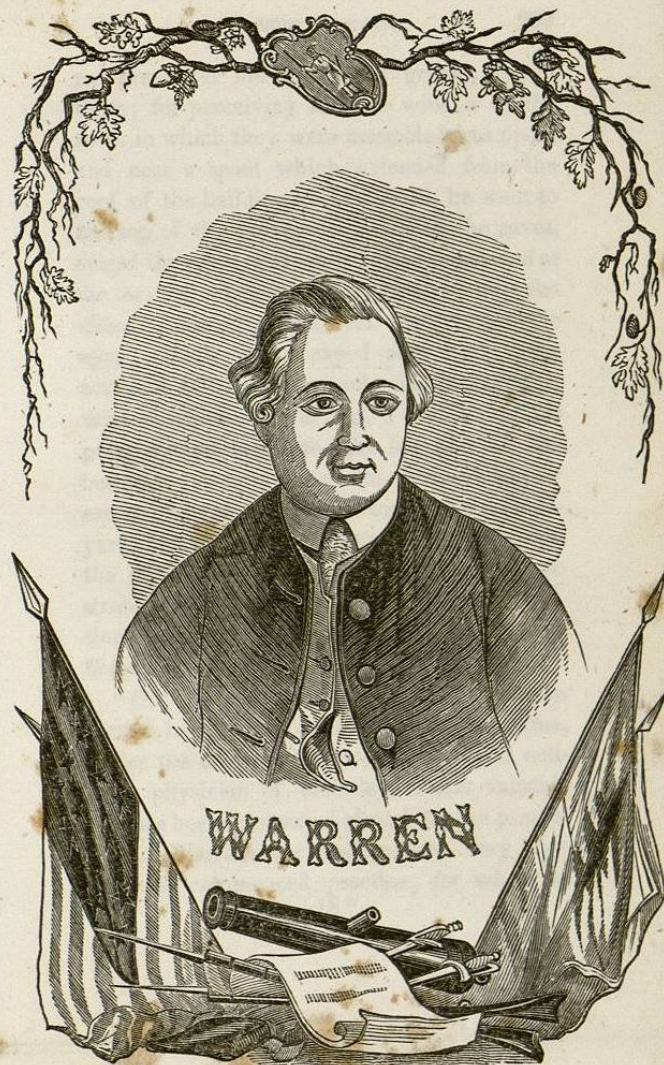


JOSEPH WARREN,

MAJOR-GENERAL IN THE AMERICAN ARMY.

"JOSEPH WARREN was born in Roxbury, near Boston, in the year 1741. His father was a respectable farmer in that place, who had held several municipal offices, to the acceptance of his fellow citizens. Joseph, with several of his brothers, was instructed in the elementary branches of knowledge, at the public grammar-school of the town, which was distinguished for its successive instructors of superior attainments. In 1755, he entered college, where he sustained the character of a youth of talents, fine manners, and of a generous independent deportment, united to great personal courage and perseverance. An anecdote will illustrate his fearlessness and determination at that age, when character can hardly be said to be formed. Several students of Warren's class shut themselves in a room to arrange some college affairs, in a way which they knew was contrary to his wishes, and barred the door so effectually, that he could not without great violence force it: but he did





not give over the attempt of getting among them; for perceiving that the window of the room in which they were assembled was open, and near a spout which extended from the roof of the building to the ground, he went to the top of the house, slid down to the eaves, seized the spout, and when he had descended as far as the window, threw himself into the chamber among them. At that instant the spout, which was decayed and weak, gave way and fell to the ground. He looked at it without emotion, said that it had served his purpose, and began to take his part in the business. A spectator of this feat and narrow escape, related this fact to me in the college-yard, nearly half a century afterward; and the impression it made on his mind was so strong, that he seemed to feel the same emotion as though it had happened but an hour before.

