

**TRAITS OF THE TEA PARTY: BEING A MEMOIR
OF GEORGE R. T. HEWES, ONE OF THE LAST
OF ITS SURVIVORS; WITH A HISTORY OF
THAT TRANSACTION; REMINISCENCES OF
THE MASSACRE, AND THE SIEGE, AND OTHER
STORIES OF OLD TIMES**

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B. B. THATCHER

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George Bancroft

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BY A BOSTONIAN.

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P R E F A C E.

It is no new thing to speak of the American War of Independence as a great event,—one of the most momentous the world has seen,—the influence of which has been felt already throughout Christendom, and will be to the end of time. The history of such a period must possess, of necessity, a corresponding interest; and not for Americans only, but for every mind sufficiently enlightened to appreciate justly the illustrations which it furnishes of the character and destiny of the race at large. The more of that history we can learn and preserve, the more of such illustrations we shall have. And we want, for the same reason, the annals, and anecdotes, public and private, of the times which immediately preceded the revolutionary age—the manners and customs of the people of those days—the condition of society;—everything, in a word, which may throw light, as almost everything will, on the more formal and stately chronicles of great leading incidents, which alone commonly pass for what is called *history*—in the absence of a more finished and life-like picture of the past.

Hence the value of the reminiscences of the actors in those scenes, who still survive; and especially of such as participated in those of the first importance, and perhaps acted a prominent part. The number of these worthies, it is true, is not great, and they are rapidly disappearing; but this very circumstance it is which most enhances the interest of the invaluable communications they are able to make. The estimate placed upon them, like the price of the Sibyl's leaves, may well be raised in each revolving year, as page after page of their living records grows more and more dimly legible with the lapse of time, till it drops from the dusty volume, and is lost to us forever.

The subject of the following memoir, it will be found, was engaged, with all the activity characteristic of his constitution of both mind and body, not only in the struggles of the seven-

year's war, but in some of the most interesting of the events which preceded it immediately, and vividly illustrate its spirit, if they did not essentially co-operate (as some of them certainly did,) in bringing it on. To have been, as he was, one of the members of the memorable "TEA-PARTY,"—but especially a principal actor in the scene,—would seem to promise a value for his biography almost peculiar to itself, since very few survivors of that transaction, besides himself, remain. He was also present at the massacre of the 5th of March, and during the whole of it; and was intimately acquainted with most of the circumstances which led to it, and the influences which followed in its train. He was a resident of the besieged city during its "hard times." He became personally involved in both the marine and military movements of the day. In a word, he happened to be one of that comparatively small class of persons who were situated, throughout the contest, and throughout the context of affairs connected with it, in the midst of them, and, as it were, at the central seeing and hearing point. Boston, it cannot be denied, was, and was considered, abroad and at home, the head-quarters of the revolutionary spirit. Faneuil Hall has deserved its name of the Cradle of Liberty. The Otises, the Adamses, the Quincys, the Hancocks, were "foremost men of all the world," in the maintenance and defence of republican principles. Here, always, were the severest resistance, and the greatest trouble and toil experienced by those who tried their experiments on our power of political endurance. "The people of Boston," said a noble Lord, in the debate on the passage of the Port-Bill,—"*the people of Boston have been the ringleaders of all the riots in America;*"* and there was meaning, if not truth, in the remark.

The situation of our hero was indeed, as will be seen, a humble one. He was a man of little education, and of no ostensible political position, beyond what every citizen of firm principles maintained as a private man. He was, however, active, inquisitive, intelligent. His accuracy, as well as his veracity, (as nobody who knows him need be told,) may be entirely relied on. He retains, even to the present extraordinarily advanced period of his eventful life, a strength and clearness in his faculties, not always discoverable in men who are his juniors by a score of years at least. It is evident, in fine, that the testimony of such a personage, upon such subjects, is getting by far too rare and valuable to be neglected.

* London Gentlemen's Magazine, for 1774.

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