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Hawthorne

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Title: Old News

Author: Nathaniel Hawthorne

Release date: November 1, 2005 [EBook #9239]

Most recently updated: May 16, 2022

Language: English

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# Old News

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

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There is a volume of what were once newspapers each on a small half-sheet, yellow and time-stained, of a coarse fabric, and imprinted with a rude old type. Their aspect conveys a singular impression of antiquity, in a species of literature which we are accustomed to consider as connected only with the present moment. Ephemeral as they were intended and supposed to be, they have long outlived the printer and his whole subscription-list, and have proved more durable, as to their physical existence, than most of the timber, bricks, and stone of the town where they were issued. These are but the least of their triumphs. The government, the interests, the opinions, in short, all the moral circumstances that were contemporary with their publication, have passed away, and left no better record of what they were than may be found in these frail leaves. Happy are the editors of newspapers! Their productions excel all others in immediate popularity, and are certain to acquire another sort of value with the lapse of time. They scatter their leaves to the wind, as the sibyl did, and posterity collects them, to be treasured up among the best materials of its wisdom. With hasty pens they write for immortality.

It is pleasant to take one of these little dingy half-sheets between the thumb and finger, and picture forth the personage who, above ninety years ago, held it, wet from the press, and steaming, before the fire. Many of the numbers bear the name of an old colonial dignitary. There he sits, a major, a member of the council, and a weighty merchant, in his high-backed arm-chair, wearing a solemn wig and grave attire, such as befits his imposing gravity of mien, and displaying but little finery, except a huge pair of silver shoe-buckles, curiously carved. Observe the awful reverence of his visage, as he reads his Majesty's most gracious speech; and the deliberate wisdom with which he ponders over some paragraph of provincial politics, and the keener intelligence with which he glances at the ship-news and commercial advertisements. Observe, and smile! He may have been a wise man in his day; but, to us, the wisdom of the politician appears like folly, because we can compare its prognostics with actual results; and the old merchant seems to have busied himself about vanities, because we know that the expected ships have been lost at sea, or mouldered at the wharves; that his imported broadcloths were long ago worn to tatters, and his cargoes of wine quaffed to the lees; and that the most precious leaves of his ledger have become waste-paper. Yet, his avocations were not so vain as our philosophic moralizing. In this world we are the things of a moment, and are made to pursue momentary things, with here and there a thought that stretches mistily towards eternity, and perhaps may endure as long. All philosophy that would abstract mankind from the present is no more than words.

The first pages of most of these old papers are as soporific as a bed of poppies. Here we have an erudite clergyman, or perhaps a Cambridge professor, occupying several successive weeks with a criticism on Tate and Brady, as compared with the New England version of the Psalms. Of course, the preference is given to the native article. Here are doctors disagreeing about the treatment of a putrid fever then prevalent, and blackguarding each other with a characteristic virulence that renders the controversy not altogether unreadable. Here are President Wigglesworth and the Rev. Dr. Colman, endeavoring to raise a fund for the support of missionaries among the Indians of Massachusetts Bay. Easy would be the duties of such a mission now! Here—for there is nothing new under the sun—are frequent complaints of the disordered state of the currency, and the project of a bank with a capital of five hundred thousand pounds, secured on lands. Here are literary essays, from the Gentleman's Magazine; and squibs against the Pretender, from the London newspapers. And here, occasionally, are specimens of New England honor, laboriously light and lamentably mirthful, as if some very sober person, in his zeal to be merry, were dancing a jig to the tune of a funeral-psalm. All this is wearisome, and we must turn the leaf.

There is a good deal of amusement, and some profit, in the perusal of those little items which characterize the manners and circumstances of the country. New England was then in a state incomparably more picturesque than at present, or than it has been within the memory of man; there being, as yet, only a narrow strip of civilization along the edge of a vast forest, peopled with enough of its original race to contrast the savage life with the old customs of another world. The white population, also, was diversified by the influx of all sorts of expatriated vagabonds, and by the continual importation of bond-servants from Ireland and elsewhere, so that there was a wild and unsettled multitude, forming a strong minority to the sober descendants of the Puritans. Then, there were the slaves, contributing their dark shade to the picture

