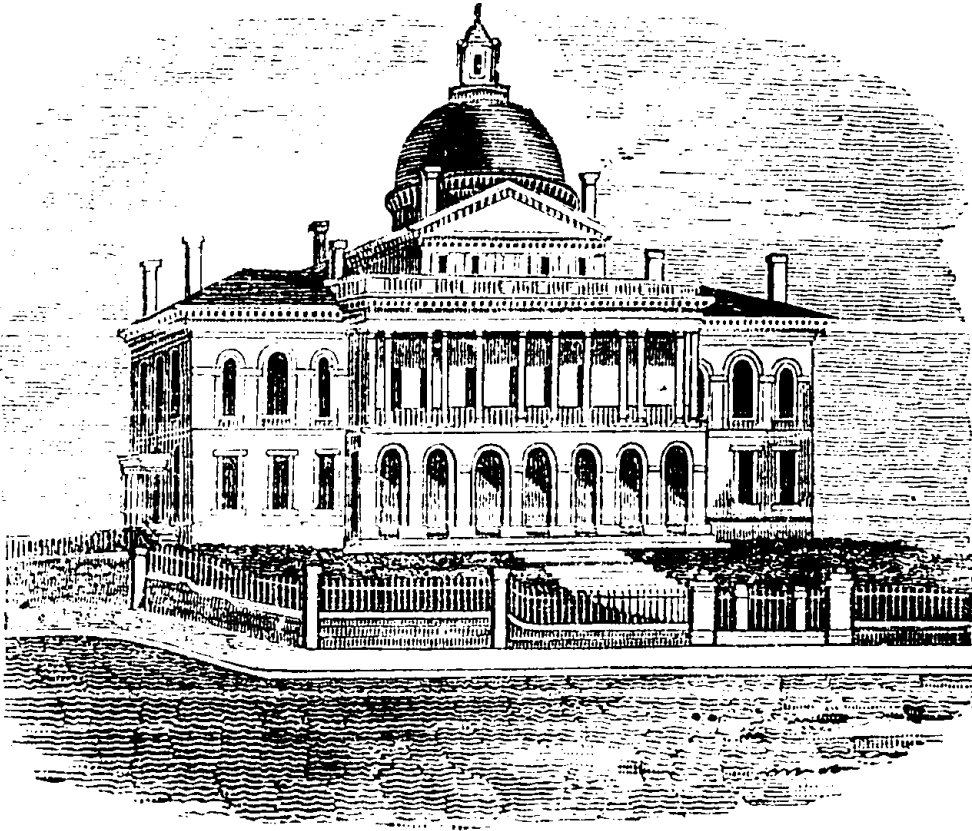


HISTORY OF BOSTON.



BY ROBIN CARVER.

BOSTON :

LILLY, WAIT, COLMAN, AND HOLDEN.

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CHAPTER XIII.

Anecdotes of the siege. Bullets and Beetles. Scarcity of fuel. Outrages of the Soldiers. Attack on Charlestown. Amusing incident. Washington takes possession of Dorchester Heights. Evacuation of Boston. Entry of the American army.

1. SOME amusing anecdotes are related of the siege. Once, two or three British officers were walking on Beacon Hill in the evening, and were suddenly very much alarmed, by a noise in the air, which they imagined to be the whizzing of bullets. They fled in great haste, and wrote fearful accounts to their friends in England, of being shot at with air-guns. The whizzing noise, which frightened these valiant officers, happened to be nothing more than the buzz of a beetle.

2. Towards winter, the want of fuel became very distressing. The Old North church, a very valuable building, was entirely demolished, and consumed by the soldiers, for fire-

wood. More than a hundred wooden buildings on some of the wharves, were taken down, and used for the same purpose. One day the soldiers amused themselves with cutting down Liberty Tree, an occasion of great mirth and merriment.

