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I

*The Revolution and
the Status of Persons*

In this year 1925 we enter upon a long series of celebrations commemorating the one hundred and fiftieth anniversaries of the successive events of the American Revolution. If any of those present are able, like myself, to remember well the long series of centennial commemorations of those same events that marked the years from 1875 to 1883, and even to 1889, they will, I think, agree with me that those celebrations did more than anything else that has happened in our lifetime to stimulate popular interest in American history in general, and specifically in the history of the American Revolution. The *Magazine of American History* was founded at once, in 1876. The Daughters of the American Revolution, a more numerous body than ever before were united in the commemoration of any portion of history, and the two societies of Sons, date from that period. A still wider, though

indirect, indication of popular historic interest may be seen in the passion for what is called "colonial" furniture, a passion which distinctly flowed from these commemorations and especially from the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876, for it is certain that down to that year the sway of black walnut and funereal horsehair was steadily maintained. A less popular but more fruitful blossoming of interest in history may be seen in the striking rapidity with which, in the 'eighties immediately succeeding, professorships of history were established in the American colleges and universities, and in the sudden zeal with which numbers of able young students devoted themselves to the study of their country's history.

The consequences which flowed from the celebrations of fifty years ago are so far certain to repeat themselves in our time that we may at least be sure of a speedy heightening of interest in the history of the American Revolution. The main desire that has underlain the preparation of the ensuing lectures has been the wish that whatever results, whether in learned academic research or in popular thinking, may spring from this new period of commemorations, may be marked by a wider view of the events than was taken fifty years ago. Surely it ought to be so, in view of the advances which history has made in America in fifty years, from a time when there were probably not a dozen professional students of history in the United States to a time when there are at least several hundreds.

The gain, the wider view, should show itself in three ways. In the first place, it ought to be possible for us to be much fairer to the British or Loyalist opponents of our fathers than were the men of fifty years ago. They had hardly emancipated

themselves from the traditional view, generated in the heat of the old conflict, that the British statesmen of that time were monstrous tyrants, the British soldiers monstrous barbarians. There is, to be sure, an opinion abroad that the permanent maintenance of that view is an essential trait of American patriotism. It is conceded that in the study of every other war—of Athens against Sparta, or Rome against Carthage, or Parliamentary against Royalist, or Prussia against France, or Union against Confederacy—it is the duty of rational beings to hear both sides, and not to suppose that the ultimate truth of history is to be gathered by listening solely to the immediate war-cries of one of the two contestants. An historical student who has no special affection for England, but on the other hand is not seeking any office for which he needs Irish-American votes, cannot help raising in some perplexity the question why the common-sense rules of fairness should be inapplicable to this war alone among all wars, why our histories of it should be sedulously guarded against improvement, or why writers who take a modern and detached view of it should be accused of the covert reception of British gold.

Another advance that we ought to make consists in a revision of the popular estimate of the men of Revolutionary times. Fifty years ago, and even a hundred years ago, there had become fixed in the public mind the notion that, because in the period of the Revolution there were many heroic characters and deeds, the whole American population of that time was heroic. It is pleasant to think well of a whole generation of those who have preceded us, and especially pleasant to glorify them if they were our ancestors. It may seem

harmless, but when it is done in terms of comparison with later generations it is not altogether wholesome. It is not wholesome because it is not just. Nothing can be more certain than that, if we consider the whole nation and not merely the individual instances of heroic character and conduct, the patriotism of 1861, on both sides, was much more widely extended and more ardent than the much-lauded patriotism of 1776, and that of 1918 more pervasive, more enlightened, and more pure than either. How could we expect it to be otherwise, when we consider carefully the circumstances of the time? Let us distinguish between the heroes who fought and suffered and made every sacrifice to bring into existence a new nation, and the population at large, of whom so great a proportion were, as a matter of fact, however we may excuse them, provincial-minded, dubious in opinion, reluctant to make any sacrifices, half-hearted in the glorious cause. All honor to the heroes, and they were many.