of society. The consequence of all this was a great variety and singularity of action and incident, many instances of which might be selected from these columns, where they are told with a simplicity and quaintness of style that bring the striking points into very strong relief. It is natural to suppose, too, that these circumstances affected the body of the people, and made their course of life generally less regular than that of their descendants. There is no evidence that the moral standard was higher then than now; or, indeed, that morality was so well defined as it has since become. There seem to have been quite as many frauds and robberies, in proportion to the number of honest deeds; there were murders, in hot-blood and in malice; and bloody quarrels over liquor. Some of our fathers also appear to have been yoked to unfaithful wives, if we may trust the frequent notices of elopements from bed and board. The pillory, the whipping-post, the prison, and the gallows, each had their use in those old times; and, in short, as often as our imagination lives in the past, we find it a ruder and rougher age than our own, with hardly any perceptible advantages, and much that gave life a gloomier tinge. In vain we endeavor to throw a sunny and joyous air over our picture of this period; nothing passes before our fancy but a crowd of sad-visaged people, moving duskily through a dull gray atmosphere. It is certain that winter rushed upon them with fiercer storms than now, blocking up the narrow forest-paths, and overwhelming the roads along the sea-coast with mountain snow drifts; so that weeks elapsed before the newspaper could announce how many travellers had perished, or what wrecks had strewn the shore. The cold was more piercing then, and lingered further into the spring, making the chimney-corner a comfortable seat till long past May-day. By the number of such accidents on record, we might suppose that the thunder-stone, as they termed it, fell oftener and deadlier on steeples, dwellings, and unsheltered wretches. In fine, our fathers bore the brunt of more raging and pitiless elements than we. There were forebodings, also, of a more fearful tempest than those of the elements. At two or three dates, we have stories of drums, trumpets, and all sorts of martial music, passing athwart the midnight sky, accompanied with the—roar of cannon and rattle of musketry, prophetic echoes of the sounds that were soon to shake the land. Besides these airy prognostics, there were rumors of French fleets on the coast, and of the march of French and Indians through the wilderness, along the borders of the settlements. The country was saddened, moreover, with grievous sicknesses. The small-pox raged in many of the towns, and seems, though so familiar a scourge, to have been regarded with as much affright as that which drove the throng from Wall Street and Broadway at the approach of a new pestilence. There were autumnal fevers too, and a contagious and destructive throat-distemper,—diseases unwritten in medical books. The dark superstition of former days had not yet been so far dispelled as not to heighten the gloom of the present times. There is an advertisement, indeed, by a committee of the Legislature, calling for information as to the circumstances of sufferers in the “late calamity of 1692,” with a view to reparation for their losses and misfortunes. But the tenderness with which, after above forty years, it was thought expedient to allude to the witchcraft delusion, indicates a good deal of lingering error, as well as the advance of more enlightened opinions. The rigid hand of Puritanism might yet be felt upon the reins of government, while some of the ordinances intimate a disorderly spirit on the part of the people. The Suffolk justices, after a preamble that great disturbances have been committed by persons entering town and leaving it in coaches, chaises, calashes, and other wheel-carriages, on the evening before the Sabbath, give notice that a watch will hereafter be set at the “fortification-gate,” to prevent these outrages. It is amusing to see Boston assuming the aspect of a walled city, guarded, probably, by a detachment of church-members, with a deacon at their head. Governor Belcher makes proclamation against certain “loose and dissolute people” who have been wont to stop passengers in the streets, on the Fifth of November, “otherwise called Pope’s Day,” and levy contributions for the building of bonfires. In this instance, the populace are more puritanic than the magistrate.

The elaborate solemnities of funerals were in accordance with the sombre character of the times. In cases of ordinary death, the printer seldom fails to notice that the corpse was “very decently interred.” But when some mightier mortal has yielded to his fate, the decease of the “worshipful” such-a-one is announced, with all his titles of deacon, justice, councillor, and colonel; then follows an heraldic sketch of his honorable ancestors, and lastly an account of the black pomp of his funeral, and the liberal expenditure of scarfs, gloves, and mourning

rings. The burial train glides slowly before us, as we have seen it represented in the woodcuts of that day, the coffin, and the bearers, and the lamentable friends, trailing their long black garments, while grim Death, a most misshapen skeleton, with all kinds of doleful emblems, stalks hideously in front. There was a coach maker at this period, one John Lucas, who scents to have gained the chief of his living by letting out a sable coach to funerals. It would not be fair, however, to leave quite so dismal an impression on the reader's mind; nor should it be forgotten that happiness may walk soberly in dark attire, as well as dance lightsofely in a gala-dress. And this reminds us that there is an incidental notice of the "dancing-school near the Orange-Tree," whence we may infer that the salutatory art was occasionally practised, though perhaps chastened into a characteristic gravity of movement. This pastime was probably confined to the aristocratic circle, of which the royal governor was the centre. But we are scandalized at the attempt of Jonathan Furness to introduce a more reprehensible amusement: he challenges the whole country to match his black gelding in a race for a hundred pounds, to be decided on Metonomy Common or Chelsea Beach. Nothing as to the manners of the times can be inferred from this freak of an individual. There were no daily and continual opportunities of being merry; but sometimes the people rejoiced, in their own peculiar fashion, oftener with a calm, religious smile than with a broad laugh, as when they feasted, like one great family, at Thanksgiving time, or indulged a livelier mirth throughout the pleasant days of Election-week. This latter was the true holiday season of New England. Military musters were too seriously important in that warlike time to be classed among amusements; but they stirred up and enlivened the public mind, and were occasions of solemn festival to the governor and great men of the province, at the expense of the field-offices. The Revolution blotted a feast-day out of our calendar; for the anniversary of the king's birth appears to have been celebrated with most imposing pomp, by salutes from Castle William, a military parade, a grand dinner at the town-house, and a brilliant illumination in the evening. There was nothing forced nor feigned in these testimonials of loyalty to George the Second. So long as they dreaded the re-establishment of a popish dynasty, the people were fervent for the house of Hanover: and, besides, the immediate magistracy of the country was a barrier between the monarch and the occasional discontents of the colonies; the waves of faction sometimes reached the governor's chair, but never swelled against the throne. Thus, until oppression was felt to proceed from the king's own hand, New England rejoiced with her whole heart on his Majesty's birthday.

But the slaves, we suspect, were the merriest part of the population, since it was their gift to be merry in the worst of circumstances; and they endured, comparatively, few hardships, under the domestic sway of our fathers. There seems to have been a great trade in these human commodities. No advertisements are more frequent than those of "a negro fellow, fit for almost any household work"; "a negro woman, honest, healthy, and capable"; "a negro wench of many desirable qualities"; "a negro man, very fit for a taylor." We know not in what this natural fitness for a tailor consisted, unless it were some peculiarity of conformation that enabled him to sit cross-legged. When the slaves of a family were inconveniently prolific,—it being not quite orthodox to drown the superfluous offspring, like a litter of kittens,—notice was promulgated of "a negro child to be given away." Sometimes the slaves assumed the property of their own persons, and made their escape; among many such instances, the governor raises a hue-and-cry after his negro Juba. But, without venturing a word in extenuation of the general system, we confess our opinion that Caesar, Pompey, Scipio, and all such great Roman namesakes, would have been better advised had they stayed at home, foddering the cattle, cleaning dishes,—in fine, performing their moderate share of the labors of life, without being harassed by its cares. The sable inmates of the mansion were not excluded from the domestic affections: in families of middling rank, they had their places at the board; and when the circle closed round the evening hearth, its blaze glowed on their dark shining faces, intermixed familiarly with their master's children. It must have contributed to reconcile them to their lot, that they saw white men and women imported from Europe as they had been from Africa, and sold, though only for a term of years, yet as actual slaves to the highest bidder. Slave labor being but a small part of the industry of the country, it did not change the character of the people; the latter, on the contrary, modified and softened the institution, making it a patriarchal, and almost a beautiful, peculiarity of the times.

