

Boston; 1773

The Governor had stolen away to his country house at Milton. Bidding Rotch make all haste, the Meeting adjourned to three in the afternoon. At that hour Rotch had not returned. It was incidentally voted, as other towns had already done, to abstain totally from the use of tea; and every
5 town was advised to appoint its Committee of inspection, to prevent the detested tea from coming within any of them. Then, since the Governor might refuse his pass, the momentous question recurred, 'Whether it be the sense and determination of this body to abide by their former Resolutions with respect to the not suffering the tea to be landed.' On this question Samuel Adams and Young⁵⁸ addressed the Meeting, which was become far the most numerous ever held in Boston,
10 embracing seven thousand men.⁵⁹ There was among them a patriot of fervid feeling; passionately devoted to the liberty of his country; still young; his eye bright, his cheek glowing with hectic fever. He knew that his strength was ebbing. The work of vindicating American freedom must be done soon, or he will be no party to the great achievement. He rises, but it is to restrain, and being truly brave and truly resolved, he speaks the language of moderation: 'Shouts and hosannas will not
15 terminate the trials of this day, nor popular resolves, harangues, and acclamations vanquish our foes. We must be grossly ignorant of the value of the prize for which we contend, of the power combined against us, of the inveterate malice and insatiable revenge which actuate our enemies, public and private, abroad and in our bosom, if we hope that we shall end this controversy without the sharpest conflicts. Let us consider the issue, before we advance to those measures, which must
20 bring on the most trying and terrible struggle this country ever saw.' Thus spoke the younger Quincy. 'Now that the hand is to the plough,' said others, 'there must be no looking back,'⁶⁰ and the whole Assembly of seven thousand voted unanimously that the tea should not be landed.

It had been dark for more than an hour. The Church in which they met was dimly lighted; when at a quarter before six Rotch appeared, and satisfied the people by relating that the Governor had
25 refused him a pass, because his ship was not properly cleared. As soon as he had finished his report, Samuel Adams rose and gave the word: 'This Meeting can do nothing more to save the country.'⁶¹ On the instant a shout was heard at the porch; the warwhoop resounded; a body of men, forty or fifty⁶² in number, disguised as Indians, passed by the door; and encouraged by Samuel Adams, Hancock and others, repaired to Griffin's wharf, posted guards to prevent the intrusion of spies, took
30 possession of the three tea-ships, and in about three hours, three hundred and forty chests of tea, being the whole quantity that had been imported, were emptied into the bay without the least injury to other property. 'All things were conducted with great order, decency, and perfect submission to government.'⁶³ The people around, as they looked on, were so still, that the noise of breaking open the tea-chests⁶⁴ was plainly heard. A delay of a few hours would have placed the tea under the
35 protection of the Admiral at the Castle. After the work was done, the town became as still and calm, as if it had been holy time. The men from the country that very night carried back the great news to their villages.

The next morning the Committee of Correspondence appointed Samuel Adams and four others, to draw up a declaration of what had been done. They sent Paul Revere as express with the
40 information to New-York and Philadelphia.

The height of joy that sparkled in the eyes and animated the countenances and the hearts of the patriots as they met one another, is unimaginable.⁶⁵ The Governor, meantime, was consulting his books and his lawyers to make out, that the Resolves of the meeting were treasonable. Threats were muttered of arrests; of executions; of transportation of the accused to England; while the Committee
45 of Correspondence pledged themselves to support and vindicate each other and all persons who had shared in their effort. The country was united with the town, and the Colonies with one another more firmly than ever.⁶⁶ The Philadelphians unanimously approved what Boston had done.⁶⁷ New-York,⁶⁸ all impatient at the winds which had driven its tea-ship off the coast, was resolved on following the example.

50 In South Carolina the ship with two hundred and fifty-seven chests of tea, arrived on the second of December; the spirit of opposition ran very high; but the consignees were persuaded to resign, so that though the Collector after the twentieth day seized the dutiable article, there was no one to vend it or to pay the duty, and it perished in the cellars where it was stored.

Late on Saturday, the twenty-fifth, news reached Philadelphia, that its tea-ship was at Chester.
55 It was met four miles below the town, where it came to anchor. On Monday, at an hour's notice, five thousand men collected in a Town Meeting; at their instance, the consignee who came as passenger resigned; and the Captain agreed to take his ship and cargo directly back to London; and to sail the very next day.⁶⁹ 'The Ministry had chosen the most effectual measures to unite the Colonies. The Boston Committee were already in close correspondence with the other New England Colonies,
60 with New-York and Pennsylvania. Old jealousies were removed and perfect harmony subsisted between all.'⁷⁰ 'The heart of the King was hardened against them like that of Pharaoh,'⁷¹ and none believed he would relent. Union, therefore, was the cry; a union which should reach 'from Florida to the icy plains' of Canada. 'No time is to be lost,' said the Boston Press; 'a Congress or a Meeting of the American States is indispensable; and what the people wills, shall be effected.'⁷² Samuel
65 Adams was in his glory.⁷³ He had led Boston to be foremost in duty, and cheerfully offer itself as a sacrifice for the liberties of mankind.

58 Dr. Wm. Tyler's Deposition.

59 S. Adams to A. Lee, 21 Dec. 1773.

60 William Turner's Deposition.

5 61 Francis Rotch's Information before the Privy Council.

62 J. D. Whitworth's Deposition.

63 John Adams to James Warren, 17 Dec. 1773.

64 Hugh Williamson's Deposition.

65 S. Adams to A. Lee, 21 Dec.

10 66 Cooper to Franklin, 17 Dec. 1773; S. Adams to James Warren, 28 Dec. 1773. 1773.

67 Clymer and Mifflin to S. Adams.

68 Haldimand to Dartmouth, 28 Dec. 1773.

69 Geo. Clymer and Thomas Mifflin to Samuel Adams, 27 Dec.

70 S. Adams to James Warren, 28 Dec. 1773.

15 71 Compare [489] A. Lee to S. Adams, Dec. 1773.

72 Boston Gazette, 27 Dec. 1773; 977, 1, 2 and 3.

73 Hutchinson to——, 30 Dec. 1773.