We sit here in the Promised Land,
That flows with Freedom's honey and milk;
But 'twas they won it, sword in hand,
Making the nettle danger soft for us as silk.

But let us not forget that a large part of their heroism had to be expended in overcoming difficulties which need not have existed but for the slackness and indifference of their fellows. For instance, no episode of the history of the Revolution affords a finer example of patriotic sacrifice than the winter's encampment at Valley Forge; but why were the sufferings at Valley Forge encountered? Simply because the country at large, with whatever excuses, did not support the

war, and the army which was waging it, with any approach to the ardor which was shown in 1861, on both sides, or in 1918. Clothes and shoes and blankets and tents were lacking. Who does not know what would happen if an American army of the present day were found to be destitute even of chocolate drops? It would not be three days before the metropolitan dailies would be voicing loudly a nation's wrath, and car-loads of chocolate drops would be rushed promptly to every camp. Let us be fair to the moderns, and not fabricate an imaginary golden age in the undeveloped America of 1776.

Thirdly, and closer to the immediate purpose of these lectures, it is to be wished that in the coming commemorations and in our future thinking we may consider the American Revolution in broader aspects than simply the political and the military. Fifty years ago, it was these that engrossed attention, and indeed most that has been written since then about the Revolution has been narrowly confined to these two aspects, the political and the military, including of late the naval. Every move in the political struggle for independence from Great Britain, every action of the Continental Congress, has been described over and over again. Every battle and every skirmish in that long and dragging war has had its historian, or has been the theme of meticulous articles or controversial pamphlets. Meanwhile, even in this age when social history is so much in fashion all over the world, few writers have concerned themselves with the social aspects of our American revolutionary history.

How different is it with the Frenchmen's study of the great French Revolution! Forty or fifty years ago they were in much the same state as we: every move of the politicians, every

picturesque happening in Paris, every march or engagement of the revolutionary armies, was eagerly chronicled by intelligent but more or less conventional historians; but in more recent years the horizon of the French historians of their revolution has broadened, and more attention has been given to the prodigious effects of the French Revolution upon the constitution of French society than to the political events, more to the march of the revolutionary ideas than to the march of the revolutionary battalions, and quite as much to the progress of the revolution in the provinces as to the dramatic events that marked its development in Paris. The result has been that the French Revolution is now seen in its true proportions and effects, not simply as the downfall of monarchy or the securing of equal political rights for all individuals, but chiefly as a social movement, French and European, of vast dimensions and of immense significance.

Perhaps some may be moved to say at once: But this is precisely to ignore the most salient contrast between the American Revolution and the French. The men of our Revolution, they will say, were neither levellers nor theorists. Their aims were distinctly political, not social. They fought for their own concrete rights as Englishmen, not for the abstract rights of man, nor for liberty, equality, and fraternity. The French rose in revolt against both a vicious political system and a vicious social system. With enthusiastic ardor they proceeded to sweep away abuses of all sorts, and to create, not simply a new government, but a new France and indeed, to their own imaginations, a new heaven and a new earth. That they cared more for the social than for the political results of the Revolution was evident when, after a few years,

believing it impossible to retain both, they resigned political freedom and threw themselves into the arms of the young Corsican who gave promise of preserving for them their new social system. Not so, it will be said, the Anglo-Saxon. He had no wish to destroy or to recast his social system. He sought for political freedom, but he had no mind to allow revolution to extend itself beyond that limited sphere. As Burke said, he was “taught to look with horror on those children of their country who are prompted rashly to hack that aged parent to pieces and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds and wild incantations they may regenerate the paternal constitution.”