Ah! We had forgotten the good old merchant, over whose shoulder we

were peeping, while he read the newspaper. Let us now suppose him putting on his three-cornered gold-laced hat, grasping his cane, with a head inlaid of ebony and mother-of-pearl, and setting forth, through the crooked streets of Boston, on various errands, suggested by the advertisements of the day. Thus he communes with himself: I must be mindful, says he, to call at Captain Scut's, in Creek Lane, and examine his rich velvet, whether it be fit for my apparel on Election-day,—that I may wear a stately aspect in presence of the governor and my brethren of the council. I will look in, also, at the shop of Michael Cario, the jeweller: he has silver buckles of a new fashion; and mine have lasted me some half-score years. My fair daughter Miriam shall have an apron of gold brocade, and a velvet mask,—though it would be a pity the wench should hide her comely visage; and also a French cap, from Robert Jenkins's, on the north side of the town-house. He hath beads, too, and ear-rings, and necklaces, of all sorts; these are but vanities, nevertheless, they would please the silly maiden well. My dame desireth another female in the kitchen; wherefore, I must inspect the lot of Irish lasses, for sale by Samuel Waldo, aboard the schooner Endeavor; as also the likely negro wench, at Captain Bulfinch's. It were not amiss that I took my daughter Miriam to see the royal waxwork, near the town-dock, that she may learn to honor our most gracious King and Queen, and their royal progeny, even in their waxen images; not that I would approve of image-worship. The camel, too, that strange beast from Africa, with two great humps, to be seen near the Common; methinks I would fain go thither, and see how the old patriarchs were wont to ride. I will tarry awhile in Queen Street, at the bookstore of my good friends Kneeland & Green, and purchase Dr. Colman's new sermon, and the volume of discourses by Mr. Henry Flynt; and look over the controversy on baptism, between the Rev. Peter Clarke and an unknown adversary; and see whether this George Whitefield be as great in print as he is famed to be in the pulpit. By that time, the auction will have commenced at the Royal Exchange, in King Street. Moreover, I must look to the disposal of my last cargo of West India rum and muscovado sugar; and also the lot of choice Cheshire cheese, lest it grow mouldy. It were well that I ordered a cask of good English beer, at the lower end of Milk Street.

Then am I to speak with certain dealers about the lot of stout old Vidonia, rich Canary, and Oporto-wines, which I have now lying in the cellar of the Old South meeting-house. But, a pipe or two of the rich Canary shall be reserved, that it may grow mellow in mine own wine-cellar, and gladden my heart when it begins to droop with old age.

Provident old gentleman! But, was he mindful of his sepulchre? Did he bethink him to call at the workshop of Timothy Sheaffe, in Cold Lane, and select such a gravestone as would best please him? There wrought the man whose handiwork, or that of his fellow-craftsmen, was ultimately in demand by all the busy multitude who have left a record of their earthly toil in these old time-stained papers. And now, as we turn over the volume, we seem to be wandering among the mossy stones of a burial-ground.

## II. THE OLD FRENCH WAR.

At a period about twenty years subsequent to that of our former sketch, we again attempt a delineation of some of the characteristics of life and manners in New England. Our text-book, as before, is a file of antique newspapers. The volume which serves us for a writing-desk is a folio of larger dimensions than the one before described; and the papers are generally printed on a whole sheet, sometimes with a supplemental leaf of news and advertisements. They have a venerable appearance, being overspread with a duskiness of more than seventy years, and discolored, here and there, with the deeper stains of some liquid, as if the contents of a wineglass had long since been splashed upon the page. Still, the old book conveys an impression that, when the separate numbers were flying about town, in the first day or two of their respective existences, they might have been fit reading for very stylish people. Such newspapers could have been issued nowhere but in a metropolis the centre, not only of public and private affairs, but of fashion and gayety. Without any discredit to the colonial press, these might have been, and probably were, spread out on the tables of the British coffee-house, in King Street, for the perusal of the throng of officers who then drank their wine at that celebrated establishment. To interest these military gentlemen, there were bulletins of the war between Prussia and Austria; between England and France, on the old battle-plains of Flanders; and between the same antagonists, in the newer fields of the East Indies,—and in our own trackless woods, where

white men never trod until they came to fight there. Or, the travelled American, the *petit-maitre* of the colonies,—the ape of London foppery, as the newspaper was the semblance of the London journals,—he, with his gray powdered periwig, his embroidered coat, lace ruffles, and glossy silk stockings, golden-clocked,—his buckles of glittering paste, at knee-band and shoe-strap,—his scented handkerchief, and chapeau beneath his arm, even such a dainty figure need not have disdained to glance at these old yellow pages, while they were the mirror of passing times. For his amusement, there were essays of wit and humor, the light literature of the day, which, for breadth and license, might have proceeded from the pen of Fielding or Smollet; while, in other columns, he would delight his imagination with the enumerated items of all sorts of finery, and with the rival advertisements of half a dozen peruke-makers. In short, newer manners and customs had almost entirely superseded those of the Puritans, even in their own city of refuge.