"On leaving college, in 1759, Warren turned his attention to the study of medicine, under the direction of Doctor Lloyd, an eminent physician of that day, whose valuable life has been protracted almost to the present time. Warren was distinguished very soon after he commenced practice; for when, in

1764, the small-pox spread in Boston, he was among the most successful in his method of treating that disease, which was then considered the most dreadful scourge of the human race; and the violence of which had baffled the efforts of the learned faculty of medicine from the time of its first appearance. From this moment he stood high among his brethren, and was the favourite of the people; and what he gained in their good-will he never lost. His personal appearance, his address, his courtesy, and his humanity, won the way to the hearts of all; and his knowledge and superiority of talents secured the conquest. A bright and lasting fame in his profession, with the attendant consequences, wealth and influence, were within his reach, and near at hand: but the calls of a distracted country were paramount to every consideration of his own interests, and he entered the vortex of politics, never to return to the peaceful course of professional labour.

"The change in public opinion had been gradually preparing the minds of most men for a revolution. This was not openly avowed: amelioration of treatment for the present, and assurances of kindness in future, were all

that the colonies asked from Great Britain— but these they did not receive. The mother country mistook the spirit of her children, and used threats when kindness would have been the best policy. When Britain declared her right to direct, govern, and tax us in any form, and at all times, the colonies reasoned, remonstrated, and entreated for a while; and when these means did not answer, they defied and resisted. The political writers of the province had been active and busy, but they were generally screened by fictitious names, or sent their productions anonymously into the world; but the time had arrived, when speakers of nerve and boldness were wanted to raise their voices against oppression in every shape. Warren possessed first rate qualities for an orator, and had early declared in the strongest terms his political sentiments, which were somewhat in advance of public opinion; for he held as tyranny all taxation which could be imposed by the British parliament upon the colonies. In times of danger, the people are sagacious, and cling to those who best can serve them; and every eye was on him in every emergency; for he had not only the firmness and decision they wished for in a leader, but was prudent

and wary in all his plans. His first object was to enlighten the people ; and then he felt sure of engaging their feelings in the general cause. He knew, when once they began, it would be impossible to tread back—independence only would satisfy the country. With an intention of directing public sentiment, without appearing to be too active, he met frequently with a considerable number of substantial mechanics, and others in the middling classes of society, who were busy in politics. This crisis required such a man as they found him to be ; one who could discern the signs of the times, and mould the ductile materials to his will, and at the same time seem only to follow in the path of

fession, and like him, in every one of them, he retained the wisdom to guide and the power to charm. At one time he might be found restraining the impetuosity, and bridling the fury of those hot-headed politicians who felt more than they reasoned, and dared to do more than became men. Such was his versatility, that he turned from these lectures of caution and prudence, to asserting and defending the most bold and undisguised principles of liberty, and defying, in their very teeth, the agents of the crown. Twice he was elected to deliver the oration on the 5th of March, in commemoration of the *massacre* ; and his orations are among the most distinguished produced by that splendid list of speakers who addressed their

tunity for effect. The great orators of antiquity, in their speeches, attempted only to rouse the people to retain what they possessed. Invective, entreaty, and pride, had their effect in assisting those mighty masters to influence the people. They were ashamed to lose what their fathers left them, won by their blood, and so long preserved by their wisdom, their virtues, and their courage. Our statesmen had a harder task to perform; for they were compelled to call on the people to gain what they had never enjoyed—an independent rank and standing among the nations of the world.

“His next oration was delivered March 6th, 1775. It was at his own solicitation that he was appointed to this duty a second time. The fact is illustrative of his character, and worthy of remembrance. Some British officers of the army then in Boston, had publicly declared that it should be at the price of the life of any man to speak of the event of March 5th, 1770, on that anniversary. Warren’s soul took fire at such a threat, so openly made, and he wished for the honour of braving it. This was readily granted: for at such a time a man would probably find but few rivals. Many who would spurn the thought of personal fear

might be apprehensive that they would be so far disconcerted as to forget their discourse. It is easier to fight bravely, than to think clearly or correctly in danger. Passion sometimes nerves the arm to fight, but disturbs the regular current of thought. The day came, and the weather was remarkably fine. The Old South Meeting House was crowded at an early hour. The British officers occupied the aisles, the flight of steps to the pulpit, and several of them were within it. It was not precisely known whether this was accident or design. The orator, with the assistance of his friends, made his entrance at the pulpit window by a ladder. The officers seeing his coolness and intrepidity, made way for him to advance and address the audience. An awful stillness preceded his exordium. Each man felt the palpitations of his own heart, and saw the pale but determined face of his neighbour. The speaker began his oration in a firm tone of voice, and proceeded with great energy and pathos. Warren and his friends were prepared to chastise contumely, prevent disgrace, and avenge an attempt at assassination.