It is indeed true that our Revolution was strikingly unlike that of France, and that most of those who originated it had no other than a political programme, and would have considered its work done when political independence of Great Britain had been secured. But who can say to the waves of revolution: Thus far shall we go and no farther? The various fibres of a nation's life are knit together in great complexity. It is impossible to sever some without also loosening others, and setting them free to combine anew in widely different forms. The Americans were much more conservative than the French. But their political and their social systems, though both were, as the great orator said, still in the gristle and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood, were too intimately connected to permit that the one should remain unchanged while the other was radically altered. The stream of revolution, once started, could not be confined within narrow banks, but spread abroad upon the land. Many economic desires, many social aspirations were set free by the political

struggle, many aspects of colonial society profoundly altered by the forces thus let loose. The relations of social classes to each other, the institution of slavery, the system of land-holding, the course of business, the forms and spirit of the intellectual and religious life, all felt the transforming hand of revolution, all emerged from under it in shapes advanced many degrees nearer to those we know.

These are only assertions. They cannot be adequately proved in a few lectures. It will content the lecturer if he can partially illustrate their truth, and if some who hear him are convinced that here is a field of history deserving further and deeper study. Meantime we might profitably consider for a moment whether it is intrinsically probable that our revolution was unlike other popular revolutions, in having no social results flowing from the political upheaval. Is there such a thing as a natural history of revolutions? Nation differs from nation, and age from age, but there are some uniformities in human nature, some natural sequences recurrently presenting themselves in human history. Not all political revolutions, it is true, have had important social consequences. One notable variety of revolution is that whereby one reigning individual or one small group of individuals holding supreme power is supplanted by another individual or small group, without any serious alteration of the system. Such are those "palace revolutions" whereby Jehu the son of Nimshi succeeds Jehoram the son of Ahab, or the tsar Alexander supplants the tsar Paul, without more disturbance of the social system than when "Amurath to Amurath succeeds" in a wholly peaceable manner. But it is the other variety, popular revolutions, which we have in mind. This is the variety which

figures most largely in modern history. A popular revolution usually consists in the transfer of political power from the hands of a smaller into those of a larger mass of the citizens, or from one great section of the population to another. As the result of such a revolution, we expect to see the new group exercising its new-found power in accordance with its own interests or desires, until, with or without fixed intention of so doing, it alters the social system into something according better with its own ideals. After the peaceful English revolution known as the passing of the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832, we look to see the new Parliament, chosen by a wider suffrage and representing now the middle classes, passing a mass of legislation that brings the social state of England into better conformity with middle-class ideals. After the American Civil War, which shifted the seat of political power from the planting aristocracy of the South to the manufacturing and commercial classes of the North, we look to see legislation and the growth of custom whereby the American social system takes on forms congenial to the minds of the new possessors of power. But indeed we do not need to look farther into the past than the last nine years, to observe how the greatest of all revolutions, the one destined evidently to be the most momentous in its consequences, beginning with the overthrow of a tsar and the substitution of a republic, speedily escapes from the control of those who would keep it purely or mainly political, and transforms Russian society by 1925 to an extent which no one would in 1913 have dreamed to be possible.

If then it is rational to suppose that the American Revolution had some social consequences, what would they be

likely to be? It would be natural to reply that it depends on the question, who caused the Revolution, and that therefore it becomes important to inquire what manner of men they were, and what they would be likely, consciously or unconsciously, to desire. In reality, the matter is not quite so simple as that. Allowance has to be made for one important fact in the natural history of revolutions, and that is that, as they progress, they tend to fall into the hands of men holding more and more advanced or extreme views, less and less restrained by traditional attachment to the old order of things. Therefore the social consequences of a revolution are not necessarily shaped by the conscious or unconscious desires of those who started it, but more likely by the desires of those who came into control of it at later stages of its development.