It was natural that, with the lapse of time and increase of wealth and population, the peculiarities of the early settlers should have waxed fainter and fainter through the generations of their descendants, who also had been alloyed by a continual accession of emigrants from many countries and of all characters. It tended to assimilate the colonial manners to those of the mother-country, that the commercial intercourse was great, and that the merchants often went thither in their own ships. Indeed, almost every man of adequate fortune felt a yearning desire, and even judged it a filial duty, at least once in his life, to visit the home of his ancestors. They still called it their own home, as if New England were to them, what many of the old Puritans had considered it, not a permanent abiding-place, but merely a lodge in the wilderness, until the trouble of the times should be passed. The example of the royal governors must have had much influence on the manners of the colonists; for these rulers assumed a degree of state and splendor which had never been practised by their predecessors, who differed in nothing from republican chief-magistrates, under the old charter. The officers of the crown, the public characters in the interest of the administration, and the gentlemen of wealth and good descent, generally noted for their loyalty, would constitute a dignified circle, with the governor in the centre, bearing a very passable resemblance to a court. Their ideas, their habits, their bode of courtesy, and their dress would have all the fresh glitter of fashions immediately derived from the fountain-head, in England. To prevent their modes of life from becoming the standard with all who had the ability to imitate them, there was no longer an undue severity of religion, nor as yet any disaffection to British supremacy, nor democratic prejudices against pomp. Thus, while the colonies were attaining that strength which was soon to render them an independent republic, it might have been supposed that the wealthier classes were growing into an aristocracy, and ripening for hereditary rank, while the poor were to be stationary in their abasement, and the country, perhaps, to be a sister monarchy with England. Such, doubtless, were the plausible conjectures deduced from the superficial phenomena of our connection with a monarchical government, until the prospective nobility were levelled with the mob, by the mere gathering of winds that preceded the storm of the Revolution. The portents of that storm were not yet visible in the air. A true picture of society, therefore, would have the rich effect produced by distinctions of rank that seemed permanent, and by appropriate habits of splendor on the part of the gentry.

The people at large had been somewhat changed in character, since the period of our last sketch, by their great exploit, the conquest of Louisburg. After that event, the New-Englanders never settled into precisely the same quiet race which all the world had imagined them to be. They had done a deed of history, and were anxious to add new ones to the record. They had proved themselves powerful enough to influence the result of a war, and were thenceforth called upon, and willingly consented, to join their strength against the enemies of England; on those fields, at least, where victory would redound to their peculiar advantage. And now, in the heat of the Old French War, they might well be termed a martial people. Every man was a soldier, or the father or brother of a soldier; and the whole land literally echoed with the roll of the drum, either beating up for recruits among the towns and villages, or striking the march towards the frontiers. Besides the provincial troops, there were twenty-three British regiments in the northern colonies. The country has never known a period of such excitement and warlike life; except during the Revolution,—perhaps scarcely then; for that was a lingering war, and this a stirring and eventful one.

One would think that no very wonderful talent was requisite for an historical novel, when the rough and hurried paragraphs of these

newspapers can recall the past so magically. We seem to be waiting in the street for the arrival of the post-rider—who is seldom more than twelve hours beyond his time—with letters, by way of Albany, from the various departments of the army. Or, we may fancy ourselves in the circle of listeners, all with necks stretched out towards an old gentleman in the centre, who deliberately puts on his spectacles, unfolds the wet newspaper, and gives us the details of the broken and contradictory reports, which have been flying from mouth to mouth, ever since the courier alighted at Secretary Oliver's office. Sometimes we have an account of the Indian skirmishes near Lake George, and how a ranging party of provincials were so closely pursued, that they threw away their arms, and eke their shoes, stockings, and breeches, barely reaching the camp in their shirts, which also were terribly tattered by the bushes. Then, there is a journal of the siege of Fort Niagara, so minute that it almost numbers the cannon-shot and bombs, and describes the effect of the latter missiles on the French commandant's stone mansion, within the fortress. In the letters of the provincial officers, it is amusing to observe how some of them endeavor to catch the careless and jovial turn of old campaigners. One gentleman tells us that he holds a brimming glass in his hand, intending to drink the health of his correspondent, unless a cannon ball should dash the liquor from his lips; in the midst of his letter he hears the bells of the French churches ringing, in Quebec, and recollects that it is Sunday; whereupon, like a good Protestant, he resolves to disturb the Catholic worship by a few thirty-two pound shot. While this wicked man of war was thus making a jest of religion, his pious mother had probably put up a note, that very Sabbath-day, desiring the "prayers of the congregation for a son gone a soldiering." We trust, however, that there were some stout old worthies who were not ashamed to do as their fathers did, but went to prayer, with their soldiers, before leading them to battle; and doubtless fought none the worse for that. If we had enlisted in the Old French War, it should have been under such a captain; for we love to see a man keep the characteristics of his country.\*

[\* The contemptuous jealousy of the British army, from the general downwards, was very galling to the provincial troops. In one of the newspapers, there is an admirable letter of a New England man, copied from the London Chronicle, defending the provincials with an ability worthy of Franklin, and somewhat in his style. The letter is remarkable, also, because it takes up the cause of the whole range of colonies, as if the writer looked upon them all as constituting one country, and that his own. Colonial patriotism had not hitherto been so broad a sentiment.]

