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MOB OR MARTYRS?

CRISPUS ATTUCKS AND THE BOSTON MASACRE.

THIS is an age of radical and rabid iconoclasm. It has shattered for us many fondly-worshipped idols, and stripped from our early, healthful enthusiasm a myriad of the brightest pictures of our nation's patriotic past. But to those who are able both to understand and to respect honest differences of opinion, and are not so weak in judgment as to be inaccessible to conviction, of either the grandeur or the littleness of a character which they cannot understand, this gradual culmination of mental evolution has accomplished an immense amount of good. It has relieved us of a very large portion of our idiotic belief in that doctrine of the "survival of the fittest" which would elevate the "ass, in the lion's skin," of antiquity, above the worthy but unsuccessful hero of the present day. And it has placed within our reach the mighty weapons of truth, with which to combat many false fiats of the ages, and to tear from the record of history its frequent falsifications of the great and the good, and its glaringly audacious apotheoses of the worthless and the vile.

Boston cherishes relics and memories of the more illustrious kind. They hallow and sanctify her claim to be best known and most highly honored by her sister municipalities. She revels in so many elements of superiority, in intellect, wisdom and valor, bequeathed by her long line of states-

men, sages and warriors, and upon which she has planted her banners high—that she has no need to indulge in those unreal, haunting dreams treasured in fable and song. She serves as the home of the solid and substantial. She makes no pretention to any cultivation in the science of "make-believe."

But we have learned to tolerate the story that "Homer nods," and that Achilles' heel at last received a fatal wound. And so we cannot wonder that even here we have been prevailed upon to condescend to the idealization of a humbug and a fraud. Amid the statues with which our public parks are so worthily adorned, the monument to Crispus Attucks has been allowed to raise its brazen front, to bear to posterity its shameless record of a living lie.

For many years we have worshipped him as a hero among the saints of the revolution. We have enveloped him in the halo of their fame, and erected for him a fitting place in the midst of the gods of our idolatry. But the cold, unimpassioned facts of history most abundantly dispute his claim to occupy that niche of honor in which his counterfeit presentment lingers still. His reputation as a paragon of heroism has been but a figment of the imagination. His deification as a martyr has long since ceased to be regarded as in any degree consistent with honesty or truth. He has at last found his proper level, among the

bravos and bullies of a lawless period in the annals of the state.

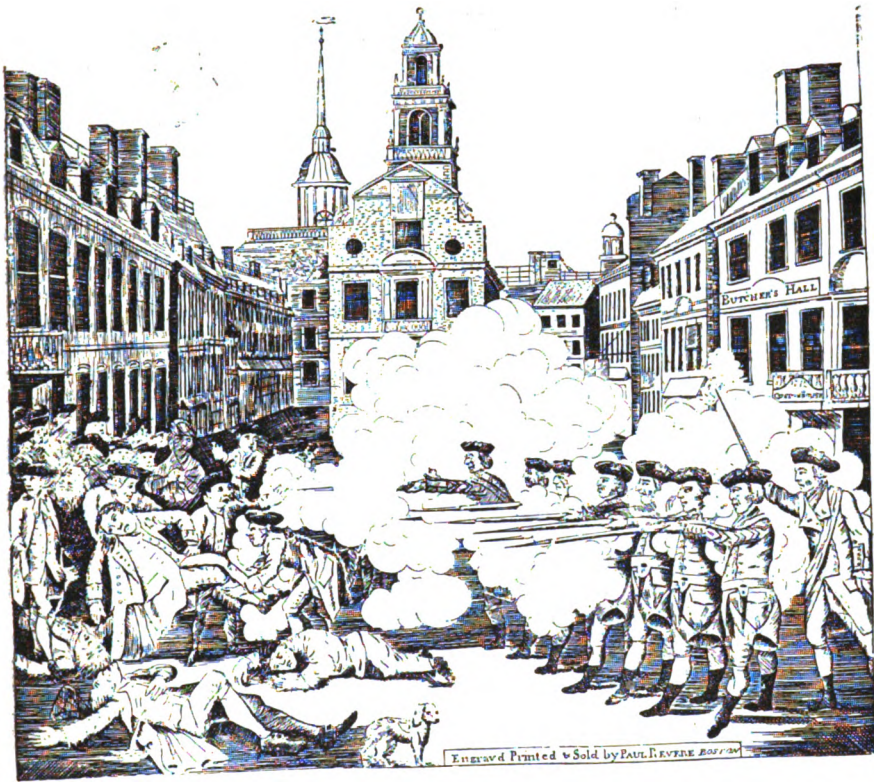
Prior to the sudden birth of his factitious and ephemeral fame the colonial town of Boston was in the throes of uncertainty and agitation. The famous navigation acts of the home government had seriously crippled her commerce, and led to the assignment of custom houses, and the designation of officers to collect the revenue; while the burden thus imposed was greatly added to by the absolute prohibition of the manufacture of any kinds of commodities or goods for which the mother country could find a market here.