You know how it was with the English Revolution of the seventeenth century. At first it was the affair of moderate statesmen, like Pym and Hampden, or moderate generals like Essex or Manchester, earls, who would not push the king too hard, but before long it fell into the hands of men like Cromwell, whose spirit is shown by his bold declaration, "If I should meet the king in battle, I would as soon fire my pistol at him as at any man." Now when we examine the interesting mass of constitutional and social legislation enacted by the parliaments of the Commonwealth, we see in it the work of men of far more advanced views than those of Pym and Hampden, to wit, of radicals who had come into control of the movement in its latest stages.

Or again, take the French Revolution. Everyone knows how its history is marked by distinct successive periods, in each of which the control is exercised by a group more radical

and extreme than its predecessors; and the same has been true of the great Russian Revolution. Now, widely as our American Revolution differed from these, do not let us suppose that it escaped every trait of conformity to the natural history of such movements. Certain it is that, in some of our states at least, it fell ultimately into quite other hands than those that set it in motion.

Well, then, we may ask, who were in favor of the Revolution, and who were against it? The answer of course varies with the different stages of its development. In 1774 the partisans of American independence were very few, though there had long been those who thought, in an academic way, that it would soon take place. In most years after 1776 the partisans of American independence were the great majority. But what sort of man became a Tory as it gradually became necessary to take sides? What sort of man became a Whig? As a matter of course, almost all persons who enjoyed office under the Crown became Tories, and these were a large number. In an age when the king's turnspit was a member of Parliament, and under a king whose chief means of political action was the distribution of offices, officeholders were certain to be numerous, and their pay was, in proportion to the wealth of the country and the work they had to do, much greater than it is now. If the natural desire of all mankind to hold on to a lucrative office (a desire which is said sometimes to influence political action even in this age) did not make an officeholder a Tory, there was another motive arising from the fact that he had been appointed and had sworn to execute the laws, and might therefore feel in duty bound to obey the instructions, of the ministers in England. As for the merchants,

many, who had extensive interests that were imperilled by rebellion, adhered to the royal cause. But on the whole the great body of the merchants of the thirteen colonies were Whigs, for of the deep underlying causes, which for a generation had been moving the American mind in the direction of independence, none was so potent, according to all the best testimony, as the parliamentary restrictions on the trade of the colonies. Among farmers many of the richest took the royalist side. Probably most Episcopalians did so, except in the South. Everywhere the debtor class was, as was natural, and as has been true the whole world over, mainly on the side of revolution.

If we speak of professions, we should note that probably most of the clergy were Whigs, with the exception of nearly all the clergymen of the Church of England in the northern colonies. Most lawyers were Whigs, but most of the most eminent and of those enjoying the largest practice were Tories. John Adams says that, of the eight lawyers who had an important practice before the Superior Court of Massachusetts at the time of the Stamp Act, only Otis and he were Whigs ten years later. One of the others had died, and the remaining five were Tories. Among physicians the proportion of Tories was quite as large as among lawyers.

A word as to race and nationality. Colonists who had very recently arrived from England were likely to take the Tory side. Immigrants from Scotland, also, were usually Tories. A hundred and fifty years ago the Scots at home were among the warmest of Tories; Hume's *History of England* is typical of their feelings. Perhaps, too, their well-known clan-nishness gave them, in America, the position of aliens who

held together, and would not assimilate with the rest of the population. Of the Irish, on the other hand, and those of the Scotch-Irish stock, Protestants from the north of Ireland, it is customary to hold that they were warmly and by vast majority on the side of revolution. It is not so certain. Industrious efforts have been made to show that they formed the backbone of the Revolutionary army—efforts partly based on a misinterpretation of a single passage in Joseph Gallo-way's testimony before a committee of the House of Commons. On the other hand, I have observed that, in the two large lists of Loyalist claimants that give the country of birth, 146 out of 1358 claimants, or eleven per cent, say that they were born in Ireland—a larger number than were born in England. Yet in Pennsylvania, where the proportion of Irish or Scotch-Irish population was greatest, it was unquestionably their influence that carried the state for independence, at the same time breaking the power in state affairs of the Philadelphia conservatives, and bestowing upon the state a radically democratic constitution. In all the colonies the Germans generally adhered to the party of independence, but not with great ardency.