These letters, and other intelligence from the army, are pleasant and lively reading, and stir up the mind like the music of a drum and fife. It is less agreeable to meet with accounts of women slain and scalped, and infants dashed against trees, by the Indians on the frontiers. It is a striking circumstance, that innumerable bears, driven from the woods, by the uproar of contending armies in their accustomed haunts, broke into the settlements, and committed great ravages among children, as well as sheep and swine. Some of them prowled where bears had never been for a century, penetrating within a mile or two of Boston; a fact that gives a strong and gloomy impression of something very terrific going on in the forest, since these savage beasts fled townward to avoid it. But it is impossible to moralize about such trifles, when every newspaper contains tales of military enterprise, and often a huzza for victory; as, for instance, the taking of Ticonderoga, long a place of awe to the provincials, and one of the bloodiest spots in the present war. Nor is it unpleasant, among whole pages of exultation, to find a note of sorrow for the fall of some brave officer; it comes wailing in, like a funeral strain amidst a peal of triumph, itself triumphant too. Such was the lamentation over Wolfe. Somewhere, in this volume of newspapers, though we cannot now lay our finger upon the passage, we recollect a report that General Wolfe was slain, not by the enemy, but by a shot from his own soldiers.

In the advertising columns, also, we are continually reminded that the country was in a state of war. Governor Pownall makes proclamation for the enlisting of soldiers, and directs the militia colonels to attend to the discipline of their regiments, and the selectmen of every town to replenish their stocks of ammunition. The magazine, by the way, was generally kept in the upper loft of the village meeting-house. The provincial captains are drumming up for soldiers, in every newspaper. Sir Jeffrey Amherst advertises for batteaux-men, to be employed on the lakes; and gives notice to the officers of seven British regiments, dispersed on the recruiting service, to rendezvous in Boston. Captain Hallowell, of the province ship-of-war King George, invites able-bodied

seamen to serve his Majesty, for fifteen pounds, old tenor, per month. By the rewards offered, there would appear to have been frequent desertions from the New England forces: we applaud their wisdom, if not their valor or integrity. Cannon of all calibres, gunpowder and balls, firelocks, pistols, swords, and hangers, were common articles of merchandise. Daniel Jones, at the sign of the hat and helmet, offers to supply officers with scarlet broadcloth, gold-lace for hats and waistcoats, cockades, and other military foppery, allowing credit until the payrolls shall be made up. This advertisement gives us quite a gorgeous idea of a provincial captain in full dress.

At the commencement of the campaign of 1759, the British general informs the farmers of New England that a regular market will be established at Lake George, whither they are invited to bring provisions and refreshments of all sorts, for the use of the army. Hence, we may form a singular picture of petty traffic, far away from any permanent settlements, among the hills which border that romantic lake, with the solemn woods overshadowing the scene. Carcasses of bullocks and fat porkers are placed upright against the huge trunks of the trees; fowls hang from the lower branches, bobbing against the heads of those beneath; butter-firkins, great cheeses, and brown loaves of household bread, baked in distant ovens, are collected under temporary shelters or pine-boughs, with gingerbread, and pumpkin-pies, perhaps, and other toothsome dainties. Barrels of cider and spruce-beer are running freely into the wooden canteens of the soldiers. Imagine such a scene, beneath the dark forest canopy, with here and there a few struggling sunbeams, to dissipate the gloom. See the shrewd yeomen, haggling with their scarlet-coated customers, abating somewhat in their prices, but still dealing at monstrous profit; and then complete the picture with circumstances that bespeak war and danger. A cannon shall be seen to belch its smoke from among the trees, against some distant canoes on the lake; the traffickers shall pause, and seem to hearken, at intervals, as if they heard the rattle of musketry or the shout of Indians; a scouting-party shall be driven in, with two or three faint and bloody men among them. And, in spite of these disturbances, business goes on briskly in the market of the wilderness.

It must not be supposed that the martial character of the times interrupted all pursuits except those connected with war. On the contrary, there appears to have been a general vigor and vivacity diffused into the whole round of colonial life. During the winter of 1759, it was computed that about a thousand sled-loads of country produce were daily brought into Boston market. It was a symptom of an irregular and unquiet course of affairs, that innumerable lotteries were projected, ostensibly for the purpose of public improvements, such as roads and bridges. Many females seized the opportunity to engage in business: as, among others, Alice Quick, who dealt in crockery and hosiery, next door to Deacon Beautineau's; Mary Jackson, who sold butter, at the Brazen-Head, in Cornhill; Abigail Hiller, who taught ornamental work, near the Orange-Tree, where also were to be seen the King and Queen, in wax-work; Sarah Morehead, an instructor in glass-painting, drawing, and japanning; Mary Salmon, who shod horses, at the South End; Harriet Pain, at the Buck and Glove, and Mrs. Henrietta Maria Caine, at the Golden Fan, both fashionable milliners; Anna Adams, who advertises Quebec and Garrick bonnets, Prussian cloaks, and scarlet cardinals, opposite the old brick meeting-house; besides a lady at the head of a wine and spirit establishment. Little did these good dames expect to reappear before the public, so long after they had made their last courtesies behind the counter. Our great-grandmothers were a stirring sisterhood, and seem not to have been utterly despised by the gentlemen at the British coffee-house; at least, some gracious bachelor, there resident, gives public notice of his willingness to take a wife, provided she be not above twenty-three, and possess brown hair, regular features, a brisk eye, and a fortune. Now, this was great condescension towards the ladies of Massachusetts Bay, in a threadbare lieutenant of foot.