Whatever may have been the real feeling of the people, in the face of these unreasonable restrictions upon their trade, it is certain that they still professed the outward semblance of faithful allegiance to the British King. Ample verification of this is to be found in the courtier-like and loyal remarks of the renowned James Otis, at a town meeting held but a short time before, when, with the dignity and courage of conviction, he said, "no constitution of government has appeared in the world so admirably adapted to co-extend, improve and preserve Liberty and Knowledge, civil and religious. Weak and wicked minds have endeavored to infuse jealousies with regard to the colonies; the true interests of Great Britain and her plantations are mutual, and what God in His providence has united let no man dare to put asunder."

But shortly after came the news of the duty that was laid by Parliament on many articles previously exempt, most particularly on sugar and molasses, which had until then been altogether free.

While the whole community regarded as odious that last clause in the provisions of the Act, and while it had a peculiarly irritating, if not absolutely maddening, effect upon the idle and disorderly persons in the town, there was soon far greater cause, in the estimation of them all, for a feeling of resentment, in the passage of the Stamp Act, in March, 1765. This seemed to inspire anger among all classes of the people, and, strange to say, aroused the most unreasoning and violent rage on the part of that very element who were not in any way to be effected by its operation, but who from that moment sought, with the greatest avidity, for the first convenient opportunity to manifest their wrath.

Their chance very soon came in the form of a riot, anticipatory of the disembarkation of the stamps in Boston, and the erection of the structure in which they were to be sold. This *emeute* occurred on the morning of the 14th of August, 1765, when there were found hanging in effigy, on an elm tree, at what is now the corner of Essex and Washington Streets, two figures, grotesquely apparelled, one of them supposed to represent a stamp official, and the other a travesty of Lord Bute, who was known throughout the colony to be one of the closest friends of the King. When night came these representations were borne, by an excited and shouting crowd, to Kilby Street, where was standing a partly-erected building, owned by the government, which was mistakenly supposed to be intended as the official receptacle for the stamps. This housing was completely destroyed by the mob, who took some of its wood work with them to Fort Hill, where they



PAUL REVERE'S ENGRAVING OF THE "BLOODY MASSACRE."

built of it a bonfire, directly in front of the house of Andrew Oliver, who had been designated as agent for the sale of the stamps. There they burnt the personification of Lord Bute, and committed outrages on Oliver's property. Many of the same mob came together again the following evening, at the same place, and piled up material for another bonfire, in which they intended to burn Oliver in effigy. But he saved himself from this ignominy by giving up his office, as more dangerous than honorable, whereupon the crowd, hitherto infuriate against him, caused the fire to blaze brightly in his honor, gave him three rous-

ing cheers, and assured him that he was safe from all danger of harm.

It could not have been sympathy with the mob that withheld the civil authorities from doing their sworn duty, in stopping so disgraceful a scene. Hutchinson, the Lieutenant-Governor, who was a relative of Oliver, was in the latter's house at the time, and urged the sheriff to the adoption of prompt measures, by which the riot might be thoroughly suppressed. Had his advice been followed then much future trouble might have been saved. But the sheriff was stolid and stubborn in his unwillingness to act, and it