As is usually the case, the revolutionary side was more frequently espoused by young men, the conservative cause by their elders. There were not a few conspicuous cases, such as that of Sir John Randolph, the king's attorney-general in Virginia, and his son Edmund Randolph, in which the son adopted the former, the father the latter cause, and other cases, like that of Samuel and Josiah Quincy, in which an elder and a younger brother were thus divided. Among all the leaders of the Revolution, very few were forty-five years

old in 1775; most were under forty. But think for a moment of the leaders of the French Revolution—Robespierre thirty-one years old when the Revolution began, Danton thirty, Camille Desmoulins twenty-seven, Collot-d’Herbois thirty-nine, Couthon thirty-three, Lebas twenty-four, Saint-Just twenty-one—and we shall see cause to be glad that our Revolution was carried through by men who, though still young, had at any rate reached their full maturity of thought and of character.

If we should investigate the Tory party in the several colonies in detail, we should be forced to the conviction that, in New England, it comprised in 1775 a very great share, probably more than half, of the most educated, wealthy, and hitherto respected classes. In March 1776, when Howe evacuated Boston, eleven hundred refugees sailed away with him. These eleven hundred, and the thousand or more who subsequently followed them, bore away perhaps a majority of the old aristocracy of Massachusetts. The act of banishment which the state legislature passed in 1778, to punish the Tories, includes among its three hundred-odd names some representatives of most of the families which had been distinguished in the earlier days of the colony. The loss of this important element, cultivated, experienced, and public-spirited, was a very serious one. It is true that many Tories returned after the war, but their fortunes were usually much broken, and they could never regain their influence. In New England, in short, it appears that the Revolution brought new strata everywhere to the surface.

In New York it seems probable that, in the height of the war at least, the bulk of the property-owners belonged to the Tory

party, and it was strong also among the middle classes of the towns and among the country population. On the large manorial estates the tenant farmers sided with their landlords if they took sides at all. The city of New York and the county of Westchester were strongly Tory during at least the period of the British occupation, and Westchester very likely before. So were Staten Island and the three counties of Long Island.

In Pennsylvania it is probable that during the critical years of the war, at least, the majority of the population was on the side of the Crown, and that majority seems to have included many persons of eminence, and many Quakers. On the other hand, as is well known, the Virginian aristocracy in general, living somewhat remote from the influence of the royal officials, upon their secluded estates, were full of the spirit of local independence. Quite unlike their New England compeers, they took the Whig side, and that almost unanimously. It was the Virginian planters who formed the local committees, seized from the outset the control of the movement, and made it impossible for loyalty to show itself in concerted or effective action. And it is well known how numerous and active were the Tories in the Carolinas. But, says Dr. Ramsay, speaking of South Carolina, "Beside their superiority in numbers, there was an ardour and enthusiasm in the friends of Congress which was generally wanting in the advocates for royal government." Is not this a most significant touch? After all the evidence as to classes and numbers—for perhaps there were a hundred thousand Loyalist exiles, to say nothing of the many more who did not emigrate—the ultimate success of the American cause might well seem to us a miracle. But the fact remains that the Revolutionary party

knew what they wanted. They had a definite programme, they had boldness and resolution, while those averse to independence were divided in their counsels, and paralyzed by the timidity which naturally cleaves to conservative minds. The first scientific observer of political revolutions, Thucydides, pointed out, and every subsequent revolution has accentuated his words, that in such times boldness and energy are more important requisites to success than intelligence or all other qualities put together. This is the secret of the whole matter. "There was an ardour and enthusiasm in the friends of Congress which was generally wanting in the advocates for royal government."