“The scene was sublime; a patriot, in whom the flush of youth and the grace and

dignity of manhood were combined, stood armed in the sanctuary of God, to animate and encourage the sons of liberty, and to hurl defiance at their oppressors. The orator commenced with the early history of the country, described the tenure by which we held our liberties and property—the affection we had constantly shown the parent country, and boldly told them how, and by whom these blessings of life had been violated. There was in this appeal to Britain—in this description of suffering, agony, and horror, a calm and high-souled defiance which must have chilled the blood of every sensible foe. Such another hour has seldom happened in the history of man, and is not surpassed in the records of nations. The thunders of Demosthenes rolled at a distance from Philip and his host—and Tully poured the fiercest torrent of his invective when Cataline was at a distance, and his dagger no longer to be feared: but Warren's speech was made to proud oppressors, resting on their arms, whose errand it was to overawe, and whose business it was to fight.

“If the deed of Brutus deserved to be commemorated by history, poetry, painting, and sculpture, should not this instance of patriotism

and bravery be held in lasting remembrance? If he

‘That struck the foremost man of all this world.’

was hailed as the first of freeman, what honours are not due to him, who undismayed bearded the British lion, to show the world what his countrymen dared to do in the cause of liberty? If the statue of Brutus was placed among those of the gods who were the preservers of Roman freedom, should not that of Warren fill a lofty niche in the temple reared to perpetuate the remembrance of our birth as a nation?

“If independence was not at first openly avowed by our leading men at that time, the hope of attaining it was fondly cherished, and the exertions of the patriots pointed to this end. The wise knew that the storm which the political Prosperos were raising, would pass away in blood. With these impressions on his mind, Warren for several years was preparing himself by study and observation, to take a conspicuous rank in the military arrangements which he knew must ensue.

“On the 18th of April, 1775, by his agents in Boston, he discovered the design of the

British commander to sieze or destroy our few stores at Concord. He instantly despatched several confidential messengers to Lexington. The late venerable patriot, Paul Revere, was one of them. This gentleman has given a very interesting account of the difficulties he encountered in the discharge of this duty. The alarm was given, and the militia, burning with resentment, were, at day-break on the 19th, on the road to repel insult and aggression. The drama was opened about sunrise, within a few yards of the house of God, in Lexington. Warren hastened to the field of action, in the full ardour of his soul, and shared the dangers of the day. While pressing on the enemy, a musket-ball took off a lock of his hair close to his ear. The lock was rolled and pinned, after the fashion of that day, and considerable force must have been necessary to have cut it away. The people were delighted with his cool, collected bravery, and already considered him as a leader, whose gallantry they were to admire, and in whose talents they were to confide. On the 14th of June, 1775, the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts made him a major-general of their forces; but previous to the date of his commission, he had

been unceasing in his exertions to maintain order and enforce discipline among the troops, which had hastily assembled at Cambridge, after the battle of Lexington. He mingled in the ranks, and by every method and argument strove to inspire them with confidence, and succeeded in a most wonderful manner in imparting to them a portion of the flame which glowed in his own breast. At such a crisis genius receives its birth-right—the homage of inferior minds, who, for self-preservation, are willing to be directed. Previous to receiving the appointment of major-general, he had been requested to take the office of physician-general to the army, but he chose to be where wounds were to be made, rather than where they were to be healed. Yet he lent his aid and advice to the medical department of the army, and was of great service to them in their organization and arrangements.

“He was at this time president of the Provincial Congress, having been elected, the preceding year, a member from the town of Boston. In this body he discovered his extraordinary powers of mind, and his peculiar fitness for responsible offices at such a juncture.