Polite literature was beginning to make its appearance. Few native works were advertised, it is true, except sermons and treatises of controversial divinity; nor were the English authors of the day much known on this side of the Atlantic. But catalogues were frequently offered at auction or private sale, comprising the standard English books, history, essays, and poetry, of Queen Anne's age, and the preceding century. We see nothing in the nature of a novel, unless it be "The Two Mothers, price four coppers." There was an American poet, however, of whom Mr. Kettell has preserved no specimen,—the author of "War, an Heroic Poem"; he publishes by subscription, and threatens to prosecute his patrons for not taking their books. We have discovered a

periodical, also, and one that has a peculiar claim to be recorded here, since it bore the title of "THE NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE," a forgotten predecessor, for which we should have a filial respect, and take its excellence on trust. The fine arts, too, were budding into existence. At the "old glass and picture shop," in Cornhill, various maps, plates, and views are advertised, and among them a "Prospect of Boston," a copperplate engraving of Quebec, and the effigies of all the New England ministers ever done in mezzotinto. All these must have been very salable articles. Other ornamental wares were to be found at the same shop; such as violins, flutes, hautboys, musical books, English and Dutch toys, and London babies. About this period, Mr. Dipper gives notice of a concert of vocal and instrumental music. There had already been an attempt at theatrical exhibitions.

There are tokens, in every newspaper, of a style of luxury and magnificence which we do not usually associate with our ideas of the times. When the property of a deceased person was to be sold, we find, among the household furniture, silk beds and hangings, damask tablecloths, Turkey carpets, pictures, pier-glasses, massive plate, and all things proper for a noble mansion. Wine was more generally drunk than now, though by no means to the neglect of ardent spirits. For the apparel of both sexes, the mercers and milliners imported good store of fine broadcloths, especially scarlet, crimson, and sky-blue, silks, satins, lawns, and velvets, gold brocade, and gold and silver lace, and silver tassels, and silver spangles, until Cornhill shone and sparkled with their merchandise. The gaudiest dress permissible by modern taste fades into a Quaker-like sobriety, compared with the deep, rich, glowing splendor of our ancestors. Such figures were almost too fine to go about town on foot; accordingly, carriages were so numerous as to require a tax; and it is recorded that, when Governor Bernard came to the province, he was met between Dedham and Boston by a multitude of gentlemen in their coaches and chariots.

Take my arm, gentle reader, and come with me into some street, perhaps trodden by your daily footsteps, but which now has such an aspect of half-familiar strangeness, that you suspect yourself to be walking abroad in a dream. True, there are some brick edifices which you remember from childhood, and which your father and grandfather remembered as well; but you are perplexed by the absence of many that were here only an hour or two since; and still more amazing is the presence of whole rows of wooden and plastered houses, projecting over the sidewalks, and bearing iron figures on their fronts, which prove them to have stood on the same sites above a century. Where have your eyes been that you never saw them before? Along the ghostly street,—for, at length, you conclude that all is unsubstantial, though it be so good a mockery of an antique town,—along the ghostly street, there are ghostly people too. Every gentleman has his three-cornered hat, either on his head or under his arm; and all wear wigs in infinite variety,—the Tie, the Brigadier, the Spencer, the Albemarle, the Major, the Ramillies, the grave Full-bottom, or the giddy Feather-top. Look at the elaborate lace-ruffles, and the square-skirted coats of gorgeous hues, bedizened with silver and gold! Make way for the phantom-ladies, whose hoops require such breadth of passage, as they pace majestically along, in silken gowns, blue, green, or yellow, brilliantly embroidered, and with small satin hats surmounting their powdered hair. Make way; for the whole spectral show will vanish, if your earthly garments brush against their robes. Now that the scene is brightest, and the whole street glitters with imaginary sunshine,—now hark to the bells of the Old South and the Old North, ringing out with a sudden and merry peal, while the cannon of Castle William thunder below the town, and those of the Diana frigate repeat the sound, and the Charlestown batteries reply with a nearer roar! You see the crowd toss up their hats in visionary joy. You hear of illuminations and fire-works, and of bonfires, built oil scaffolds, raised several stories above the ground, that are to blaze all night in King Street and on Beacon Hill. And here come the trumpets and kettle-drums, and the tramping hoofs of the Boston troop of horseguards, escorting the governor to King's Chapel, where he is to return solemn thanks for the surrender of Quebec. March on, thou shadowy troop! and vanish, ghostly crowd! and change again, old street! for those stirring times are gone.

Opportunely for the conclusion of our sketch, a fire broke out, on the twentieth of March, 1760, at the Brazen-Head, in Cornhill, and consumed nearly four hundred buildings. Similar disasters have always been epochs in the chronology of Boston. That of 1711 had hitherto been termed the Great Fire, but now resigned its baleful dignity to one which has ever since retained it. Did we desire to move the reader's sympathies

on this subject, we would not be grandiloquent about the sea of billowy flame, the glowing and crumbling streets, the broad, black firmament of smoke, and the blast or wind that sprang up with the conflagration and roared behind it. It would be more effective to mark out a single family at the moment when the flames caught upon an angle of their dwelling: then would ensue the removal of the bedridden grandmother, the cradle with the sleeping infant, and, most dismal of all, the dying man just at the extremity of a lingering disease. Do but imagine the confused agony of one thus awfully disturbed in his last hour; his fearful glance behind at the consuming fire raging after him, from house to house, as its devoted victim; and, finally, the almost eagerness with which he would seize some calmer interval to die! The Great Fire must have realized many such a scene.

Doubtless posterity has acquired a better city by the calamity of that generation. None will be inclined to lament it at this late day, except the lover of antiquity, who would have been glad to walk among those streets of venerable houses, fancying the old inhabitants still there, that he might commune with their shadows, and paint a more vivid picture of their times.