All things considered, it seems clear that in most states the strength of the revolutionary party lay most largely in the plain people, as distinguished from the aristocracy. It lay not in the mob or rabble, for American society was overwhelmingly rural and not urban, and had no sufficient amount of mob or rabble to control the movement, but in the peasantry, substantial and energetic though poor, in the small farmers and frontiersmen. And so, although there were men of great possessions like George Washington and Charles Carroll of Carrollton who contributed a conservative element, in the main we must expect to see our social changes tending in the direction of levelling democracy.

It would be aside from the declared purpose of these lectures to dwell upon the political effects which resulted from the victory of a party constituted in the manner that has been described. There are, however, some political changes that almost inevitably bring social changes in their wake. Take, for instance, the expansion of the suffrage. The status in which

the electoral franchise was left at the end of the Revolutionary period fell far short of complete democracy. Yet during the years we are considering the right of suffrage was much extended. The freeholder, or owner of real estate, was given special privileges in four of the new state constitutions, two others widened the suffrage to include all owners of either land or personal property to a certain limit, and two others conferred it upon all tax-payers. Now if in this lecture we are considering especially the status of persons, we must take account of the fact that the elevation of whole classes of people to the status of voters elevates them also in their social status. American society in the colonial period had a more definite and stable organization than it ever has had since the Revolution. It had been like that English county society of which the poet speaks,

Where Aylmer followed Aylmer at the hall,
And Averill Averill at the rectory.

Now, multitudes of squires had been driven into exile or dethroned from their high position of dominance over the community. Multitudes of other Loyalists had been disfranchised, or impoverished by confiscations. Rip Van Winkle, whose sleep bridged just these years, found the atmosphere of his village radically altered. Jeremy Belknap of New Hampshire, writing in 1792, after remarking on the effect of the Revolution in calling the democratic power into action and repressing the aristocratic spirit, confesses that in the new state "the deficiency of persons qualified for the various departments in the Government has been much regretted, and by none more than by those few who know how public

business ought to be conducted.” In that entertaining Virginian autobiography, the *Life* of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt, after speaking of the habit in that writer’s youth, among the plain people with whom he grew up, of regarding gentlefolk as beings of a superior order, he says in 1794:

But I have lived to see a vast alteration in this respect and the contrary extreme prevail. In our high republican times there is more levelling than ought to be, consistent with good government. I have as little notion of oppression and tyranny as any man, but a due subordination is essentially requisite in every government. At present there is too little regard and reverence paid to magistrates and persons in public office; and whence do this regard and irreverence originate but from the notion and practice of levelling? An idea is held out to us that our present government and state are far superior to the former, when we were under the royal administration; but my age enables me to know that the people are not now by half so peacefully and quietly governed as formerly; nor are the laws, perhaps by the tenth part, so well executed. And yet I know the superiority of the present government. In theory it is certainly superior; but in practice it is not so. This can arise from nothing so much as from want of a proper distinction between the various orders of the people.

Similar voices come from North Carolina, where one stout conservative laments the “extension of that most delicate and important right [of suffrage] to every biped of the forest,” and another declares that: “Anyone who has the least pretence to be a gentleman is suspected and borne down *per*

ignobile vulgus—a set of men without reading, experience, or principle to govern them.” In fact, the sense of social change pervaded the country. A writer in South Carolina says, quite in the spirit of these lectures, “There is nothing more common than to confound the terms of the American Revolution with those of the late American war. The American war is over, but this is far from being the case with the American revolution. On the contrary, nothing but the first act of the great drama is closed.”

The workings of the popular sentiment in favor of equality may of course be plainly seen in the legislation abolishing rights of primogeniture and distributing more or less equally the estates of persons dying intestate, but this movement may perhaps be more conveniently considered in a lecture devoted to the Revolution and the Land. We might also expect the equalitarian or humane spirit to show itself in alterations of the laws respecting redemptioners or indentured servants. Those laws, however, seem not to have been changed in the Revolutionary period. We may infer that the laws protecting the interests of such persons, a very numerous class in the years just preceding the Revolution, either were, or were deemed to be, adequate already for their humane purpose, and that the status of the indentured, who after all had but a few years to serve and then would have all the rights of other poor people, was not regarded as seriously unsatisfactory.