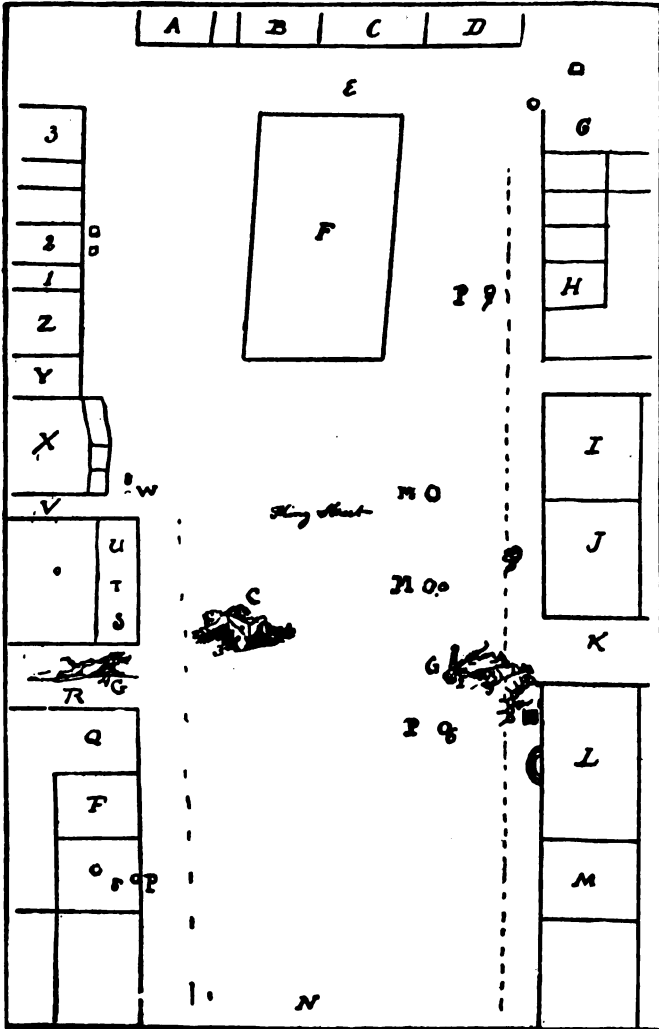
does not seem that he was ever called to account for his wrongful, even criminal, neglect. Hutchinson was the only one who suffered. His judicious counsel was spoken of as an offence against the sovereign people, and he lost much of their confidence and support.

Later on, during the same evening, the mob, after they had left Oliver's, surrounded Hutchinson's own house, in Garden Court Street, and shouted for him to appear and render them an account of himself. But he barred his doors and windows, and quietly remained within, while a rumor was spread throughout the crowd that he was in Milton, passing the night at his country home. On hearing this the mob separated, without having effected any damage besides the breaking of many windows in his house.

In a very short time it was seen that the failure of the civil authorities to quell and subdue these uprisings, and to punish their leading agitators, was to be followed by consequences harmful in the extreme. Of these the most dangerous was the rapid and vast increase of sympathy with the rioters which became every day more manifest among the lower element of the people, and which displayed itself in words and deeds calculated to arouse and excite the public mind. The fury of the idle and dissolute quickly "grew by what it fed on," and they soon gave proof of their evidently settled purpose to render absolutely inevitable an armed conflict between the authorities and themselves.

Was this aggregation of idle apprentices, and their ilk, such as in these days we would call vagabonds and tramps, actually "build-

ing better than they knew"? Is it imaginable that into their ignorant minds had percolated a minute atom of liberty's divine afflatus, inspiring them to believe that *their* blood, if it could be spilt, would become "the blood of the martyrs," and so prove "the seed of the Church"? No! It is impossible to frame for them any such shadow of plausible excuse. They were simply the representatives of that wicked and vicious element which at all serious crises in the history of every nation forces itself to the front, to profit, if unopposed, by the general alarm and confusion of the times. Unhindered by the officers of the law and winked at by those as base as but less courageous than themselves, they persisted in their pernicious course until, on the 26th of August, they precipitated a riot even more disgraceful than any which had yet occurred. At nightfall they built and lit a bonfire in King Street, now called State, which seems to have been agreed upon as a signal to summon together a rough body of men, disguised and armed with clubs, who recklessly committed a number of outrages. They first broke into the office of the Register of the Admiralty Court, and abstracted his own private papers, together with the public records in his keeping, with all of which they fed the fire high. Then they forced the windows of the Comptroller of Customs, in Hanover Street, destroyed his furniture, stole his money, and used up all the choice wines in his cellar, as stimulants to feed their fury and prompt them to excesses still more extreme. Hutchinson had hardly time for himself and family to make their escape from his house ere the raging mob arrived;



