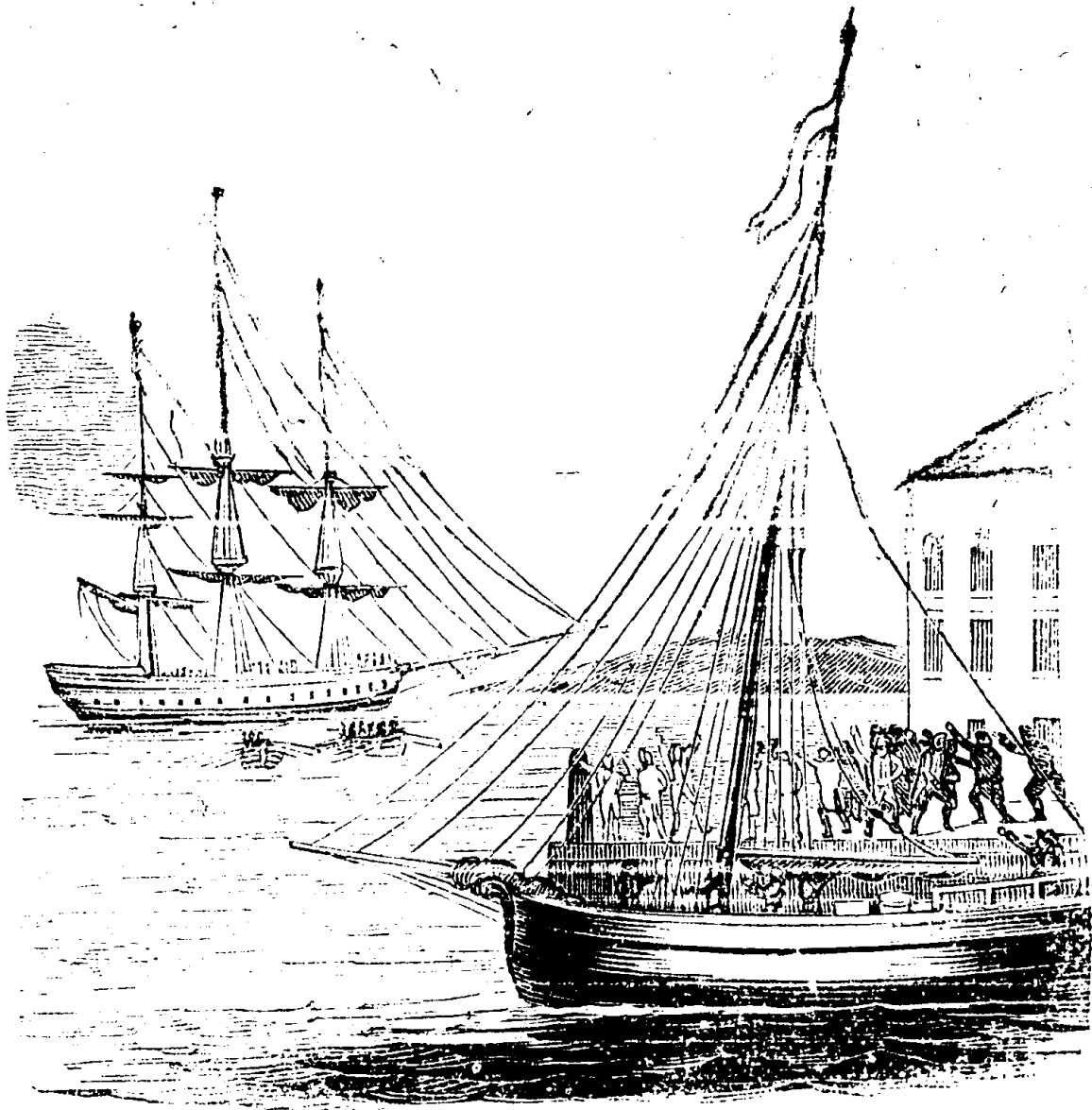
1834.

CHAPTER X.