A far more serious question, in any consideration of the effect of the American Revolution on the status of persons, is that of its influence on the institution of slavery, for at this time the contrast between American freedom and American slavery comes out, for the first time, with startling

distinctness. It has often been asked: How could men who were engaged in a great and inspiring struggle for liberty fail to perceive the inconsistency between their professions and endeavors in that contest and their actions with respect to their bondmen? How could they fail to see the application of their doctrines respecting the rights of man to the black men who were held among them in bondage far more reprehensible than that to which they indignantly proclaimed themselves to have been subjected by the King of Great Britain?

At the time when the Revolution broke out there were about a half-million of slaves in the Thirteen Colonies, the figures probably running about as follows: 200,000 in Virginia, 100,000 in South Carolina, 70,000 or 80,000 each in Maryland and in North Carolina, 25,000 perhaps in New York, 10,000 in New Jersey, 6,000 in Pennsylvania, 6,000 in Connecticut, 5,000 in Massachusetts, 4,000 in Rhode Island. Slavery in the continental colonies at that time was no doubt less harsh than in the West Indies, and milder than it has been in many other countries and times. An English parson, preaching to a Virginian congregation in 1763, says: "I do you no more than justice in bearing witness, that in no part of the world were slaves ever better treated than, in general, they are in the colonies." But slavery is slavery, and already before the Revolution many hearts had been stirred against it. It is of course true that other influences than those of the American Revolution were abroad in the world at the same time which would surely work in some degree against the institution of human slavery. On the one hand Voltaire had raised a powerful, if at times a grating, voice in favor of a rational humanitarianism, and Rousseau had poured upon

time-worn institutions the active solvent of abounding sentimentality. Quite at another extreme of human thought from them, Wesley and Whitefield had stirred the English nation into a warmth of religious feeling of which Methodism was only one result, and with it came a revived interest in all varieties of philanthropic endeavor.

There is no lack of evidence that, in the American world of that time, the analogy between freedom for whites and freedom for blacks was seen. If we are to select but one example of such evidence, the foremost place must surely be given to the striking language of Patrick Henry, used in 1773, when he was immersed in the struggle against Great Britain. It is found in a letter which he wrote to one who had sent him a copy of Anthony Benezet's book on slavery.

Is it not amazing [he says] that at a time, when the rights of humanity are defined and understood with precision, in a country above all others fond of liberty, that in such an age and in such a country we find men professing a religion the most humane, mild, gentle and generous, adopting a principle as repugnant to humanity as it is inconsistent with the Bible and destructive to liberty? . . . Would anyone believe I am the master of slaves of my own purchase! I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living here without them. I will not, I can not justify it. However culpable my conduct, I will so far pay my devoir to virtue, as to own the excellence and rectitude of her precepts, and lament my want of conformity to them. I believe a time will come when an opportunity will be offered to abolish this lamentable evil. Everything we can do is to

improve it, if it happens in our day, if not, let us transmit to our descendants, together with our slaves, a pity for their unhappy lot, and an abhorrence of slavery. . . . It is a debt we owe to the purity of our religion, to show that it is at variance with that law which warrants slavery.

Along with many examples and expressions of individual opinion, we may note the organized efforts toward the removal or alleviation of slavery manifested in the creation of a whole group of societies for these purposes. The first anti-slavery society in this or any other country was formed on April 14, 1775, five days before the battle of Lexington, by a meeting at the Sun Tavern, on Second Street in Philadelphia. The members were mostly of the Society of Friends. The organization took the name of "The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes unlawfully held in Bondage." In the preamble of their constitution they point out that "loosing the bonds of wickedness and setting the oppressed free, is evidently a duty incumbent on all professors of Christianity, but more especially at a time when justice, liberty, and the laws of the land are the general topics among most ranks and stations of men." The New York "Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves" was organized in 1785, with John Jay for its first president. In 1788 a society similar to these two was founded in Delaware, and within four years there were other such in Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia, and local societies enough to make at least thirteen, mostly in the slave-holding states.