REVERE'S PEN AND INK PLAN OF KING STREET AND VICINITY.

and thus, no doubt, murder was averted, which would have been the crowning outrage of that infamous night. His doors were hewn with axes, and everything of value in the house was stolen, including a large amount of money, a great deal of very fine plate, and papers which to-day would be of inestimable value could they have

been saved. Then, maddened by the strong wines which they found within the house, they demolished the roof and tore down the wood work. And here again one is lost in wonder at the seemingly studied indifference of the authorities, in the face of such lawless scenes. There is no lack of evidence that

they were fully aware of the existence and progress of the outrageous doings of the mob. And still they made no sign. They were even more than passive. They were apparently oblivious to the incalculable damage that was being wrought—a damage far more ominous than the mere loss of property—an utter defiance of law and order, to be followed by the actual shedding of blood and loss of life.

But in their own conceit they were wise—the next day! After the riot was over they denounced its perpetrators! After the money and goods had been stolen they bemoaned their theft! After the law had been outraged and trampled upon, the citizens in town meeting assembled desired the magistrates and “all good people” to exert their efforts to prevent the repetition of such scenes!

It is pleasant to feel sure that the real patriots of the day entertained not the least doubt as to whether the actors in these lawless deeds ought to have been praised or censured—coddled or punished. In a letter written by Samuel Adams, just at this time, he branded as “high-handed outrages” the doings of this pestilent mob.

But the writing of letters, however energetic, was not to stop them in their nefarious work. Vice active always conquers virtue inactive. By reason, no doubt, of the mysterious and inexplicable silence of the officers of the law the mob spirit fast augmented, and it was resolved that on the very next night, August 27th, the Custom House should be taken by assault and pillaged of its valuable stores. But fortunately this intention came to be known in time,

and inasmuch as there were several thousand pounds of specie in the building the Governor, at the urgent request of the Collector, called out the Cadets, who formed his body guard. When the mob assembled they were addressed by the officer in command of the corps—persuasively at first, then threateningly—but both were found to be in vain. Then the company were ordered to prime and load, and the rioters again asked to give way. Immovable, though, they remained, until the order to aim was given, when they rapidly dispersed.

Then, at last, there was an effort to enforce the law against the culprits, and several of the rioters of August 26th were arrested and held for trial. But a large number of sympathizers—fellow criminals perhaps—forced the gaol at night, and released them from custody.

Encouraged by the success of this last audacious move, the mob spirit grew more rampant still, and there were frequent incidents of a riotous sort. Unpopular officials were hanged and burned in effigy. Often there were displays of open and virulent hostility against the government. In all of these cases no doubt has ever been expressed but that the mischief makers were destitute of the slightest excuse for their encroachments upon the peace and quiet of the town. Yet they were unpunished, even unmolested, and by consequence their arrogance and recklessness so fast increased, that the actual presence of troops finally came to be considered an absolute necessity. That nothing save this could have restored and secured tranquility among the people, has always been remembered with re-

gret by those who treasure the memories of the American Revolution. Throughout those long and perilous hours of public travail and alarm, the voice of patriotism seems to have been entirely hushed. The prominent and leading men among the people — those who afterwards seized upon and directed the storm, when once it had been ushered into being — were so strangely silent and inert, so unwilling to make any effort to calm the troubled waters of tumult and disorder, that they may safely be regarded as having, by their utter inactivity, indirectly encouraged Bernard, the royal governor, to issue the orders that were to summon into their midst the armed representatives of that kingly power which they denominated as tyrannous and despotic, and against which, even then, they were preparing to rebel. It was the irony of fate, the sadness of which was only to be relieved by the end that was at last attained.

