

Book VI—Winning Democracy

WHEN Hunting Hills was established as a separate district apart from Sunderland, in 1753, it was named Montague, after a popular hero of the Indian wars, an English sailor, Captain William Montague, who commanded "The Mermaid" at the first capture of Louisburg in 1745. This was chiefly an expedition manned, by land and sea, by our Connecticut valley Indian fighters. "The Mermaid" was dispatched to Boston with the news of our solitary victory of those days. Eight years later, while our people were palisading houses on the Indian paths, against a renewal of war, perhaps the new name was an omen of future victory. William Montague was son of Edward Richard Montague, Viscount Hinchinbroke and Lord Lieutenant of the County of Huntingdon; and grandson of Edward, third Earl of Sandwich. The fact that in Old Hadley, Sunderland and most of the towns of the valley, including Hunting Hills itself, were the numerous and very sterling stock of Richard Montague, descended with Captain William from the same old Norman Drogo de Monteacuto of the Conqueror's time; and coupled with the fact that Richard's kinfolk had a town named for the family in Virginia, where they lived, it seems quite correct to say, that the town was named as a compliment to our local family of Montague. The gallant Sir William, with his blithe news from Canada of the success of our own boys, was the occasion; but our pride in our home-made Montagues was the bottom reason. This becomes quite apparent by a very little investigation. The first Montague, Rich-

ard, was one of the fifty-nine founders of the town of Hadley, and he was twice selectman of that town and a famous Indian fighter, up and down the valley. His son Peter Montague was in the Turners Falls fight, as was also his daughter Martha's husband, who lost his life in it. Peter was a selectman of Hadley many years, and four times representative at Boston. Another son, John, was also selectman, and was one of the Hadley men who drove the Indians from Deerfield in 1704. And his son, John, was considered the third greatest man and farmer in his day in Hadley. And when John's sons emigrated to South Hadley, the town of Hadley observed a day of fasting and prayer. One of these sons, Peter, was at Louisburg, under old Seth Pomeroy of Northampton. They were a tall race, and were said to build the doorposts of their houses higher than common, "that a Montague might walk in with his hat on." Another grandson of Richard Montague, Samuel, was one of the forty first settlers of Sunderland. Town-founding was the Montague habit. He was always a leader there in war and in peace; in church he was the head deacon; and a captain in the army; and of course many times a selectman. His son Samuel was one of the founders of Bennington, Vt., but that was a few years later than our present story. Another son of Deacon Samuel was Major Richard Montague, one of the founders of the town of Leverett and its leading spirit for many years. He was also one of Rogers' Rangers in the French war. He lived on the Long Plain road near Mt. Toby, and was so much of a personality here in three towns, in his day, that it was once popularly taken for granted that this town was named for him alone. There were Montagues amongst the pioneers of this district, who were as usual much at the front. And to speak again of things

that came after, New England's greatest statesman, Daniel Webster, was maternally another Hadley Montague. It is safe to say then that at the middle of the eighteenth century no single family this side the river had impressed itself quite so much upon the public consciousness and popular affection as the family of Montague. By act of the General Court, August 23, 1775, the district of Montague became a town of the same name.

According to the deeds of Mashalisk and Metawompe in 1674, all the present territory of Montague up to a line running due east from the southern terminus of the old canal, at Montague City, belonged to the proprietors of Hadley. It seems clear that the little brook whose bed was once developed for the canal was the Papacomtuckquash, or "little Pocumtuck," of the Indians; and not Cold brook, and certainly not Pequog river, as one old map gives it.

A settlement was begun at the present site of Sunderland village in 1674, as ruins, occasionally mentioned in the reports of the Indian scouts, during the next forty years, show. But it was abandoned in Philip's war, and burned by the Indians. After that the parts of Swampfield (Sunderland) near Hadley were included in the vast "pastures," where sheep and cattle roamed with their shepherds all summer. The parts above Kunckwadchu (Mt. Toby) were known as "the hunting hills," probably a name borrowed from the Indians.

The "old Sunderland line" ran from the mouth of Cold brook east six miles across Great Pond (Lake Pleasant). When Montague district was set off in 1753 a two mile addition was made on the north to a line running east from the mouth of Papacomtuckquash, the original bound of the Hadley proprietors. June 21, 1768, Joseph Root

in a petition to the General Court asked for the annexation of the unincorporated land remaining between the Montague line and Miller's river, being about 8000 acres belonging to lands owned by John Irving of Boston. And an act was passed November 7, 1770, annexing this territory. Mr. Irving remonstrated; but the order stood. A good part of a two mile addition on the east was set off to Wendell, February 28, 1803, when that town was incorporated. The final territory of Montague, of irregular boundaries (three-quarters round its borders) on account of the natural course of streams, is contained within a six miles square. Nearly half of this is a semi-arid pine plain of sea sand and a slight mingling of fertile loam which responds curiously to cultivation. Indian corn, beans and grain of excellent quality but of fairy size are raised by very little labor on fallows. There is a yarn to the effect that Solomon Root of Taylor Hill, who owned land on the Plain, was often seen strolling in from that direction on Sabbath afternoon. When asked by his church-going neighbors how he had spent the Lord's day, "On my knees," replied Solomon, "watching my corn grow." This tract was the bottom of an ancient sea lagoon, with two or three interesting hills like islands and two gems of lakes, all that is left of the inland sea. Fully fifteen miles, of the twenty-four of boundary of Montague, are traced by the Connecticut and Miller's rivers and Wickett brook. The rest of the border east and south is a steep mountain wall pierced by highways at only three points in the course of ten miles: at Goddard's brook to Dry Hill and Wendell Center, at Sawmill river to Shutesbury, and at Cranberry and Long Plain brooks to Leverett. The bounds were surely set by nature.

The majority of the inhabitants, apart from those of