

## CHAPTER II

### Historical Background

It is related by the descendants of Andreas Balch that the home of the three brothers who came to America had been in Germany near Alsace; their father was German, their mother French. Both Rhenish-Prussia and the Palatinate have been mentioned as districts from which they came as has also the city of Bonn on the Rhine, which lies in Rhenish-Prussia. These are adjoining districts, the Palatinate now being a province of Bavaria. The inhabitants of these regions were descendants of German or Teutonic tribes called Rhein-Franken, that is, the Franks who lived along the Rhine, with a mixture of the Allemani. The Franks rose from the ruins of the old Roman Empire in 486 A. D. and in a battle along the upper Rhine under their king, Chlodowig, defeated the Allemani in 496. In 814 the Allemania and other tribes were included in Charlemagne's Empire, the division of which among his three grandsons in 870 established the approximate modern boundaries of France, Germany and Italy. When Roman civilization came into contact with these German tribes the latter were given to war and the chase, but raised crops of corn and lived upon the products of the field. In time they became agriculturalists who thought industry the highest virtue. During the Middle Ages the Palatinate was among the most powerful and influential of the

German states. The condition of its people was improved and their civilization advanced under progressive, tolerant and broadminded rulers. The ancient University of Heidelberg as well as that of Bonn were influential centers of learning. The yeomanry were prosperous with comfortable houses, capacious barns, well-stocked stables, plenteous crops and money laid aside for possible emergencies. Even silver plate was found in some homes. The Palatinate includes within its borders the city of Worms, where in 1521 Luther made his famous declaration. The events of the Protestant Reformation greatly changed the religious beliefs and lives of the people in that neighborhood. Undoubtedly the ancestors of the Bolichs who came to America two centuries later were affected by these stirring happenings. Religious persecutions and destructive wars followed, culminating in the Thirty Years' War 1618-1648. From 1685 to 1697 Louis XIV of France attempted to gain permanent possession of the Palatinate. When he was unsuccessful, he ordered its buildings and crops to be burned, its fields and vineyards made desolate. Famine stalked the land and a state of economic bankruptcy existed. William Penn visited the Rhineland with his offer of asylum in Pennsylvania to men of all religious creeds. Many people emigrated to America both for conscience sake and to improve their temporal condition. They were led to Pennsylvania by William Penn's offer and especially by the efforts of Daniel Falkner, an ordained Lutheran minister, who, as head of the

Frankfort Land Company, bought 22,000 acres of land in Manatawny, now Montgomery County, Pennsylvania and induced his countrymen to settle there.

The name Balch has been found in Baluchistan, Tibet, Afghanistan, Russia, Rumania, Serbia, Poland, Pomerania, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Westphalia, Silesia, Herzegovina, Germany, Flanders, Alsace, Lorraine, and Brittany. Balchen is in Norway. There is a Balch mountain range and a Balch pass in Tibet. In northern Afghanistan, Balch is noted on the German maps where the ancient city of Bactra stood. In Great Britain, first mention is found in the building of Battle Abbey in 1066, but the name is Balcheman. The New England Historical and Genealogical Register of July 1855 reports it as "Balchman of Bodeherstegate." In the reign of King John, 1119-1216, was John de Newdigate in the County of Surrey, who had as wife Alice, daughter of Walter de Horton, and sons John, William and Peter. This last John, in the reign of Henry the Third, 1216-1272, received twenty acres, called Lamputts fields in Newdigate from Richard, son of Roger le Balch. In 1225 Edward Balch was living in the Hundred of Chyn in Somersetshire. In 1327 four taxpayers of the name appear in places well to the north, the center and the south of the county. John Balch, 1362-1420, had a son George Balch, 1398-1468, believed to have been the founder of Saint Audries in the northwest part of the shire close to Bridgewater Bay, West Quantox, on the road from London to Portlock

Quay, near Bridgewater. In 1327 William Balch was taxed at Purve near Bridgewater and in 1492 Robert Balch became incumbent of the church at Hazelbury. William Balch of Hingham died 1532-3. His son, John Balch of Horton was born in 1497. A branch of the family that settled as early as the 16th century in Bridgewater gave three members to Parliament and three mayors to the town. From the Quantox hills is a distinct prospect of the Welsh coast. This manor was occupied in 1791 by Robert Evererd Balch, Esq., and George Balch, Esq. The family in Somerset would seem to divide into four groups the Hingham Horton-Ilminster group, the North Curry group, the Bridgewater group, and the Wells-Bruton group. (This information concerning the English branch of the family was furnished by Samuel W. Balch of Montclair, N. J., historian.)

### THE NEW ENGLAND FAMILY

Probably from the Wells-Bruton group, in 1623 came John Balch to Massachusetts and built his home in North Beverly, which is still standing, the oldest house in New England, and held for preservation by trustees representing the family. His son Benjamin lived for 86 years in the house and raised a large family of whom there are many descendants from four sons and five daughters:

Samuel (1651-1723).

Benjamin (1653-1698).

John (1654-1738), Lieut.  
Freeborn (1660-1729).  
Sarah (1661-1716) m. James Patch.  
Ambigail (1663-1706) m. Cornelius Larcum.  
Ruth (1665- ) m. Joseph Drinker.  
Mary (1667-1737) m. Nathaniel Stone.  
Deborah (1693-1717) m. William Raymond.

### THE MARYLAND FAMILY

Also from County Somerset another John Balch came to Maryland in 1658 and had a son Thomas (1660-1730) who returned to Somersetshire and became captain of the Duke's forces in the Monmouth Rebellion in 1685. After the defeat at the battle of Sedgemoor he returned to America. He married Agnes Somerville and they had several children:

James (1714-1779).  
John (1716- ).  
Thomas (1717- ).  
Hezekiah (1721 ).  
Mary (1725- ).

John Balch belonged to the Presbyterian wing of the English church and his son and his grandchildren were brought up in that faith. Hezekiah Balch married Martha Bloomer. Their son, James, born December 5, 1740 at St. George's Parish, Maryland, married Anne Goodwin, of the Eastern Shore of Maryland on January 19, 1737. They had 12 children. She died in 1760. In 1769

he removed with them to Mecklenburg, North Carolina where he died in 1779.\*

Connection between branches of a family of such ancient origin must be found in early history or in antiquity. For this reason the relation between members of the English branch of the family and members of the German branch has not been determined. Owing to the fact that in England in the thirteenth century Roger is spoken of as "le Balch" we might infer that his family came from France. The route of the migrations of this old, old family can be followed back to ancient times and the cradle of civilization by tracing on a map of Europe and Asia the countries in which the name has been found. Starting with England, Brittany, Flanders, Alsace, Lorraine, we move across the North of Europe through Westphalia, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Silesia and Poland to Russia, and in the South from Herzegovina, Servia and Rumania to Russia again where the North and South trails seem to meet and the main route of the migration continues on to the East, to Baluchistan, Afghanistan and Tibet. What an interesting family! What a story of their history remains to be told!

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\*Reverend Hezekiah Balch (1741-1810) was a Presbyterian minister, and founder of Greenville College, Greenville, Tenn. For genealogies of the New England and Maryland families see "Genealogy of the Balch Families in America" by Galusha Burchard Balch. A coat of arms used by this branch of the family, was brought over from England. "Where liberty is, there is my country" is its Latin motto.