### III. THE OLD TORY.

Again we take a leap of about twenty years, and alight in the midst of the Revolution. Indeed, having just closed a volume of colonial newspapers, which represented the period when monarchical and aristocratic sentiments were at the highest,—and now opening another volume printed in the same metropolis, after such sentiments had long been deemed a sin and shame,—we feel as if the leap were more than figurative. Our late course of reading has tintured us, for the moment, with antique prejudices; and we shrink from the strangely contrasted times into which we emerge, like one of those immutable old Tories, who acknowledge no oppression in the Stamp Act. It may be the most effective method of going through the present file of papers, to follow out this idea, and transform ourself, perchance, from a modern Tory into such a sturdy King-man as once wore that pliable nickname.

Well, then, here we sit, an old, gray, withered, sour-visaged, threadbare sort of gentleman, erect enough, here in our solitude, but marked out by a depressed and distrustful mien abroad, as one conscious of a stigma upon his forehead, though for no crime. We were already in the decline of life when the first tremors of the earthquake that has convulsed the continent were felt. Our mind had grown too rigid to change any of its opinions, when the voice of the people demanded that all should be changed. We are an Episcopalian, and sat under the High-Church doctrines of Dr. Caner; we have been a captain of the provincial forces, and love our king the better for the blood that we shed in his cause on the Plains of Abraham. Among all the refugees, there is not one more loyal to the backbone than we. Still we lingered behind when the British army evacuated Boston, sweeping in its train most of those with whom we held communion; the old, loyal gentlemen, the aristocracy of the colonies, the hereditary Englishman, imbued with more than native zeal and admiration for the glorious island and its monarch, because the far-intervening ocean threw a dim reverence around them. When our brethren departed, we could not tear our aged roots out of the soil.

We have remained, therefore, enduring to be outwardly a freeman, but idolizing King George in secrecy and silence,—one true old heart amongst a host of enemies. We watch, with a weary hope, for the moment when all this turmoil shall subside, and the impious novelty that has distracted our latter years, like a wild dream, give place to the blessed quietude of royal sway, with the king's name in every ordinance, his prayer in the church, his health at the board, and his love in the people's heart. Meantime, our old age finds little honor. Hustled have we been, till driven from town-meetings; dirty water has been cast upon our ruffles by a Whig chambermaid; John Hancock's coachman seizes every opportunity to bespatter us with mud; daily are we hooted by the unbreeched rebel brats; and narrowly, once, did our gray hairs escape the ignominy of tar and feathers. Alas! only that we cannot bear to die till the next royal governor comes over, we would fain be in our quiet grave.

Such an old man among new things are we who now hold at arm's-length the rebel newspaper of the day. The very figure-head, for the thousandth time, elicits its groan of spiteful lamentation. Where are the united heart and crown, the loyal emblem, that used to hallow the sheet on which it was impressed, in our younger days? In its stead we find a

continental officer, with the Declaration of Independence in one hand, a drawn sword in the other, and above his head a scroll, bearing the motto, "WE APPEAL TO HEAVEN." Then say we, with a prospective triumph, let Heaven judge, in its own good time! The material of the sheet attracts our scorn. It is a fair specimen of rebel manufacture, thick and coarse, like wrapping-paper, all overspread with little knobs; and of such a deep, dingy blue color, that we wipe our spectacles thrice before we can distinguish a letter of the wretched print. Thus, in all points, the newspaper is a type of the times, far more fit for the rough hands of a democratic mob, than for our own delicate, though bony fingers. Nay we will not handle it without our gloves!

Glancing down the page, our eyes are greeted everywhere by the offer of lands at auction, for sale or to be leased, not by the rightful owners, but a rebel committee; notices of the town constable, that he is authorized to receive the taxes on such all estate, in default of which, that also is to be knocked down to the highest bidder; and notifications of complaints filed by the attorney-general against certain traitorous absentees, and of confiscations that are to ensue. And who are these traitors? Our own best friends; names as old, once as honored, as any in the land where they are no longer to have a patrimony, nor to be remembered as good men who have passed away. We are ashamed of not relinquishing our little property, too; but comfort ourselves because we still keep our principles, without gratifying the rebels with our plunder. Plunder, indeed, they are seizing everywhere,—by the strong hand at sea, as well as by legal forms oil shore. Here are prize-vessels for sale; no French nor Spanish merchantmen, whose wealth is the birthright of British subjects, but hulls of British oak, from Liverpool, Bristol, and the Thames, laden with the king's own stores, for his army in New York. And what a fleet of privateers—pirates, say we—are fitting out for new ravages, with rebellion in their very names! The Free Yankee, the General Greene, the Saratoga, the Lafayette, and the Grand Monarch! Yes, the Grand Monarch; so is a French king styled, by the sons of Englishmen. And here we have an ordinance from the Court of Versailles, with the Bourbon's own signature affixed, as if New England were already a French province. Everything is French,—French soldiers, French sailors, French surgeons, and French diseases too, I trow; besides French dancing-masters and French milliners, to debauch our daughters with French fashions! Everything in America is French, except the Canadas, the loyal Canadas, which we helped to wrest, from France. And to that old French province the Englishman of the colonies must go to find his country!

O, the misery of seeing the whole system of things changed in my old days, when I would be loath to change even a pair of buckles! The British coffee-house, where oft we sat, brimful of wine and loyalty, with the gallant gentlemen of Amherst's army, when we wore a redcoat too,—the British coffee-house, forsooth, must now be styled the American, with a golden eagle instead of the royal arms above the door. Even the street it stands in is no longer King Street! Nothing is the king's, except this heavy heart in my old bosom. Wherever I glance my eyes, they meet something that pricks them like a needle. This soap-maker, for instance, this Hobert Hewes, has conspired against my peace, by notifying that his shop is situated near Liberty Stump. But when will their misnamed liberty have its true emblem in that Stump, hewn down by British steel?