3. The Old South church was used as a riding-school. The pulpit and pews were removed, and burned for fuel; the floor was covered with earth, and Burgoyne's regiment of dragoons exercised there. The south door was closed, and a bar was fixed, over which the cavalry were taught to leap their horses at full speed. A beautiful pew, ornamented with carved work and silk furniture, was destroyed; and part of it was used as a fence for a hog-sty.

4. On the ninth of February 1776, a detachment of about a hundred men left the American camp, and made an incursion into Charlestown. It was their purpose, to burn a number of the houses still standing, in order to deprive the enemy of their use. This object was effected. About ten houses were destroyed, and in less than two hours the detachment returned, bringing away a lot of muskets, and without the loss of a single man.

5. This affair is connected with a laughable incident, which happened at Boston. On the night of the attack, the British officers were amusing themselves with a farce, in ridicule of the Yankees. It was called the Blockade of Boston, and is said to have been written by General Burgoyne. The figure intended to represent General Wash-

ington, was dressed in an odd style, with a long rusty sword, and a huge wig, attended by his orderly serjeant, in a rude country dress, with an old gun seven or eight feet in length.

6. At the moment this figure appeared, one of the British serjeants came running breathless upon the stage, and exclaimed — ‘The Yankees are attacking our works on Bunker’s Hill.’ The spectators laughed, and thought the scene quite funny, but when General Howe called out, ‘Officers to your posts,’ they began to see that it was all real, and not part of the play. Great confusion followed. The ladies shrieked and fainted, and in a few minutes the theatre was empty. The Yankees had provided an entertainment for them, of a different kind.

7. Washington had been for some time contemplating an attack upon Boston. The American army consisted of about 20,000 men. With these troops, he determined to take possession of Dorchester heights, a position, from which the ships and soldiers of the enemy, could be annoyed with much success. On the night of the fourth of March, this plan was to be executed. The evening came with a full bright moon, and a very mild, pleasant air. A heavy bombardment was opened, soon after dark, on the town and the lines of the enemy.

8. This fire served to conceal their purpose, and a considerable detachment passed under its cover, to take possession of the heights. The ground was very hard, but by

working with great industry, they had so far completed two forts before morning, that they formed a sufficient defence against grape shot and small arms. When General Howe saw these forts at day-break, much magnified in their appearance, by the haziness of the air, he was struck with perfect astonishment. 'I know not what I shall do,' he said; 'the rebels have effected more in one night than my whole army would have done in weeks.'

9. A tremendous cannonade was immediately commenced, from the forts in Boston, and the ships of war in the harbor. The royal troops were seen to be in motion, and it was not known what direction would be given to them. General Howe had concluded to make an attack on the works, and to dislodge the provincials.

10. He commanded the execution of this plan, but a violent storm came on at night, and completely defeated it. A council of war was called the next morning, and a flag of truce was sent to General Washington, with a message from the selectmen of the town. An offer was made by the British officers to retire from Boston, and leave it standing, if they might be allowed to retire unmolested.

11. On the morning of the seventeenth of March, the royal army commenced their embarkation. In the course of the forenoon all their fleet was under sail, and was suffered to leave the harbor without injury. By this event, the inhabitants of Boston were relieved of the presence of a powerful enemy. Immediately after they had set sail,

General Washington ordered the greater part of his army to march to New York, in order to protect that city against an expected attack of the British force.

12. In the course of two or three days, the American troops were allowed to enter Boston. As they marched through the streets, they were greeted by the shouts of the inhabitants, who had been relieved from their oppressive imprisonment. Every thing, however, wore an aspect of gloom, and told too plainly, that Boston had been a garrisoned town.

13. The common was found to be much disfigured by ditches and cellars, which had been dug by the British troops for their accommodation while in camp. The fence about the common, and many of the trees had been cut down for fuel. It is said that the Tories had commenced the destruction of all the trees in the mall, but had been stopped by the orders of General Howe. As we walk under the shade of those aged and majestic elms, we may remember that we are indebted for their preservation, to the generosity of an enemy.