In actual results of the growing sentiment, we may note, first of all, the checking of the importation of slaves, and

thus of the horrors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Continental Congress of 1774 had been in session but a few days when they decreed an "American Association," or non-importation agreement, in which one section read: "That we will neither import nor purchase any slave imported after the first day of December next, after which we will wholly discontinue the slave trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our vessels nor sell our commodities or manufactures to those who are concerned in it"; and the evidence seems to be that the terms of this agreement were enforced throughout the war with little evasion.

States also acted. Four months before this, in July 1774, Rhode Island had passed a law to the effect that all slaves thereafter brought into the colony should be free. The influence under which it was passed may be seen from the preamble. "Whereas," it begins, "the inhabitants of America are generally engaged in the preservation of their own rights and liberties, among which that of personal freedom must be considered as the greatest, and as those who are desirous of enjoying all the advantages of liberty themselves should be willing to extend personal liberty to others," etc. A similar law was passed that same year in Connecticut. Delaware prohibited importation in 1776, Virginia in 1778, Maryland in 1783, South Carolina in 1787, for a term of years, and North Carolina, in 1786, imposed a larger duty on each negro imported.

Still further, the states in which slaves were few proceeded, directly as a consequence of the Revolutionary movement, to effect the immediate or gradual abolition of slavery itself. Vermont had never recognized its existence, but Vermont was not recognized as a state. Pennsylvania in 1780 provided

for gradual abolition, by an act which declared that no negro born after that date should be held in any sort of bondage after he became twenty-eight years old, and that up to that time his service should be simply like that of an indentured servant or apprentice. Now what says the preamble of this act? That when we consider our deliverance from the abhorrent condition to which Great Britain has tried to reduce us, we are called on to manifest the sincerity of our professions of freedom, and to give substantial proof of gratitude, by extending a portion of our freedom to others, who, though of a different color, are the work of the same Almighty hand. Evidently here also the leaven of the Revolution was working as a prime cause in this philanthropic endeavor.

The Superior Court of Massachusetts declared that slavery had been abolished in that state by the mere declaration of its constitution that "all men are born free and equal." In 1784 Connecticut and Rhode Island passed acts which gradually extinguished slavery. In other states, ameliorations of the law respecting slaves were effected even though the abolition of slavery could not be brought about. Thus in 1782 Virginia passed an act which provided that any owner might, by an instrument properly attested, freely manumit all his slaves, if he gave security that their maintenance should not become a public charge. It may seem but a slight thing, this law making private manumission easy where before it had been difficult. But it appears to have led in eight years to the freeing of more than ten thousand slaves, twice as great a number as were freed by reason of the Massachusetts constitution, and as many as there were in Rhode Island and Connecticut together when the war broke out.

That all was not done that might have been done for the removal or amelioration of slavery we cannot deny, nor that there was in many places a glaring contrast between the principles avowed by the men of the Revolution and their acts respecting slavery; yet very substantial progress was made, and that more was made in this period than in any other until a much later time may be taken as clear evidence of a pronounced influence of the Revolution upon the status of persons in the realm where that status stood most in need of amelioration.

Thus in many ways the successful struggle for the independence of the United States affected the character of American society by altering the status of persons. The freeing of the community led not unnaturally to the freeing of the individual; the raising of colonies to the position of independent states brought with it the promotion of many a man to a higher order in the scale of privilege or consequence. So far at any rate as this aspect of life in America is concerned, it is vain to think of the Revolution as solely a series of political or military events.

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