Resistance. Seizure of Hancock's Sloop. Mob. Arrival of British troops. Attack on Mr Otis. Agreement of merchants. Mr Richardson shoots a boy. His funeral. Story of the Fifth of March. Trial and acquittal of the soldiers.

1. THE spirit of resistance in the town seemed to grow, with every indication of a wish in the mother country to employ force. Mobs were frequent, and the collectors of the customs were exposed to occasional peril. In the month of June, 1768, an affray of considerable importance took place with the collectors, which eventually led to great results.

2. Towards twilight on the tenth of this month, a sloop, named Liberty, belonging to John Hancock, and lying at his wharf, was seized by the officers of the customs. The British ship of war Romney was at this time in the stream, ready to lend them assistance. On a given signal, her boats were manned and sent to the wharf. The officers were



Seizing the Liberty.

warned not to move the sloop, but in spite of all remonstrances, her fastenings were cut, and she was carried under the guns of his Majesty's ship.

3. At this event the people were exceedingly irritated. A mob soon collected, and some of the officers were roughly handled. A party of sailors, who suspected an intention to impress them on board of the ship, joined the multitude and went in pursuit of mischief. Whilst parading in the streets, they met the inspector, and treated him with much more rudeness, than he thought himself entitled to as a faithful servant of the king. They broke his sword, made rags of part of his garments, and obliged him to seek refuge in a house in King street.

4. They next went in pursuit of one of the man-of-war's boats, but finding none on shore, they took possession of a large pleasure-boat that belonged to the collector. This they dragged through the streets in triumph, with loud shouts, till they reached the common, where they amused themselves with making a bonfire of it.

5. Some other affairs of this kind gave a sufficient pretence to General Gage, who commanded the military forces in New England, to station a detachment of regular troops in Boston. On the last day of September, six ships of war, with an armed schooner and transports, came sailing up the harbor and anchored round the town. Their cannon were loaded, and springs were on the cables, that they might be easily slipped; all seemed prepared for a regular siege.

6. On the noon of the following day, two regiments, a part of a third, and a train of artillery with two pieces of cannon, were landed on the wharf. There they formed in order, and paraded up King street with colors flying, drums sounding and fifes playing ; each soldier having received sixteen rounds of shot, and having his musket charged and bayonet fixed.

7. Difficulties soon sprang up between the troops and the inhabitants. It was said that the soldiers could not lawfully be quartered in the town, while the barracks at the castle were empty. Meanwhile they were lodged in the town-house and Faneuil Hall, and some in stores on the wharves. Guards were placed at the doors of the town-house, which the council were obliged to pass in going to their own chamber. Tents covered the common. Sentinels challenged the citizens as they passed. The sabbath was disturbed by the sound of drums, and other martial music. The town wore the aspect of a garrison, and all the inconveniences ensued, which naturally flow from the presence of a military force in a peaceful community.

8. The luxury of tea, which was first used in New England about the year 1720, began now to be very unpopular. Many families in Boston had resolved to abstain from the use of it, and several of the neighboring towns had concluded to follow their example.

9. In September 1769 a circumstance took place, which occasioned a great excitement among the good people of

the town, and which led to an instance of noble generosity. Mr James Otis had been insulted in some paper, by the commissioners of the customs; and took occasion to resent it, by advertising them as unworthy of belief. On the next evening he went to the British Coffee-house, which was much visited by the officers in the interest of the government, and where he found a number of them sitting at that time.

10. Among them was Mr Robinson, one of the commissioners. When Mr Otis entered, a quarrel immediately commenced. It ended in recourse to violence. The lights were extinguished, and Mr Otis, without a friend, was surrounded by the companions of Robinson. A young man, by the name of Gridley, happened to be passing at the time, and boldly came in to his assistance; but he was attacked, beaten, and turned out of the house.

11. After some time, the combatants were separated, and Mr Otis was led home, wounded and bleeding. He afterwards commenced an action at law, against Robinson, and the jury awarded him a verdict of £2000. This sum he generously returned, on receiving a suitable apology.

12. An event took place in February, 1770, which illustrates the feelings of the time. The merchants of the town had agreed not to import British goods. Some, however, were so regardless of public opinion and interest, that they determined to pursue their trade as usual. They of course

fell under the censure of their fellow citizens, and were objects of contempt and hatred.

