

American History told by
Contemporaries



VOLUME II

BUILDING OF THE REPUBLIC

1689-1783

•The  Co. •

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BUILDING OF THE REPUBLIC

1689-1783

EDITED BY

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Preface

THE work of which this is the second volume is an attempt to bring before the minds of Americans a picture of the life of their forefathers as the latter saw it themselves. It is the conviction of the editor that there is need of a series which in reasonable compass may accomplish two objects : first, to open up for the use of schools, of libraries, of readers, and of investigators, texts of rare or quaint writings which shall be authoritative, so far as they go ; secondly, to make the contemporary writers tell their own story of the events of American history and the aspirations of Americans, from the foundation of the colonies to the present day. The editor believes that such material makes the past vivid to pupil, student, and reader ; and that from a succession of such episodes as are here set forth, so fitted together as to make a kind of continuous narrative, a more permanent impression is made on the mind than from the reading of an equal amount of secondary writings.

In selecting material the same principles have been followed as in Volume I : the first authoritative edition has been sought — in a few cases manuscript sources have been used ; all pieces in foreign languages appear in translation ; the copy is meant to be an absolute transcript of the original in paragraphing, wording, spelling, and capitalization ; nothing appears not found in the original, and all omissions are indicated ; at the end of each extract is a statement of the place whence the extract is taken. Of course some of the printed originals are not faithful transcripts of the manuscripts, but I have aimed in all cases to reproduce the best text available.

In making up the volume I have drawn less on documents, — charters, messages, resolutions, declarations, instructions, statutes, and treaties, — than on those kinds of material in which the personality of the writer plays a greater part, — journals, letters, reports, discussions, and reminis-

cences. Whenever a piece could be found which is both characteristic and well written, it has been chosen over a piece which is equally accurate but has less literary merit. By references to Tyler's admirable *History of American Literature*, and *Literary History of the Revolution*, and other like works, I have tried to make it easy to learn the place of writers in the literature of the country.

The aim of the first half of this volume is to show the interest and the continuance of colonial history from the end of the seventeenth century to the outbreak of the Revolution. The lessons of this "forgotten half-century" are not to be found in the petty events of each colony, but in the growth of principles of government and of a social and economic system. Hitherto it has been hard to study this important formative period, because the illustrative material was so scattered: perhaps this volume will help to bring out the significance of the growth of an American spirit which made union and independence possible.

The history of the American Revolution, which is the subject of the second part of the volume, has usually been written as annals of military campaigns. In this volume I have sought to bring out, from the writings of the time, the real spirit of the Revolution: the ill-judged restrictive system of the home government; the passionate arguments for and against taxation; the fervor of the irregular opposition in the colonies. I have tried to let patriots, Englishmen, and loyalists speak for themselves, and thus to make clear that increasing and unappeasable discontent which preceded and explains the Revolution.

It is the editor's hope that both sections of this book may serve as an adjunct to school and college text-books, as material for topical study, and as a resource for those who like to know what manner of men their fathers were.

The courtesy of the Harvard College Library has opened to me all the stores of that vast collection; and to Miss Addie F. Rowe is due special credit for skilful verification and vigilant proof-reading.

ALBERT BUSHNELL HART.

CAMBRIDGE, January 1, 1898.

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