On the 28th of September, 1768, about one thousand British Regulars were marched into the town. Only eleven days after, there was an exhibition of resentment against them by the people, who in their causeless anger so utterly destroyed the frame work of a guard

house, in process of erection, that no portion of it could thereafter be put to any use. From that moment there were constant conflicts, led principally by the ropemakers of the town, and in which the soldiers generally got the worst of it. By degrees the mutual hatred and animosity were kindled into fever heat, daily intensified, until, on the 5th of March, 1770, the famous "Boston Massacre"* assumed its place among the principal landmarks of the Revolutionary War. The riot which led to it is said to have been carefully prearranged. Certainly there is good cause to suppose so, as at about 8 o'clock in the evening one of the town bells was violently rung, and immediately several separate bands of men — composed in greater part of negroes, white servants, Irishmen, and idle apprentices — and all of them armed with clubs — made their appearance in the streets. They were led by Crispus Attucks, said to be a gigantic negro, who is not known, however, to have been a slave at that time, if, indeed, he had ever been one. He had, before this, been prominent in riots, that were similarly unprovoked. If it be true, as the negroes claim, that he was of their race, he could hardly have been

* The engraving of the Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street, Boston, on March 5th, 1770, by a party of the 29th Regt. bears the following imprint. "Engraved, Printed and Sold by PAUL REVERE, BOSTON." It was a large tilded copper-plate issued in the "Short Narrative" by the Town and printed by Edes & Gill. There are but few of the original engravings in existence. The Bostonian Society has one hanging on its walls which has been hand-colored and which bears on the reverse side the following significant inscription. "Given in 1825 to Josiah Quincy, Jr., (1772-1864) by his aunt, Mrs. Storer, sister of Josiah Quincy, Jr., who defended Captain Preston."

Hon. Mellin Chamberlain has in his possession Revere's pen-and-ink plan of the scene of the massacre which was used in the trial of the British soldiers. It shows the position of the troops when they fired, of the citizens who fell, the topography of the scene, the streets and houses surrounding the old State House in an excellent manner. This has

been reproduced in Mr. Chamberlain's chapter, "The Revolution Impending," in the Narrative and Critical History of America, Vol. VI., Chapter I., a fac-simile of which is here given. The key is as follows. A. Dr. Jones; B. Doctor Roberts; C. Brigdens, goldsmith; D. John Nazro, store; E. Main Street; F. Town House; G. Brazen Head; H. Benj. Kent, Esq., house; I. Mrs. Clapham; J. Exchange Tavern; K. Exchange Lane; L. Custom House; M. Col. Marshall's House; N. "N. B.—The pricked line is the gutter"; O. Mr. Amory's house; P. Mr. Davis's house; Q. Mr. Amory's house; R. Quaker Lane; S. Warden and Vernon's shop; T. Levi Jennings' shop; U. Mr. Peck, wa [t] ch maker's shop; V. Court Square; W. Whipping-post; X. J. & D. Waldo, shop; Y. Pudin Lane; Z. G. C. Phillip's house; 1. Ezk. Prince, Esq., office; 2. Guard House; 3. Mr. Bowse, shop. The key to the letters in the streets which was a part of the original drawing is lost.

EDITOR.

more than a quadron. He was six feet, two inches high, was possessed of herculean strength, and led the rioters with a savage cry that certainly indicated a large share of the Indian character. At nine o'clock, a sentinel stationed in front of the Custom House, in King Street, was attacked by a crowd of men and boys, who struck him repeatedly with pieces of ice and coal, and threatened him with their clubs. As military rule required that he should not leave his post, he shouted for aid and at once a corporal and seven men came to his relief, from the barracks in Brattle Street. Their commanding officer, present with them, was Captain Preston, who strove to temper the angry passions of the mob. But by that time their number had greatly increased, and they were grown determined on violence. They imagined that the soldiers were helpless, as it was thought that they were only allowed to fire when ordered to do so by a civil magistrate. Time and again the rioters challenged them to fire, and poured upon them a torrent of villification and profanity, while the soldiers stood calmly on the defensive, their lives constantly endangered by a hail of flying missiles, until the mob closed in upon them, in a conflict that was hand to hand. The leader of this furious onslaught is claimed to have been Crispus Attucks, who for his infamous prominence in this ruffianly attack upon the conservators of the peace, has been enrolled among the revolutionary nobility of our grand old Commonwealth. He knocked down one of the soldiers, took from him his gun, and would doubtless have killed him at once

had not the soldiers fortunately fired, at that instant, and killed Attucks, and two others of the mob.

