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VOLUME III

NATIONAL EXPANSION

1783-1845

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Contemporaries

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NATIONAL EXPANSION

1783-1845

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Preface

WHEN the series of which this is the third volume was begun, three years ago, the editor thought it necessary to explain and define the method of which it is a type. In that brief space of time, however, people have become more accustomed to the use of original historical materials, and there is no novelty in the suggestion that American history may be read in the works of its makers. As in the previous volumes, the double task is attempted of giving characteristic extracts from the best-qualified contemporaries, and of weaving those extracts together so as to make a consistent and truthful whole.

The principles adopted in selecting and transcribing material are those which I believe best calculated to inculcate accuracy, fidelity, and judgment. I have in all cases sought the earliest authoritative text of each piece ; it has been transcribed as the writers themselves saw it in manuscript or in print ; no liberties have been taken with spelling, capitals, or paragraphing. Doubtless the sense would remain the same if the text had been modernized, but it seems worth while to give an object lesson in the faithful reproduction of texts just as one finds them.

The good writers in the period covered by this volume are very numerous, and it has been a painful task to throw out much instructive and interesting first-hand material which had been selected. As in the previous volumes, constitutional documents have been avoided, both because they are not self-explanatory and because good collections of them fortunately now abound ; diaries, travels, autobiographies, letters, and speeches have been preferred as being more real and more human.

In the choice of material I have tried to illustrate social and political conditions, even at the expense of leaving out many important and indispensable incidents. Our historians in general deal less with "the

people" than with people,—less with the life and impressions of the average man than with the thoughts of brilliant leaders. To my mind the foundations of true historical knowledge of our past are the actual conditions of common life: of country, town, and city; of farmer, artisan, merchant, and slaveholder; of church, school, and convention. If this book leads people to understand how their forefathers felt, it will have done its work.

Naturally the largest episode in this volume is the building of the Federal Constitution. In this, as in other disputed questions, I have tried to give a fair representation to the various schools of thought: if some people were wrong-headed and illogical and unpatriotic, it is part of history to know what their arguments were and how they were refuted. In approaching the terrible contest over slavery the same method is adopted: the assailant, the champion, and the observer speaks, each for his own side.

From the date at which this volume begins, the West assumed a life and character of its own; and it has been my aim to bring out that abounding frontier life, that constructive political instinct, that force and energy, which are so notable in the development of the West and so important in our national history.

It is hoped that students in colleges and good secondary schools may find materials in this volume for collateral reading and for topical work. Perhaps, also, the long-besought "gentle reader" will here find resources for his leisure hours.

The work of arranging the volume and seeing it through the press could hardly have been performed without the expert aid of Mr. David M. Matteson and Miss Addie F. Rowe; or without the unflagging and generous interest of the authorities of the Harvard College Library and the Boston Public Library.

ALBERT BUSHNELL HART.

TWIN BEECHES, DUBLIN, N. H.
September 5, 1900.

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