Where shall we buy our next year's almanac? Not this of Weatherwise's, certainly; for it contains a likeness of George Washington, the upright rebel, whom we most hate, though reverentially, as a fallen angel, with his heavenly brightness undiminished, evincing pure fame in an unhallowed cause. And here is a new book for my evening's recreation,—a History of the War till the close of the year 1779, with the heads of thirteen distinguished officers, engraved on copperplate. A plague upon their heads! We desire not to see them till they grin at us from the balcony before the town-house, fixed on spikes, as the heads of traitors. How bloody-minded the villains make a peaceable old man! What next? An Oration, on the Horrid Massacre of 1770. When that blood was shed,—the first that the British soldier ever drew from the bosoms of our countrymen,—we turned sick at heart, and do so still, as often as they make it reek anew from among the stones in King Street. The pool that we saw that night has swelled into a lake,—English blood and American,—no! all British, all blood of my brethren. And here come down tears. Shame on me, since half of them are shed for rebels! Who are not rebels now! Even the women are thrusting their white hands into the war, and come out in this very paper with proposals to form a society—the lady of George Washington at their head—for clothing the continental troops. They will strip off their stiff

petticoats to cover the ragged rascals, and then enlist in the ranks themselves.

What have we here? Burgoyne's proclamation turned into Hudibrastic rhyme! And here, some verses against the king, in which the scribbler leaves a blank for the name of George, as if his doggerel might yet exalt him to the pillory. Such, after years of rebellion, is the heart's unconquerable reverence for the Lord's anointed! In the next column, we have scripture parodied in a squib against his sacred Majesty. What would our Puritan great-grandfathers have said to that? They never laughed at God's word, though they cut off a king's head.

Yes; it was for us to prove how disloyalty goes hand in hand with irreligion, and all other vices come trooping in the train. Nowadays men commit robbery and sacrilege for the mere luxury of wickedness, as this advertisement testifies. Three hundred pounds reward for the detection of the villains who stole and destroyed the cushions and pulpit drapery of the Brattle Street and Old South churches. Was it a crime? I can scarcely think our temples hallowed, since the king ceased to be prayed for. But it is not temples only that they rob. Here a man offers a thousand dollars—a thousand dollars, in Continental rags!—for the recovery of his stolen cloak, and other articles of clothing. Horse-thieves are innumerable. Now is the day when every beggar gets on horseback. And is not the whole land like a beggar on horseback riding post to the Devil? Ha! here is a murder, too. A woman slain at midnight, by all unknown ruffian, and found cold, stiff, and bloody, in her violated bed! Let the hue-and-cry follow hard after the man in the uniform of blue and buff who last went by that way. My life on it, he is the blood-stained ravisher! These deserters whom we see proclaimed in every column,—proof that the banditti are as false to their Stars and Stripes as to the Holy Red Cross,—they bring the crimes of a rebel camp into a soil well suited to them; the bosom of a people, without the heart that kept them virtuous,—their king!

Here flaunting down a whole column, with official seal and signature, here comes a proclamation. By whose authority? Ah! the United States,—these thirteen little anarchies, assembled in that one grand anarchy, their Congress. And what the import? A general Fast. By Heaven! for once the traitorous blockheads have legislated wisely! Yea; let a misguided people kneel down in sackcloth and ashes, from end to end, from border to border, of their wasted country. Well may they fast where there is no food, and cry aloud for whatever remnant of God's mercy their sins may not have exhausted. We too will fast, even at a rebel summons. Pray others as they will, there shall be at least an old man kneeling for the righteous cause. Lord, put down the rebels! God save the king!

Peace to the good old Tory! One of our objects has been to exemplify, without softening a single prejudice proper to the character which we assumed, that the Americans who clung to the losing side in the Revolution were men greatly to be pitied and often worthy of our sympathy. It would be difficult to say whose lot was most lamentable, that of the active Tories, who gave up their patrimonies for a pittance from the British pension-roll, and their native land for a cold reception in their miscalled home, or the passive ones who remained behind to endure the coldness of former friends, and the public opprobrium, as despised citizens, under a government which they abhorred. In justice to the old gentleman who has favored us with his discontented musings, we must remark that the state of the country, so far as can be gathered from these papers, was of dismal augury for the tendencies of democratic rule. It was pardonable in the conservative of that day to mistake the temporary evils of a change for permanent diseases of the system which that change was to establish. A revolution, or anything that interrupts social order, may afford opportunities for the individual display of eminent virtues; but its effects are pernicious to general morality. Most people are so constituted that they can be virtuous only in a certain routine; and an irregular course of public affairs demoralizes them. One great source of disorder was the multitude of disbanded troops, who were continually returning home, after terms of service just long enough to give them a distaste to peaceable occupations; neither citizens nor soldiers, they were very liable to become ruffians. Almost all our impressions in regard to this period are unpleasant, whether referring to the state of civil society, or to the character of the contest, which, especially where native Americans were opposed to each other, was waged with the deadly hatred of fraternal enemies. It is the beauty of war, for men to commit mutual havoc with undisturbed good-humor.

The present volume of newspapers contains fewer characteristic traits than any which we have looked over. Except for the peculiarities

attendant on the passing struggle, manners seem to have taken a modern cast. Whatever antique fashions lingered into the War of the Revolution, or beyond it, they were not so strongly marked as to leave their traces in the public journals. Moreover, the old newspapers had an indescribable picturesqueness, not to be found in the later ones. Whether it be something in the literary execution, or the ancient print and paper, and the idea that those same musty pages have been handled by people once alive and bustling amid the scenes there recorded, yet now in their graves beyond the memory of man; so it is, that in those elder volumes we seem to find the life of a past age preserved between the leaves, like a dry specimen of foliage. It is so difficult to discover what touches are really picturesque, that we doubt whether our attempts have produced any similar effect.

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