After calm and disinterested investigation, conscientiously persevered in during many years, this is the generally accepted verdict upon that unfortunate and ominous affray. There have been many other accounts of it, all of them apparently intended to transfer the larger portion of the blame to the military force. But the records do not justify any such interpretation of what actually took place. It was usual with the idle element of the town to attribute to the soldiers the utmost possible blame, in every event of an untoward or harmful character. But the unprejudiced and impartial reader will, no doubt, recognize the truth, as transmitted to us by Samuel G. Drake, a loyal, though liberty-loving citizen of Boston, who writes "that outrages were committed by the soldiers is no doubt true; but those outrages were exaggerated, and they, probably in nine cases out of ten, were the injured party."

Censure has also been directed against Captain Preston, who ordered the troops to open fire upon the mob; but apart from the undeniable fact that he cannot possibly have deserved any blame, inasmuch as the firing was the only means left to the soldiers for their own defence, it must be remembered that he was legally tried for murder and triumphantly acquitted of the charge. The presiding judge was Chief Justice Lynde, famed for his stern integrity and righteous impartiality. At the close of the trial he uttered these memorable words, pregnant with meaning, as they echo down the

corridors of time: "Happy am I to find, after such strict examination, the conduct of the prisoner appear in so fair a light; yet I feel myself deeply affected that this affair turns out so much to the disgrace of every person concerned against him, and so much to the shame of the town in general."

The soldiers, too, were indicted for murder. Six of them were acquitted, and two convicted of manslaughter, the latter on unquestionable evidence that plainly connected them with the vital wounds inflicted upon the persons whom they slew. During the progress of the case it was found that the most important and valuable testimony was that of the widely known surgeon, John Jeffries, who had attended one Patrick Carr, an Irishman, fatally wounded in the affray. His evidence was in these words: "Carr told me that he saw many things thrown at the sentry; he believed they were oyster shells and ice; he heard the people hurrah every time they heard anything strike that sounded hard; he then saw some soldiers going down to the Custom House; he saw the people pelt them as they went along; I asked him whether he thought the soldiers would fire; he told me he thought the soldiers would have fired long before; I then asked him if he thought the soldiers were abused a good deal after they went down there; he said he thought they were; I asked him if he thought the soldiers would have been hurt if they had not fired; he said he really thought they would, for he heard many voices cry out 'kill them!' I asked him, meaning to close all, whether he thought they fired in

self defence or on purpose to destroy the people; he said he really thought they did fire to defend themselves; that he did not blame the man, whoever he was, that shot him. He told me he was a native of Ireland, that he had frequently seen mobs, and soldiers called upon to quell them. Whenever he mentioned that, he called himself a fool, and said that he might have known better, that he had seen soldiers often fire on people in Ireland, but had never in his life seen them bear half so much before they fired."

This testimony, given by an honorable professional gentleman, as having come from the lips of one of the attacking party—willingly spoken, too, while on his death bed, and momentarily expecting the dread summons to arrive—should have forever silenced the expression of any desire to idealise the principal aggressor in the hideous work of that memorable night. All concurrent evidence fully agrees with this view of the case. But in spite of it all we have seen fit, at this late day, to perpetrate the grotesque and charivarish canonization of this reckless conspirator against the dignity and majesty of the law—the utter bathos and absurdity of which performance has been most scathingly alluded to by the eminent writer, Andrew Preston Peabody, in the following striking words: "About the time when this public tribute (the Attucks monument) was decreed to the rioters of the last century, there were within three or four miles of the State House, two brutal mobs, hurling stones and brickbats, in professed championship of the rights of labor, for whose leaders,

had they been slain by the police, our legislature must, in self-consistency, have voted commemorative bronze or marble, with inscriptions indicative of public respect, reverence, and gratitude."

We would not obliterate the arrangement of the stones which mark the spot, on State Street, where Attucks met his death. They should remain there, as in commemoration of the long continued patience and courageous

endurance of the royal authorities, as well as of the law abiding people of the town, in the face of constant insult, robbery and violence.

And the figure on the monument in the Common! Should it remain as it is, the representative of patriotism and resistance to tyranny? Or, as is usual with public malefactors, should it be loaded with chains about its limbs, and gyves around its wrists?

FRANKLIN J. MOSES.

