

elements of a mighty nation began to coalesce. The patriots of America rose as a man in defense of their inalienable rights. The first call to the uprising was issued by Otis and Henry.

Each represented different sections of the country and different types of character. Otis was the spokesman for New England; Henry, for Virginia. Massachusetts and Virginia were the leading colonies in the Revolution. New England society was democratic in the extreme; that in Virginia was intensely aristocratic, but each was indispensable to the other.

The patriots of Massachusetts fought for principle. They had been trained in schools of theological discussion. Their minds were acute and penetrating. They became the most skillful politicians. Every man was a patriot, clear-headed and full of understanding. James Otis represented men like these. The scene of Otis' first triumph is memorable. In a dimly lighted court room, in which sat the royal judges, flanked by the insignia of royalty, the fearless advocate of liberty gave voice for the first time to the sentiment already existing in every heart. The speech of James Otis against the Writs of Assistance was a trumpet-call to action. Its warning notes had scarcely ceased to echo, before an answering call came from the southern colonies.

The memorable words of Patrick Henry in the House of Burgesses made Virginia a unit. His speech advocating resistance to the oppressive measures of England melted Virginian patriotism into a compact, glowing mass. He was the first to sound the alarm against the Stamp Act. His words announced the coming conflict as the flash of lightning foretells the storm.

No man at that time, fifteen years before the Revolution, was ready to believe that the colonies would ever separate from England. The colonists loved England as men love their boyhood's home. They were proud of the ruins, the traditions, the struggles, and the victories of the English people. But when James Otis ceased speaking against the Writs of Assistance, the American Revolution had begun. Though Patrick Henry stunned the Virginian House of Burgesses by his boldness, from that day Virginia went hand in hand with Massachusetts in the struggle for independence.

Mr. Fifer has a rapid, nervous delivery. A little more deliberation would have added force. His voice was pitched a little higher than natural tone. He made no gesture, and his posture was slightly monotonous in consequence.

The next speaker was W. L. Stephens, whose subject was,

HENRY DAVID THOREAU.

A radical change in thought took place in New England during the first half of the present century. The turmoil of the revolution had passed away, and social and intellectual stagnation succeeded. Man became a machine, a slave to the commonplace. Conventionalism was crushing out all that was human. Whoever dared to display any traces of individuality was beaten and scourged by church and society until he gave at least formal adherence to conventional forms and beliefs. Development was completely arrested. Sympathy, toleration, individual liberty, were unknown. This diseased, hypocritical, pharisaic society was revolutionized. Without sign from heaven, the upheaval came. A plea went forth for the emancipation of humanity, and for liberty of conscience. Intuitively, the race grasped at the means of escape from civil and religious thralldom. Not New England and America alone, but the world was moved. The revolution in mind affected the entire orbit of every man's thought. A standard of excellence was established by which the literature of all tongues is even to-day judged to be worthy or unworthy of perpetuity. It was a spiritual expansion. Liberal views in religious and in secular things took firm hold of the people. The despotism of conventionalism was overthrown. The "individual became the world." Pulpit and press hurled the bitterest invectives at the interpreters of the movement. Like the anarchists of to-day, they were objects of suspicion and contempt. But they were without fear. Through them truth went out, and was felt in the uttermost parts of the earth. The value of these leaders to the age is inestimable. There were two phases of the movement; the religious and the secular. The former was promoted by Emerson; the latter by Thoreau.

No man in the history of our country is so hard to understand and appreciate as Henry David Thoreau. He is called morbid and misanthropic, but only by those that do not understand him. He was so easily influenced by surrounding conditions, so susceptible to the lightest impressions, that he withdrew to Nature in order to prepare himself, untrammelled, for intercourse with his fellow-men. This is

what is mistaken for morbidness. No more was he a bigot, or a misanthrope. He loved humanity, and craved sympathy; sacrificing everything for society, nothing for himself. He believed that in solitude the soul can have free intercourse with God. In this atmosphere of the soul's supremacy he received the impulse to tear himself away from the evil, and adopt the good.

Thoreau retired to Walden, a wild and solitary place, frequented by thieves and cut-throats. It was an eye-sore to the neighborhood, but in his works it is converted into a fairy retreat. He withdrew from social life because he was thoroughly convinced that the development of man is retarded, if not prevented, by the restrictions of society. He proposed to demonstrate, by a practical example, how an ideal life could be led, free from all the lumber of conventionality. His life there was not intended to be one of inertia, but full of activity. He did not marry; not because he failed to realize that the family is the corner-stone of every strong and healthy commonwealth, but because his ideal family could not be realized. Other men, disgusted by the emptiness of ordinary social life, have given themselves up to cynicism and hatred. Thoreau was more noble. He withdrew to solitude to prove that, until soul and Nature are harmonized, no spiritual expansion is possible. He went into retirement to prepare himself for social life, in which he might be forever afterwards free, vigorous, and independent.

Thoreau had an Indian's love and veneration for Nature. To him Nature was perfection, and the attempt to improve her, mutilation.

No Indian lamented the inroads upon the forests more deeply than he. He thanked God that no axe could cut down the clouds. Every phenomenon of Nature, however trivial, corresponded to a general law of the universe. He pleaded earnestly and effectively for more recourse to Nature, and to receive from her whatever impulse and instincts she had to offer. Then they could return to society, with double the capacity for new enjoyment and new service.

Thoreau was no idle dreamer. He was a man of action. In Boston, when the Christian church, a slave to the calloused prejudices of creeds and dogmas, in the belief that it was acting in accordance with the fundamental laws of our government, approved the sending of Anthony Burns, a fugitive slave, back to bondage—in Boston, Thoreau, first of all, dared to defend John Brown. With a soul overflowing with conviction, he exclaimed: "I know this well: If 1,000, if 100, if 10 men whom I could name, if 10 honest men only, aye, if ONE honest man in this state of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership, and be locked up in jail therefor, it would be the abolition of slavery in America." When John Brown lay bleeding in a Virginia jail; when later the country was suffering the agonies of civil war, the full force and meaning of Thoreau's teachings burst upon the intelligence of the people.

Thoreau has been accused of favoring the abolition government. In a perfect state of society, government is reduced to a minimum. He was prepared for this condition, but was in advance of his age. In his forest retreat he refused to pay his tax and gladly went to jail, because he knew, no matter how dark his cell or how thick his prison walls, his convictions would help to mould the character of the race. Certainly a beautiful example of the Puritan spirit of freedom.

Thoreau's life, as a whole, represents the highest ideal of an individuality that should be the foundation of all cultured and progressive society. He knew that society was diseased; the best, the most so. He sacrificed himself in order to point out this disease to his age. He graduated from Harvard when Harvard brains were in great demand. Every profession would gladly have welcomed him. His intellect could have procured him social prominence and wide influence. Young men on all sides were rushing into active life and gaining recognition for wisdom and discretion. Thoreau could have been foremost among them all. Ease, comfort, leisure, wealth, an independent life, and powerful influence were within his grasp. But literally scorning all, he gave himself up to his age, and taught it, once for all, a lesson of purity and simplicity, the silent influence of which is active and potent to-day. A man may become great when strengthened and upheld by the conventionalities of his times. Much greater is Thoreau, who utterly disregarded the homage and sympathy of the world. For the sake of a great moral principle, without hope of reward, he took his stand alone, independent, and self-sufficient. The pure and simple soul who has inspired and humanized the race should command its gratitude and reverence.

Mr. Stephens' strength lay in deliberation and emphasis. His voice was deep and enunciation distinct. He was slightly nervous and ill at ease.

The last speaker was Miss Myra Clark, who eulogized