13. By the house of one of these men, a large wooden head had been fixed on a pole, ornamented with the carved faces of other importers. A despicable fellow, by the name of Richardson, tried to persuade some teamsters to run down this pole with their carts. They knew the meaning of the exhibition, however, and were wise enough to let it alone.

14. Richardson persisted in his folly, and at last excited the attention of a crowd of boys, who pelted him with stones and mud, till he was obliged to seek shelter in his own house. The little heroes had caught something of the angry spirit of their fathers, and were fond of taking liberties with the old fellows, who were too fond of their pence, to look after their rights. The shouts of the boys drew together quite a multitude. A quarrel ensued between the mob and Richardson, which ended in his discharging a musket from his window, and another from his door.

15. By these random shots, a young man and a boy were severely wounded. On this the bells were all set to ringing, and a vast multitude was soon collected. Richardson, with a companion, was carried to Faneuil Hall, where he was examined and committed for trial. In the course of the evening the lad died, and three days afterwards his funeral was attended with great honors.

16. On his coffin were various Latin inscriptions, suitable to the feelings and character of the time. On the foot was

a sentence which signified 'The snake lies hid in the grass;' and on the head, 'Innocence nowhere safe.' The procession was formed under Liberty Tree. It consisted of four or five hundred school-boys, walking two by two before the body; about thirteen hundred citizens on foot, and thirty chaises and carriages.

17. This scene was very imposing, and was so arranged as to strike gloom into every heart. The papers of the fifth of March, which gave an account of the ceremony, also told of farther difficulties and quarrels between the soldiers and the people of the town. This day was to be marked by an event of more horror, than any which had yet befallen the inhabitants of Boston. The massacre, which then occurred, originated in a slight affray between three or four young men, and a soldier, who was stationed as sentinel, by a little alley which led to the barracks of the 14th regiment.

18. The main guard of the troops was stationed opposite the town-house; and to this place they were all marched daily. A mob had been collected by the rencontre with the sentinel, and were ready for an attack even on the armed soldiers. They shouted for the main guard, and soon found the way to the neighborhood of their station. One party found a single sentinel standing before the door of the custom-house, which was in a building now occupied as a bank in State street.

19. It was a clear moon-light night, and there was some snow on the ground. As the mob approached, the sentinel

retired to the door of the house, and knocked three or four times to apprise those within of the danger. Word was soon sent to the lieutenant of the main guard, of the expected assault, and he dispatched a serjeant with six men, to the relief of the sentinel. Captain Preston immediately followed them.

20. The party formed in a semi-circle about the steps of the custom house. Mr Knox, a bookseller, and afterwards a famous general of the revolution, went from the guard house with Preston, having his hand on his shoulder all the way down, and warning him of the consequences of firing upon the mob. By this time all the bells were ringing, and people collected from every quarter to ascertain what was going on. They pressed and crowded upon the soldiers, and some attacked them with pieces of snow and ice, and clubs, while from all sides were shouts of 'Fire, fire, if you dare.'

21. The soldiers at length commenced firing, and three of the citizens were killed on the spot. Two others were mortally wounded, and several were considerably injured. A cry was soon raised through the town of 'To arms, to arms, turn out with your guns,' and the drums were beating, and bells ringing, in all directions. The King's Council immediately assembled, and the people were assured that Captain Preston and his men should be delivered to the magistrates.

22. The funeral of the slain was attended with great ceremony, and by an immense multitude; the shops were closed,



Fifth of March.

and all the bells were tolled in Boston, and the neighboring towns. The procession formed in King street, and marched through the town to the burial-ground, where the bodies were deposited in one grave.

23. In the course of a few days, all the troops were removed to the Castle. Captain Preston was tried and acquitted. The soldiers were soon after tried. They were defended by John Adams, and Josiah Quincy, Jr. Two were convicted of manslaughter, and the other six were acquitted. These acquittals were highly creditable to the citizens of the town. Even in the midst of a deep excitement and indignation, we see that they were governed only by the strictest sense of duty and justice.